

# Building Louisville’s Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS)

## 2014-2019 Youth Program Quality Intervention Evaluation Report



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## Building Louisville's Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS) 2018-2019 Youth Program Quality Intervention Evaluation Report

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## Communications Brief

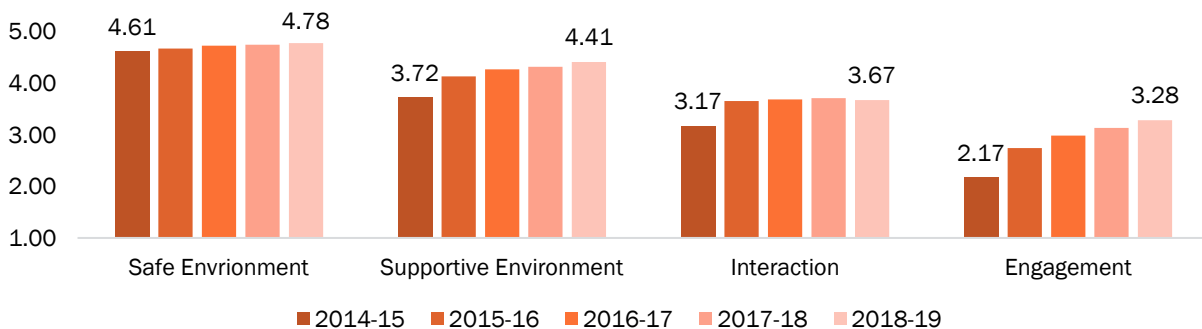
The Building Louisville's Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS) program model states that afterschool programs benefit from training and professional development, coaching, and self-assessment activities that lead to improvements in both the skills of afterschool staff and improvements in the structure of afterschool programs. These changes in skills and structure can be measured in the quality of the afterschool programs. High quality afterschool programs lead to better youth outcomes, which lead to higher school engagement and academic performance, and to the acquisition of social-emotional skills, which in turn contribute to greater success in college, career, and life.

Central to this model is a commitment to Program Quality Assessment and Continuous Quality Improvement. In partnership with the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, BLOCS programs used an adapted version of the Weikart Center's evidence-based Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI), designed to facilitate a culture of continuous assessment, planning, and improvement of program quality. Since 2014, certified external assessors have collected School-Age Program Quality Assessment (School-Age PQA) and Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA) at each BLOCS site, and then sites worked with the network to review the data, identify both strengths and growth opportunities, and create a Quality Action Plan articulating the goals, timelines, necessary resources and staffing supports needed for improvement.

Using a series of descriptive and pattern-centered analyses, this report examines change in program quality during the 2014-2018 program years and the importance of high quality instructional practices as a necessary condition for positive youth development in BLOCS programs.

**Blocs has demonstrated consistent continuous improvement in program quality for the past five years.**

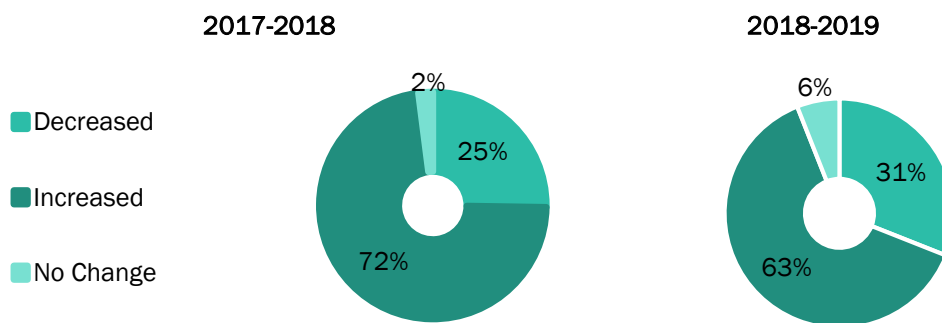
**CB. Chart 1. Change in Program Quality over Time, by Domain**



- The most significant improvements in program quality were observed during BLOCS first two years of YPQI implementation.
- While Safe Environment and Supportive Environment practices have consistently been strong and reliable across the five years, both Interaction and Engagement practices have achieved noticeable improvements.
- Examining change by cohort shows that a primary drive of this improvement is that each new cohort has started YPQI with a higher level of instructional quality than the cohort before, with Cohort 5 reporting initial instructional practices to be almost as strong as the highest level of instructional quality reported by any cohort previously.
- The most distinct difference between high, medium and low quality sites is attributed to greater variation in staff practices across the domains, meaning that the difference between high quality and low quality sites is not only about overall strengths or limitations of individual sites, but also the variability among staff within sites to implement high quality practices consistently.
- This emerging pattern suggests that the standard for program quality among BLOCS sites is rising. High quality programs are not only identified by having a higher overall average of staff practices, but also by a greater balance and consistency across all domains of practice.

**Persistent gains in SEL outcomes show that BLOCS sites have been successful in prioritizing programs and opportunities for participating youth to practice and improve their social and emotional skills.**

**CB Chart 2. Annual Change in SEL Outcomes**

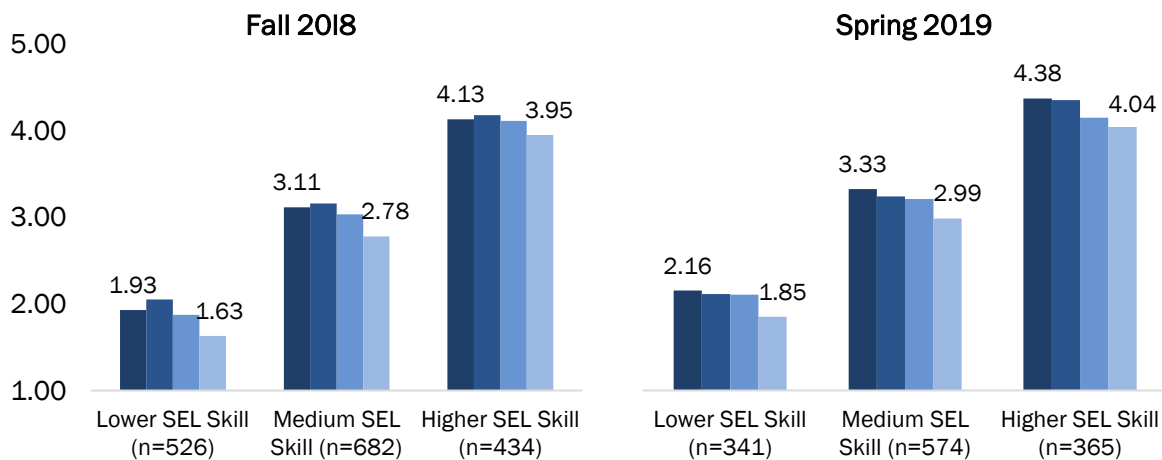


- The majority of BLOCS youth showed SEL gains in Staff Rating of Youth behavior (SRYB) each program year, with approximately 50% of youth demonstrating improvements across multiple constructs of social and emotional development.

- Approximately 30% of sites served youth that represented the full range of social and emotional skills. In comparison, 9% of sites did not have any participating youth in the low SEL skill profile, and 10% of sites did not have any participating youth in the high SEL skill profile.

**Youth in high quality sites were more likely to maintain or increase their SEL skills, in comparison to youth participating in lower quality sites.**

**CB Chart 3-4. SEL Skill Profiles, 2018-2019 Fall and Spring**



- In contrast, youth attending lower quality sites were more likely to show a decline in social and emotional outcomes, with youth at low quality sites showing declining more than twice that of their peers in high quality sites.

## Program Background

Building Louisville's Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS) was initiated in 2012 to support the capacity of local out-of-school time (OST) programs to improve the academic performance and social-emotional intelligence of students, so that high school graduates are college- and career-ready, and Louisville is able to sustain itself with a highly-skilled and employment ready workforce.<sup>1</sup> As articulated in their logic model (see Figure 1 below), BLOCS programs operate on the evidence-based premise that frequent, regular attendance in high-quality OST programs leads to higher school engagement and academic performance, and to the acquisition of social-emotional skills, which in turn contribute to greater success in college, career, and life.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1. BLOCS Out-of-School Time Logic Model**



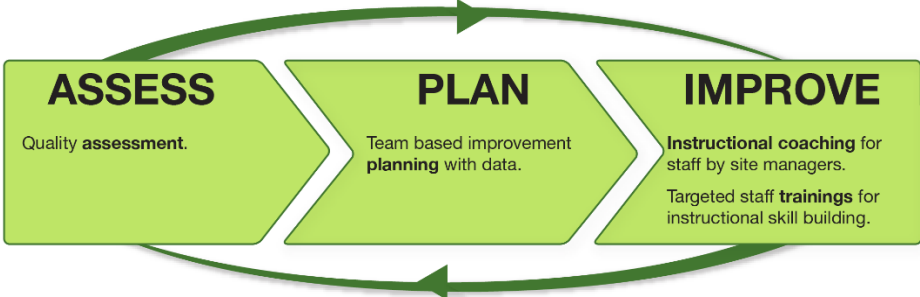
Central to this model is a commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement. Since 2014, BLOCS has partnered with the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (CYPQ) to establish and implement the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) a data-driven continuous improvement process centered on four core staff practices. First, managers and staff are trained to use the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) that aligns best with their program and coordinate self- and external assessments of instructional quality at their sites. Next, staff participate in a Planning with

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.louisvilleblocs.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Building Louisville's Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS): 2018 Data Report Summary (<https://www.louisvilleblocs.org/#2017summary>)

Data workshop where they create an improvement plan and are empowered to implement changes to improve program quality at their site. As a third step, managers and staff attend aligned trainings (e.g. Methods Workshops, Quality Coaching) to strengthen skills and support quality practices. Finally, managers and other identified coaches provide technical assistance and ongoing support to program staff.<sup>3</sup> With Weikart support to guide system-level decisions, this Program Quality Improvement process (see Figure 2) is designed to embed a culture of continuous assessment, planning, and improvement in program quality.

**Figure 2. Youth Program Quality Intervention**



As shown in Table 1, each year of this partnership began with a BLOCs-hosted project kick-off in the fall to establish expectations and timelines for the year. As the program year started, sites completed both external and self-assessments to collect objective data about staff-youth interactions within programs at each site using the Youth and School-Age PQA’s. This data was then reviewed in a Planning with Data training and strengths and growth opportunities were identified in Program Improvement Plans detailing goals, timelines, necessary resources and staffing supports to achieve desired improvements. Managers and staff then engaged in additional training opportunities to improve targeted instructional skills. These professional development opportunities were supplemented by ongoing technical assistance and coaching supports designed to reinforce continuous improvement practices.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, C., Akiva, T., Sugar, S., Lo, Y. J., Frank, K.A., Peck, S. C., Cortina, K.S. & Devaney, T. (2012). *Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study*, Washington, D.C.: Forum for Youth Investment.



**Table 1. Annual Project Timeline**

Activity	Timeline	Performance Measures
<b>Afterschool Programming</b>	August – May	
<b>Project Kickoff</b>	Fall	
<b>Program Quality Assessments</b>	Time 1: Fall Time 2: Spring	Self (fall only) and External YPQA and SAPQA
<b>Staff Training: Planning with Data Youth Work Methods Quality Coaching</b>	Ongoing	Performance Improvement Plans
<b>Youth Outcomes</b>	Time1: October Time 2: April	SAYO-Y and SRYB

### Evaluation Design

To assess the impact of BLOCS YPQI engagement, the partnership with the Weikart Center has also included a longitudinal impact evaluation to assess improvements in program quality and youth’s social emotional learning. The primary purpose of this report is to examine change in Program Quality during the 2014-2019 program years and the importance of high quality instructional practices as a necessary condition for positive youth development in BLOCS programs. The key questions guiding this evaluation were:

1. What does Program Quality look like across BLOCS Programs?
2. What are the Social and Emotional Learning outcomes for BLOCS youth participants?
3. What is the relationship between Program Quality and SEL skills in Louisville programs?

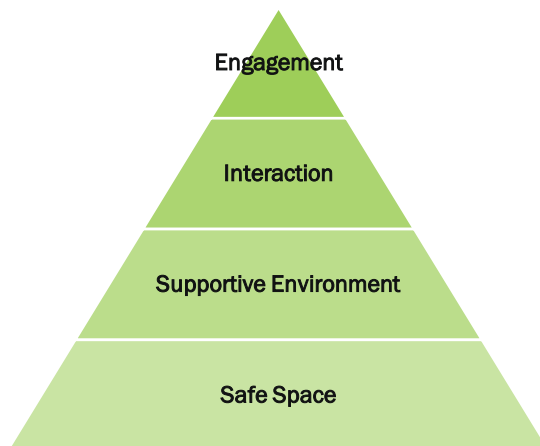
Each year, the evaluation approach has included steps to guide data collection efforts across sites, but also support staff in their efforts to interpret the findings and apply these learnings to continuous improvement decisions. In the 2014-2015 program year, BLOCS collected baseline program quality metrics through one external assessment in the fall, using both the SAPQA and YPQA. As a result, BLOCS increased their investment in YPQI and for the past four years has conducted external assessments in the fall and spring, complemented by a fall self-assessment. Expanding their focus in subsequent years, BLOCS programs started to measure and report on youth’s social and emotional learning outcomes in the 2015-2016 program year using the youth-reported Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes Youth Survey (SAYO-Y), adding the option to use the staff-reported Staff Rating of Youth Behavior (SRYB) in the 2017-2018 program year. Each year culminated with site-level data summaries and a comprehensive evaluation report provided to BLOCS to acknowledge key successes and highlight priorities for continuous improvement.

## Performance Measures

Multiple data sources were collected each year from participating sites to evaluate the impact of BLOCS programs. Starting with the 2014-2015 program year and ending with the 2018-2019 program year, sites submitted Program Quality Assessment (PQA) data, Program Improvement Plans (PIP), and youth Social and Emotional outcomes using the Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes-Youth Survey (SAYO-Y) or the Staff Rating of Youth Behavior (SRYB).

### *Program Quality Assessment*

The Program Quality Assessment (PQA) is a validated, observation-based instrument designed to evaluate the quality of K-12 youth programs and identify staff training needs (Smith, Akiva, Sugar, Lo, et al., 2012; Smith & Hohmann, 2005). This assessment spans four domains of program quality: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement, with each domain consisting of a series of scales, made up of multiple items. BLOCS used both the School-Age PQA and the Youth PQA to collect site performance data.



- The **School-Age PQA** is composed of 70 items comprising 19 scales. The School-Age PQA is appropriate for observing programs that serve youth Kindergarten – 6<sup>th</sup> grades.
- The **Youth PQA** is composed of 63 items comprising 18 scales. The Youth PQA is appropriate for observing programs that serve youth in 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

PQA self-assessments were conducted at all sites each fall, and external assessments were conducted twice a year in the fall and spring. To collect self-assessment data, an internal team was selected at each site and trained to observe staff practices using the PQA. After observations, the team held a scoring meeting to discuss their notes and come to a consensus on the score for each item on the tool. BLOCS hired trained reliable assessors to collect external assessment data. Raters received endorsement through a reliability training process in which they were required to reach 80% agreement with the Weikart Center's master scores on the PQA. Scores were entered into Scores Reporter, a Weikart Center online data collection platform, where data reports could be retrieved as needed.

The primary purpose of the Program Quality Assessment is to measure Instructional Quality, defined as the extent to which programs promote positive youth development through evidence-

based staff practices implemented consistently across youth activities. Instructional Quality, measured by the Instructional Total Score (ITS), is composed of ratings of staff practice at the point of service, or when staff or youth interact during the program. The ITS is a composite score of three out of the four quality domains: a structured environment facilitated through guidance and encouragement (i.e., Supportive Environment), opportunities for leadership and collaboration (i.e., Interaction), and the capacity to promote planning and reflection (i.e., Engagement).

### ***Social and Emotional Learning Outcomes***

Beginning with the 2017-2018 program year, BLOCS sites were able to assess youth's Social and Emotional Learning outcomes using the Staff Rating of Youth Behavior (SRYB). This tool consists of 14 items that staff use to assess youth social and emotional skills in four domains: Expresses Emotion Knowledge, Behaviorally Manages Emotions, Displays Social-Role Mastery, and Displays Goal-Striving Mastery. BLOCS staff would observe each young person in their program twice a year, fall and spring, to assess their social and emotional development. The staff were instructed to (a) have had sufficient exposure to the youth over the four weeks prior to completing the rating, (b) complete the rating during a quiet time when there are few distractions, (c) base the ratings on direct observations of the youth, considering only behaviors that he/she has actually seen (e.g., the rater should not consider behaviors that were reported to occur in other settings), (d) consider only those behaviors that have occurred in the past four weeks, and (e) make ratings based solely on the number of times the youth being rated exhibited the behaviors, not how frequently the youth exhibits the behavior in comparison to other youth in the classroom.

Prior to the 2018-2019 program year, BLOCS sites also had the option to administer the SAYO-Y. This survey invites youth to report on their program experiences, future expectations, and sense of competence. The surveys are designed for programs serving children from Grade 4 through Grade 12 and can be completed online.<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of longitudinal comparison, the Social and Emotional Learning analyses in this report are limited to sites with SRYB data only.

### **Evaluation Sample**

Each year, participating sites were asked to submit data aligned to the key evaluation questions. A total of five cohorts are represented in this report, with Cohort 1 beginning implementation in 2014-2015 and implementing YPQI for five years. Throughout the report, data will be presented by annual year and cohort separately to acknowledge overall network level changes

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<sup>4</sup> National Institute on Out-of-School Time: SAYO-Y: Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes-Youth Survey: Tools & Training: How We Help You. Retrieved October 28, 2019, from <https://www.niost.org/Training-Descriptions/survey-of-afterschool-youth-outcomes-youth-survey-sayo-y>.

each year as well as changes aligned to tenure with the YPQI process. Tables 2-3 below show the amount of data available for analysis in each year and longitudinally. For example, while more than 100 sites participated in the 2018-2019 program year, only 31 sites had data available for all five years of the evaluation. Similarly, while more than 700 youth had SRYB data in BLOCS programs each year, approximately 130 had SRYB data both years.

**Table 2. 2014-2019 Participating Sites by Cohort**

	Participating Sites				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Cohort 1	38	31	31	31	31
Cohort 2	-	29	24	19	19
Cohort 3	-	-	21	14	14
Cohort 4	-	-	-	13	12
Cohort 5	-	-	-	-	27
<b>Annual Total of Participating Sites</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>103</b>

**Table 3. 2014-2019 Participating Sites with Assessment Data**

	Participating Sites				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
PQA External	38	61	77	77	103
SRYB					
Fall	-	-	-	58	88
Spring	<sup>5</sup>	-	-	58	85

**Table 4. Participating Youth with SRYB Data**

Participating SRYB Youth	2017-2018 (n=1,071)	2018-2019 (n=1,642)
K - 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	41%	39%
4 <sup>th</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	33%	34%
6 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	14%	14%
9 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	13%	12%
% Male	50%	52%
ESL Status % Yes	16%	14%
IEP Status % Yes	4%	10%

Examining the evaluation sample more closely suggests that caution is needed when interpreting the findings of this report. Looking at Table 2, the data show a significant decline in site participation for the 2017-2018 program year. At the same time, SRYB data was not collected at all sites. This level of incomplete and missing data must be kept in mind when drawing conclusions as

<sup>5</sup> SAYO-Y data was the only social and emotional data collected in 2014-2015 through 2016-2017.

the longitudinal findings are not representative of all 2014-2019 participating sites. When possible, attrition analyses were conducted to examine any underlying patterns that may have contributed to drop out and/or incomplete data.

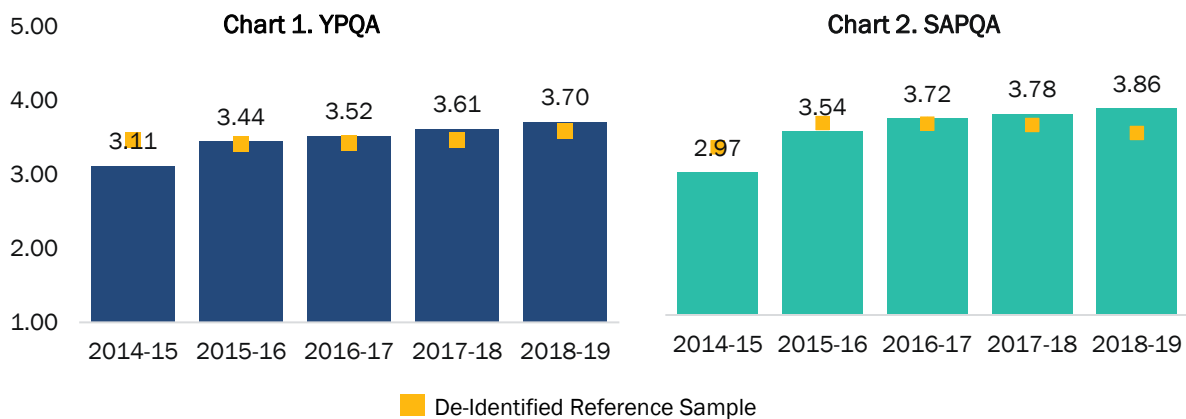
## Results

### Instructional Quality

Over the past decade, research has proliferated the youth development field demonstrating the significant relationship between high quality programs and youth outcomes. Studies have shown that youth programs with the highest instructional practices, meaning those that prioritize a safe environment, supportive relationships, positive staff-youth interactions, and active learning principles are more likely to promote youth engagement and attendance<sup>6</sup>, as well as positive academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

Using the Instructional Total Score as a measure of high quality instructional practice (see pg. 10 for definition), the charts below show that **BLOCS staff demonstrated continuous improvement in instructional practice from 2014-2019**. The most substantial growth in staff practice was observed from the 2014-15 to the 2015-16 program year with smaller improvements observed each subsequent year. This sharp jump in instructional quality between the first and second year of implementation is understandable as initial adoption of YPQI brings a new set of standards and supporting resources that help to model and reinforce higher expectations for staff practice.

**Charts 1 - 2. Instructional Total Score by Year for Youth and School-Age Programs**

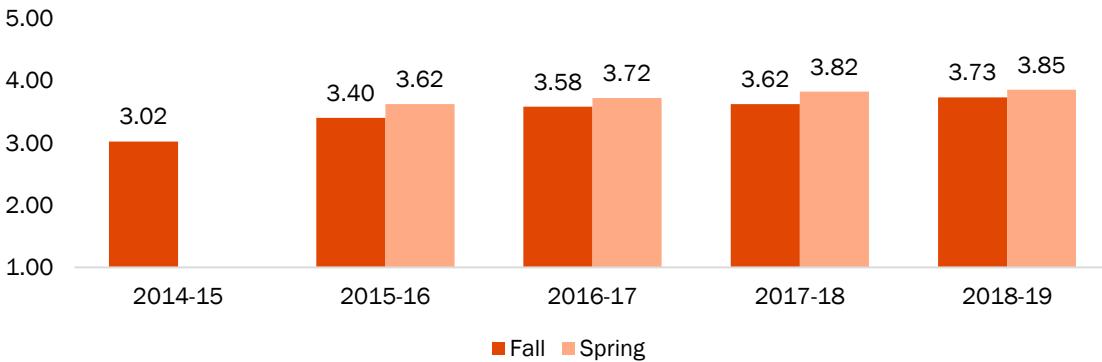


Note: Given there are no major differences in how program quality changed over time by tool, both YPQA and SA-PQA results are combined in all future analyses to provide a more powerful sample size to understand change.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, C., & Hohmann, C. (2005). *Full findings from the youth program quality assessment validation study*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

<sup>7</sup> Durlak, J.A., & Weissberg, R.P. (2007). *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning.

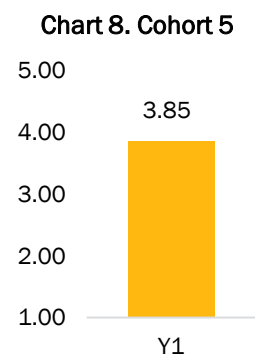
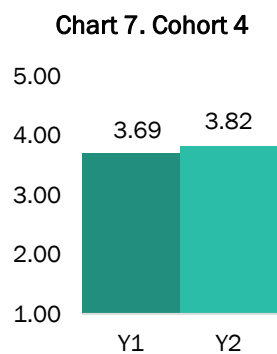
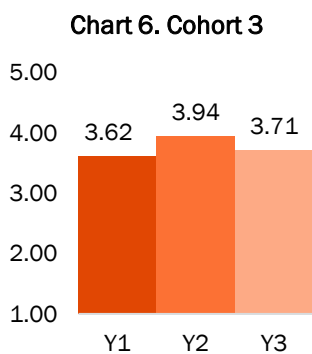
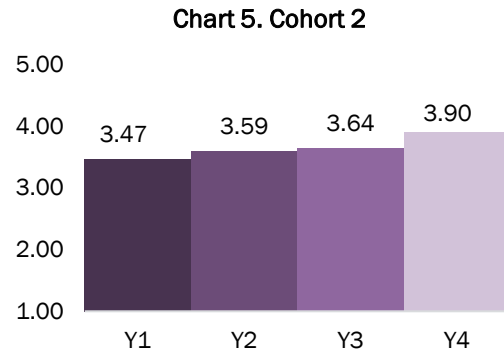
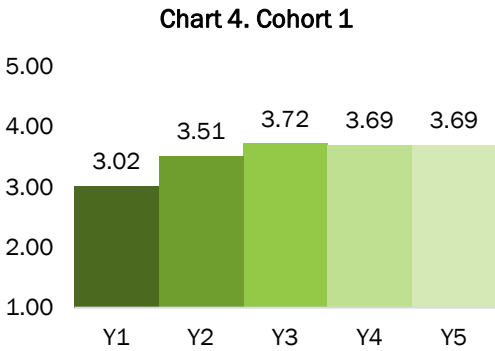
**Chart 3. Change in Instructional Total Score from Fall to Spring, 2014-2019**



**Staff also demonstrated growth within the program year, as instructional practices continuously improved from fall to spring,** an indication that annual YPQI efforts were successful. At the same time, Chart 3 shows instructional practices declined 0.1 points on average from spring to fall as each program year transitioned to the next. This summer slide in program quality is most often attributed high rates of staff turnover each year and sites not offering continuous programs during the summer months.

In an effort to understand what contributed to change in instructional quality over time, analyses were conducted at the cohort level to assess how continued engagement with YPQI impacted ongoing improvements. From 2014-2019, five cohorts of BLOCS sites participated in YPQI, with Cohort 1 having five years of YPQI engagement since starting in the 2014-15 program year. The charts below show that **while each cohort showed overall improvement in instructional quality over time, the amount of change each year has varied greatly across cohorts, and the change between years has not always been positive.** Looking at the first five years of implementation, Cohort 1 reported the most improvement in their first year of implementation (0.49 points), whereas Cohort 3 reported a decline in instructional quality in their third year of implementation (-0.23 points).

## Charts 4 – 8. Change in Instructional Quality over Time, by Cohort

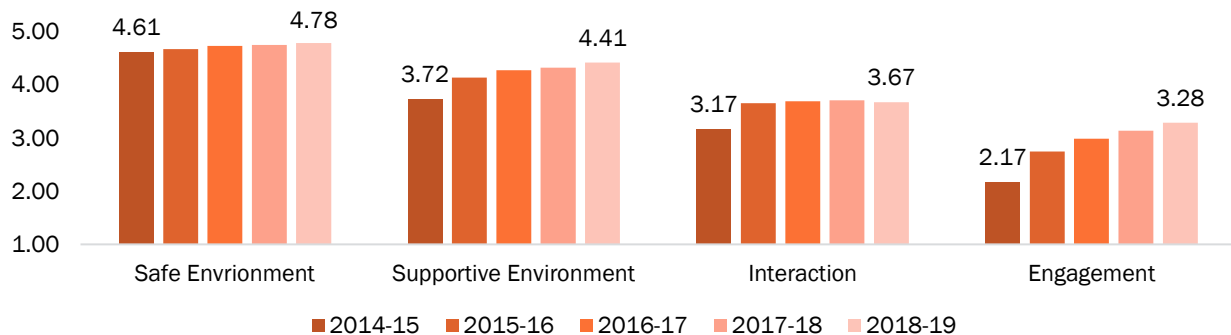


The charts above also show that over the past five years, each cohort has started YPQI with a higher level of instructional quality than the cohort before, with Cohort 5 reporting initial instructional practices to be almost as strong as the highest level of instructional quality reported by any cohort previously. **Having staff with higher quality practices at the onset of YPQI not only strengthens the foundation for each new cohort, but it continuously elevates the network standard for quality across cohorts.** This developing strength is most likely attributed to system-level capacity building over the past five years, and may represent different criteria for site participation in YPQI, such as adjusted hiring standards for staff, or possibly more effective trainings and resources at the launch of YPQI. More data around YPQI efforts and fidelity are needed to identify the specific practices that have contributed to a stronger start for each cohort.

In an attempt to isolate specific staff practices that saw the most growth or practices that persisted as opportunities for improvement we examined the PQA data first by domain and then scale. There was overall improvement in program quality each year, however the amount of change varied greatly across PQA domains (see Chart 9). Similar to the results above (see Charts 1 – 2), the most observable increase for each domain was between the first and second year of implementation. **While Safe Environment and Supportive Environment practices have consistently**

been strong and reliable across the five years, both Interaction and Engagement practices have achieved noticeable improvements. Engagement practices increased on average by more than a full point, suggesting that sites where Engagement practices may have been limited or absent, are now being implemented with more intentionality and consistency within programs.

**Chart 9. Change in Program Quality over Time, by Domain**



Looking more closely at specific staff practices, sites regularly created a supportive environment, with staff providing youth a welcoming atmosphere, as well as planning the session suitably for the participating youth. **The ability to provide encouragement and opportunities for active engagement were staff practices in the Supportive Environment domain that showed the most improvement over the past five years** (see Appendix A). This improvement was most likely attributed to new sites coming in with stronger skills. For example, staff in Cohort 5 demonstrated stronger encouragement practices in their first year of implementation (mean=4.34) compared to staff in Cohort 1 in their fifth year of implementation (mean=4.29) (see Table A5.).

Providing an interactive and engaging program environment for youth requires an advanced set of staff practices and can be more difficult to achieve compared to establishing a Safe and Supportive Environment. While interaction practices maintained after the first year, staff efforts to support youth engagement continued to improve over time. Most notably, staff continuously provided greater opportunities for youth to be independent and take on responsibility within the program (see Table A14).

The strong and consistent pattern of results for Safe and Supportive Environment also elicited the need to assess for ceiling effects, which would indicate that BLOCS sites have reached the highest levels of instructional practice and expectations for continued improvement are impractical. Analyses were conducted to examine the percentage of first year sites that scored above 3.50 on any PQA practice. **Confirming the concern for ceiling effects, the data show that more than 90% of participating BLOCS sites achieved the highest quality Safe and Supportive environment staff**

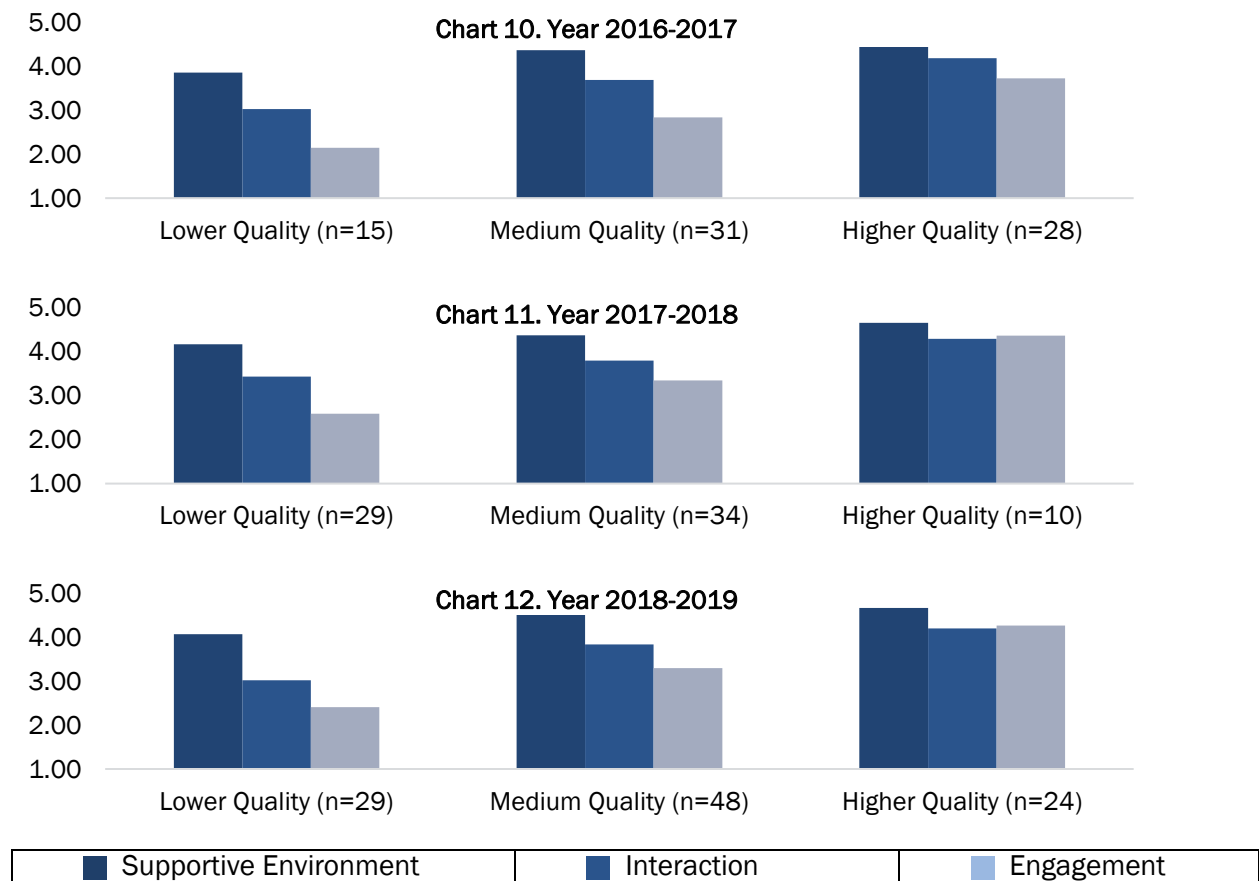


**practices in the first year of implementation** (See Appendix B, Table B1). In comparison, Interaction and Engagement practices consistently show room for growth across years and cohort.

### *Instructional Quality Profiles*

To examine site-level patterns in program quality improvement, pattern-centered analyses were conducted to identify clusters of similar staff practices within sites that contributed to overall change. This analysis allowed us to identify groups of sites with common strengths and challenges that would benefit from more targeted YPQI supports. Instructional Quality profiles were generated using domain scores for Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement from the School-Age and Youth PQA. For the purposes of this analysis we limited the evaluation dataset to the past three years of YPQI implementation. This decision allowed us to focus on the most stable and consistent patterns that emerged over time.

**Charts 10 – 12. Instructional Quality Profiles by Domain and Year**



The results show that BLOCS sites represent three distinct patterns or profiles of Instructional Quality in each year (higher, medium, and lower) with the majority (70%) of sites falling in the higher and medium quality profiles each year. **The most distinct difference between higher and lower quality sites is attributed to greater variation in staff practices across the domains.** For example, lower quality sites reported an average 1.65 point difference between Supportive Environment practices and Engagement practices, whereas higher quality sites demonstrated more stability and consistency, with an average 0.47 point difference in Supportive Environment and Engagement practices. Aligning with previous findings, **while the quality of instructional practices across BLOCS sites continues to improve over time, the difference between higher and lower quality sites is not only about overall strengths or limitations of individual sites, but also the variability among staff within sites to implement high quality practices consistently.**

It is interesting to note that over time the pattern of staff practices across domains shifts for higher quality sites. Typically, as the complexity of the domain increases, the execution of the practice decreases, as best observed in Chart 10. However, beginning in 2017-2018 higher quality sites demonstrated more stability in staff practices across domains meaning youth were provided a more balanced program experience built equally on safety, support, interaction and engagement. This pattern was sustained in the 2018-2019 program year and expanded with more sites moving into the higher quality category, in part due to 10 new higher quality sites joining the network at this time. **This emerging pattern suggests that the initial level of quality among BLOCS sites is rising. Higher quality programs are not only identified by having a higher overall average of staff practices, but also by a greater balance and consistency across all domains of practice.**

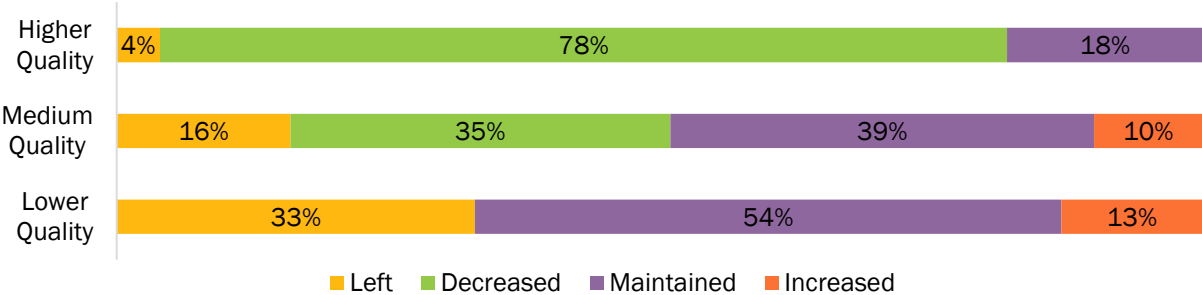
As a next step, basic descriptives were run to examine how sites shifted across quality profiles over time. Looking at change from the 2016-2017 to 2017-18 program year. One-third of lower quality sites left the network in 2016-2017 and more than half of higher quality and medium quality sites either left the network or decreased in quality (see Chart 13). In comparison, the change over the following two program years was much more encouraging with all lower quality sites maintaining or increasing quality, and only 3% of medium quality sites leaving the network. However, this result suggests that **while the average level of staff practices among lower quality sites is increasing, the change is attributed to both quality improvement among some sites as well as the lowest quality sites leaving the network.** Research has consistently shown that the availability of higher quality programs is lowest in high-poverty communities where youth also struggle to find access to education, food and safe outdoor space.<sup>8</sup> Given BLOCS priority to equip Louisville with a

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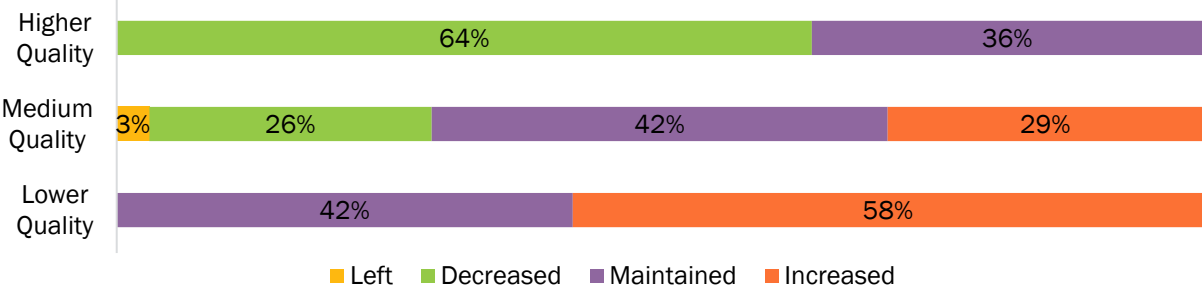
<sup>8</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2016). America after 3pm special report: Afterschool in communities of concentrated poverty. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/Concentrated\\_Poverty.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/Concentrated_Poverty.pdf)

more educated and skilled workforce, it may be beneficial to understand more of the barriers to improvement that lower quality programs face in an effort to support program stability within communities that most need the additional resources to transform communities and change the odds for youth.

**Chart 13. Sites Quality Profile Change from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 Program Year**



**Chart 14. Sites Quality Profile Change from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019 Program Year**



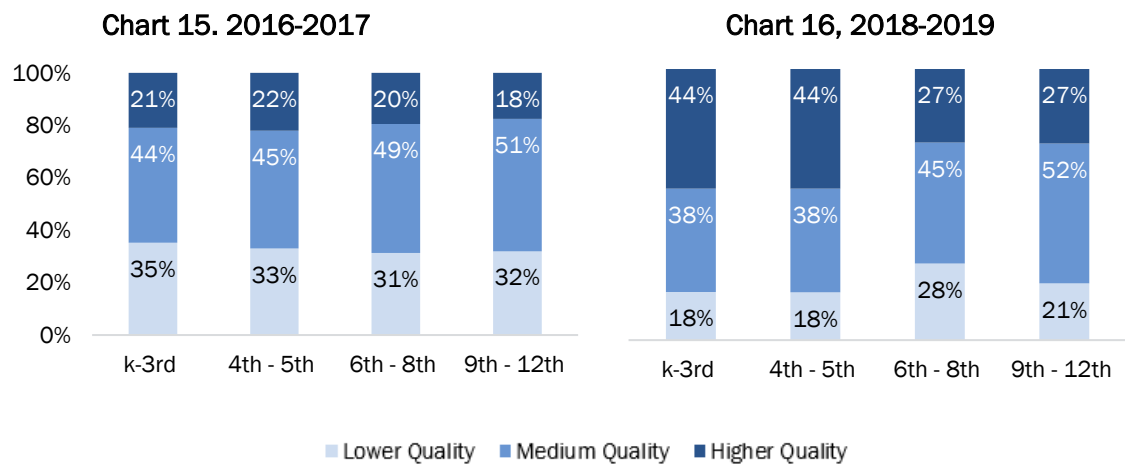
While the results suggest that more differentiated YPQI efforts may be needed to support both lower and higher quality sites fairly, acknowledging the rising standards for high quality across BLOCS sites creates new opportunities for continued improvement. The ceiling effects achieved in the Safe and Supportive Environment domains indicate that capacity-building activities centered on other staff practices would be more beneficial. Similarly, the more balanced definition of quality achieved among the highest performing sites suggests that some BLOCS sites may be ready to advance their work in different ways. With BLOCS priority focus on SEL outcomes, additional youth methods and new assessments could be added to the cadre of resources to elevate staff capacity to promote social emotional learning. Additionally, aligned with the importance of creating opportunities for responsibility and critical thinking in youth development spaces, higher performing sites and staff could be identified as models of excellence and provide mentorship to lower

performing sites, therefore freeing up network staff to pursue future plans for innovation and improvement.

### Site Level Characteristics Related to Quality

In addition to examining trends among staff practices that contribute to overall levels of program quality, analyses were conducted to examine patterns in site characteristics that relate to program quality and continuous quality improvement efforts. First, differences in staff practices across grade levels were examined using grades information collected from each external assessment. To simplify the analysis, grades were organized into four groups: 1) Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 2) 4<sup>th</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 3) 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 4) 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Charts 15-16. Grade Level Served by Quality Profile in 2016-2017 and 2018-2019**



While previous analyses have shown that the percentage of higher quality sites increased over time, the data presented in Charts 15-16 show that youth’s access to higher quality programs has shifted differently.<sup>9</sup> In the 2016-2017 program year, youth across all grade levels had similar opportunities to participate in higher, medium or lower quality programs. **By the 2018-2019 program year, higher quality programs were almost twice as likely to be available to younger youth in grades K-5<sup>th</sup>, while the programs available to middle school and high school aged youth were more likely to be lower quality.** It is possible that these trends align with overall shifts in the youth that BLOCS sites serve, but in combination with the finding that lower-quality programs are more likely to drop-out of YPQI supports, it becomes important for program staff to address any barriers that may limit youth’s access to equitable learning opportunities.

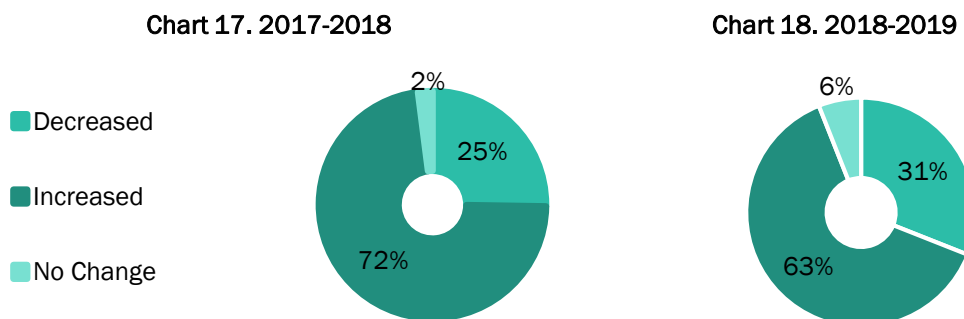
<sup>9</sup> Results are presented for the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 years only in an effort to simply reporting. Findings for the 2017-2018 program year align strongly with the trend reported and can be provided upon request.

## Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional skills, such as emotion management, empathy, teamwork and problem solving are all critical behaviors that provide the foundation for positive self-management and decision-making that young people will need to navigate life successfully. Programs that adhere to high quality standards, such as maintaining a safe space and implementing responsive staff practices that create meaningful opportunities for youth interaction and engagement, have been shown to promote social and emotional outcomes for youth<sup>10</sup>. Parallel to the priority of continuous quality improvement, BLOCS has encouraged their programs to support the social and emotional learning outcomes of Louisville youth, in an effort to help young people realize success in college, career and life.

Beginning in the 2017-2018 year, BLOCS sites collected SRYB data from participating youth each fall and spring as a measure of youth's social and emotional development. Looking first at sample descriptives, the majority (73%) of youth with SRYB data were in grades K-5<sup>th</sup>, approximately half of the youth were female, 15% were identified as needing ESL supports, and less than 10% had an IEP status. It is important to note that only 12% of youth received SRYB ratings in both years, meaning examining change in SEL outcomes overtime would be misleading.

### Charts 17 – 18. Annual Change in SEL Outcomes



To examine annual change, all fall SRYB scales within the same year were averaged to get an annual baseline SRYB score and then all spring SRYB scale within the same year were averaged to get an annual end of program Total SRYB score. Charts 17-18 show that **the majority of BLOCS youth showed SEL gains each program year**. On average, approximately two-thirds of youth increased their SEL skills, just less than one-third decreased their SEL skills, and only a small percentage of youth maintained the same level of SEL skills from fall to spring each year.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, C., McGovern, G., Larson, R., Hillaker, B., Peck, S.C. (2016). *Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices for Social Emotional Learning*. Forum for Youth Investment, Washington, D.C.

## Charts 19 – 20. Youth SRYB Scale Scores at Baseline and End of Program for Two Years

Chart 19. 2017-2018

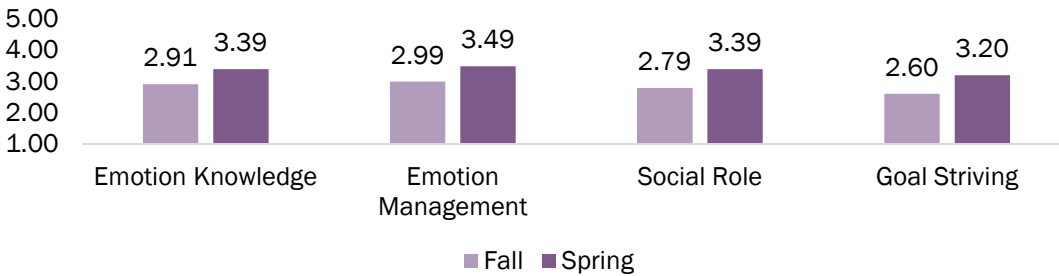
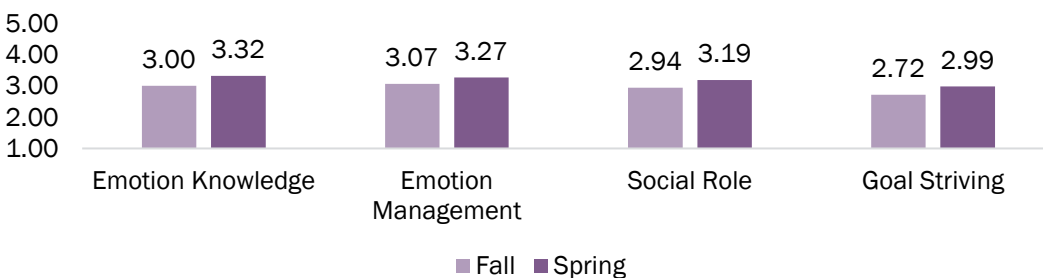


Chart 20. 2018-2019

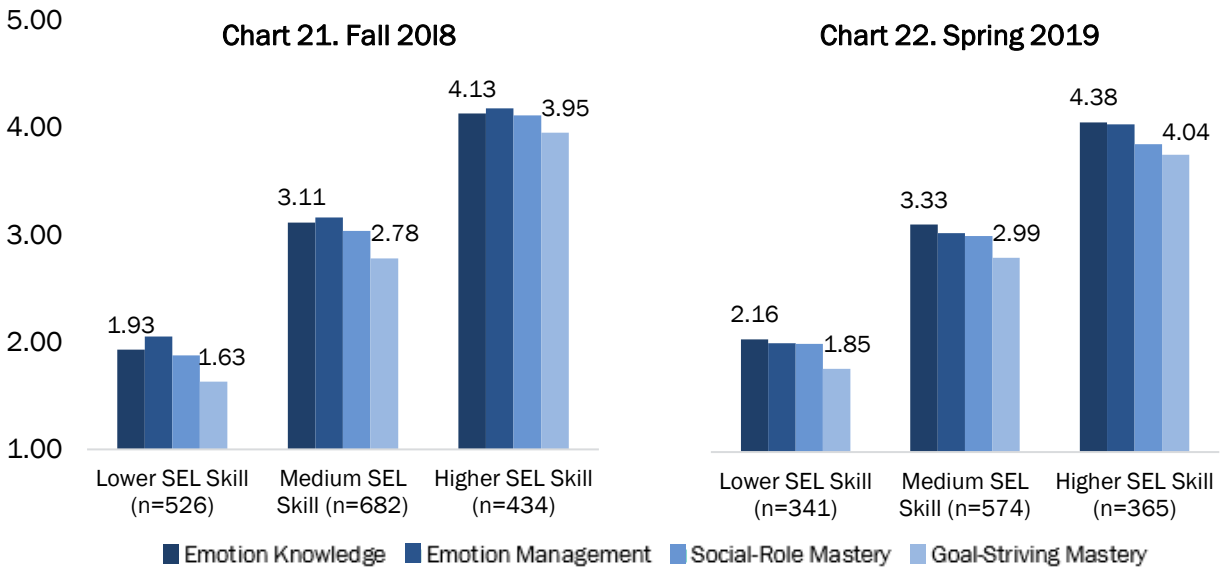


In both 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, approximately 50% of youth demonstrated improvements in each scale, meaning that at least half of participating youth showed growth in multiple social and emotional constructs. BLOCS youth demonstrated a stronger capacity to identify and describe emotional needs as well as manage emotions, with slightly lower skills in social-role mastery and goal striving across both years. The greatest improvements were observed among Social Role and Goal Striving skills in the 2017-2018 year, and the most persistent gains across both years was noted for Emotion Knowledge. Overall these consistent gains in social and emotional development show that BLOCS sites have been successful in prioritizing programs and opportunities for participating youth to practice and improve their social and emotional skills.

### *Staff Rating of Youth Behavior Profiles*

To examine the pattern of change among individual students, SEL profiles were generated using the domain scores from the 2018-2019 SRYB. This analysis allows us to identify trends in how social and emotional skills develop among all youth so that sites and staff can generate more responsive practices to meet the varying developmental needs within their programs. Youths social and emotional skill levels formed three distinct pattern profiles in the fall and spring. The majority of youth remained in in the higher and medium SEL skill profiles, with 67% of youth in the fall and 73% of youth in the spring.

Chart 21 – 22. SEL Skill Profiles, 2018-2019 Fall and Spring



Overall, the mastery of social and emotional skills improved from fall to spring in BLOCS programs. Each increasing profile is characteristic of youth with higher capacity to identify and describe emotional needs as well as manage emotions, with slightly lower skills in social-role mastery and lower goal striving. **The similar three pattern or characterization of youth’s social and emotional skills at both time points illustrates change in mastery of skills, but not change in skill type.** For example, even though youth improved across all SRYB areas, youth are still demonstrating higher emotional knowledge and management with lower social-role and goal-striving mastery.

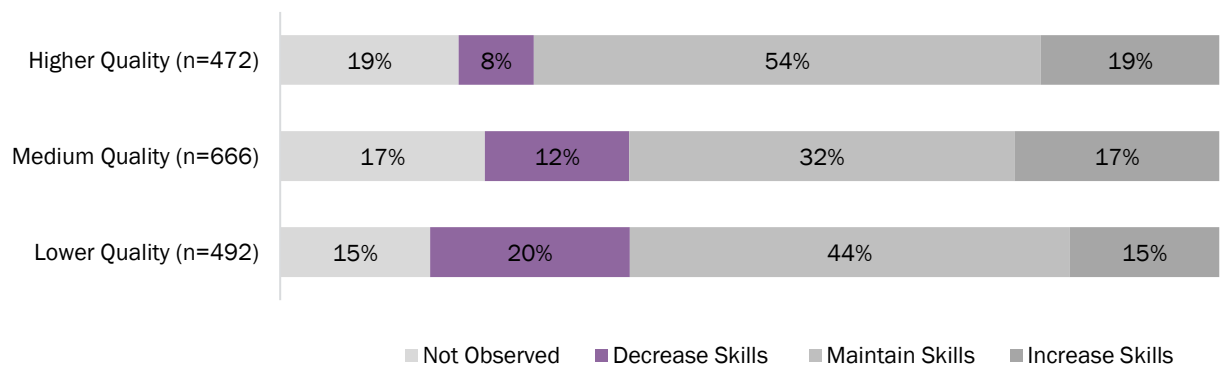
By categorizing youth with lower, higher, and mixed social and emotional skills allows leaders within the network to adjust services and supports to meet the developmental needs of youth served. Looking across all sites, **29% of sites served youth that represented the full range of social and emotional skills (i.e., 33% higher SEL skills, 33% medium SEL skills, and 33% lower SEL skills).** These sites may benefit from a more regular review of SRYB data so activities and opportunities could be modified as needed to support the varying needs among the youth they serve. In contrast, **9% of sites did not have any participating youth in the lower SEL skill profile, and 10% of sites did not have any participating youth in the higher SEL skill profile.** Sites with a more concentrated level of social and emotional skills therefore require a different set of resources and modifications to programming to ensure high quality experiences for all youth. For a full description of youth social and emotional skills distribution by site see Appendix C.

## Quality to Outcomes

The four domains of social and emotional skills reflect responses to specific qualities of out-of-school (OST) settings. For example, learning to negotiate a role that fits your interests and capacities is a responsibility skill that requires a setting organized around access to roles (e.g., social-role mastery), the ability to remain calm under pressure (e.g., emotion management), a specific vocabulary associated with the tasks that go with the role (e.g., emotion knowledge), and opportunities to problem solve and monitor progress towards goals (e.g., goal-striving mastery).

To examine the relationship between program quality and SEL outcomes, we compared Youth SRYB profile movement with the instructional quality of the program they attended. Improvement was achieved when a youth made a categorical shift from into a higher quality profile from fall 2018 to spring 2019.

**Chart 23. SEL Profile change over time by Program Quality in 2018-2019**



**Youth in higher quality sites were more likely to maintain or increase their SEL skills, in comparison to youth participating in lower quality sites.** In contrast, youth attending lower quality sites were more likely to show a decline in social and emotional outcomes, with youth at lower quality sites showing a decrease more than twice that of their peers in higher quality sites. Coupled with the previous findings showing that lower quality sites are less likely to engage in quality improvement efforts (see Charts 13-14), and that that older youth are less likely to have access to higher quality programs, these results suggest that targeted improvement efforts for lower quality sites are imperative for participating youth to achieve the social and emotional gains necessary for Louisville to build a highly-skilled and employment ready workforce.



## Appendix A: Instructional Quality Scales by Cohort and Year

### Supportive Environment Scales

Table A1. Warm Welcome

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	4.39	4.68	4.85	4.75	4.78
Year 2	4.68	4.67	4.95	4.96	
Year 3	4.76	4.71	4.64		
Year 4	4.76	4.81			
Year 5	4.57				

Table A2. Session Flow

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	4.52	4.74	4.78	4.62	4.79
Year 2	4.72	4.67	4.82	4.86	
Year 3	4.69	4.83	4.62		
Year 4	4.71	4.76			
Year 5	4.76				

Table A3. Active Engagement

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	3.45	3.56	3.91	4.32	4.32
Year 2	3.92	3.98	4.07	4.63	
Year 3	4.05	3.84	4.07		
Year 4	4.13	4.22			
Year 5	4.24				

Table A4. Skill-Building

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	3.29	3.69	4.33	4.05	4.11
Year 2	3.84	3.98	4.00	4.37	
Year 3	3.93	3.82	4.03		
Year 4	3.79	4.19			
Year 5	3.92				

Table A5. Encouragement

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	2.91	3.81	4.24	4.27	4.34
Year 2	3.81	3.85	4.10	4.57	
Year 3	3.98	4.27	4.13		
Year 4	4.10	4.26			
Year 5	4.29				

## Interaction Scales

**Table A6. Belonging Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	3.38	3.73	3.88	4.02	4.07
Year 2	3.90	3.90	3.95	4.24	
Year 3	4.03	3.97	3.91		
Year 4	3.73	4.20			
Year 5	3.80				

**Table A7. Collaboration Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	2.45	3.22	2.80	3.37	3.34
Year 2	3.18	3.24	4.00	3.54	
Year 3	3.67	3.97	2.67		
Year 4	3.72	3.33			
Year 5	3.11				

**Table B8. School-Age Leadership Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	2.20	2.50	2.57	2.83	3.02
Year 2	2.85	3.06	2.81	2.77	
Year 3	3.10	3.27	2.62		
Year 4	2.65	3.32			
Year 5	2.76				

**Table A9. Adult Partners Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	3.61	3.39	3.60	4.11	4.14
Year 2	3.42	3.07	4.50	3.63	
Year 3	4.45	4.09	3.88		
Year 4	4.13	4.00			
Year 5	3.75				

**Table A10. Adult Interaction Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	4.40	4.08	4.70	4.45	4.79
Year 2	4.37	4.50	4.84	4.88	
Year 3	4.46	4.20	4.45		
Year 4	4.46	4.63			
Year 5	4.15				

## Engagement Scales

**Table A11. Planning Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	1.53	2.26	2.21	2.31	2.97
Year 2	2.27	2.66	2.73	2.70	
Year 3	2.48	2.43	2.57		
Year 4	2.53	2.92			
Year 5	2.49				

**Table A12. Choice Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	2.82	2.68	2.82	2.96	3.37
Year 2	2.98	2.87	3.71	3.25	
Year 3	3.13	3.15	3.67		
Year 4	3.39	3.50			
Year 5	3.52				

**Table A13. Reflection Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	1.62	2.45	2.78	2.98	3.20
Year 2	2.63	2.82	3.10	3.55	
Year 3	2.95	3.26	3.00		
Year 4	3.32	3.76			
Year 5	3.30				

**Table A14. Responsibility Scale**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Year 1	3.27	3.68	3.92	4.60	4.29
Year 2	3.83	4.33	3.82	3.00	
Year 3	4.09	3.85	4.36		
Year 4	3.92	3.93			
Year 5	3.97				

## Appendix B: Program Quality Ceiling Effects

Each cohort was examined in their first year to test for variation of staff practice and ceiling effects in YPQI. Analyses were conducted to examine the percentage of sites that scored above 3.50 on any PQA practice.

**Table B1.**

Domain	Scale	Cohort 1	Cohort 3	Cohort 5
Safe Environment	Emotional Safety	99%	99%	100%
	Healthy Environment	100%		
	Emergency Preparedness	85%	97%	96%
	Accommodating Environment	99%	100%	100%
	Nourishment	93%	97%	92%
Supportive Environment	Warm Welcome	99%	97%	96%
	Session Flow	99%	99%	100%
	Active Engagement	69%	79%	85%
	Skill-Building	69%	73%	69%
	Encouragement	69%	88%	89%
Interaction	Belonging	78%	85%	69%
	Collaboration	48%	45%	67%
	Leadership	23%	42%	35%
	Adult Partners	68%	85%	100%
	Interaction with Adults	95%	93%	80%
Engagement	Planning	20%	18%	27%
	Choice	37%	42%	58%
	Reflection	25%	35%	46%
	Responsibility	75%	82%	80%

### Appendix C: Site Differences in SEL Skills

The figure below illustrates the number of students at each site in the higher, medium, and lower social and emotional clusters at time one. It becomes obvious that there is a concentration of students with higher social and emotional skills at some sites, as well as the concentration of students with lower social and emotional skills in other sites.

Figure C1: Distribution of SEL Skills by Site

