DAVID P. WEIKART
CENTER FOR YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY

BLOCS
BUILDING A BETTER LIFE
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
BLOCK BY BLOCK

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

2017-2018 YPQI Findings

Why Afterschool? Why Quality?

Each day 11.3 million American children are without supervision at home or in their community[i]. Studies have shown that regular participation in high-quality afterschool programs is linked to significant gains in academic achievement and social emotional skills[ii,iv].

Gains in these areas also positively influence work habits and future employability, therefore it's no surprise that 84% of American families support public funding for afterschool programs[iii]. Both taxpayers and policymakers want safe and engaging activities for young people during out of school time, but not all programs achieve these positive effects, thus focusing our collective energy on improving program quality is critical[iv,v].

History

In an effort to improve the quality of local afterschool programs, Building Louisville's Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS) partnered with the Forum for Youth Investment's David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality to design and build a quality improvement system for afterschool programs in the Louisville region.

Drawing upon the Weikart Center's evidence-based *Youth Program Quality Intervention* (YPQI), the quality improvement system is designed to: (a) build managers' continuous quality improvement skills; (b) increase the quality of instruction available in afterschool programs; (c) increase students' engagement with program content and opportunities for skill-building[vi]; and ultimately (d) improve student outcomes related to school success.

BLOCS Quality Improvement System began with a baseline assessment of 38 sites in Fall 2014. The number of sites involved with the work has scaled up each program cycle and during the 2017-2018 program year, 77 sites participated in the YPQI.

Sites were assessed using either the Youth or School-Age Program Quality Assessment (PQA). This observation-based rubric measures the presence of instructional practices that have been shown to positively impact youth development. Sites also collected youth outcomes data using the Survey Of Academic And Youth Outcomes-Youth Survey (SAYO-Y) or the Staff Rating of Youth Behavior (SRYB). Feedback on the satisfaction and fidelity to the YPQI Process was collected using a survey. The data collected was compiled into a report and used to determine system need and readiness for more intensive quality work.

The YPQI Approach to Quality Improvement

The YPQI approach engages out-of-school time leaders, program managers, and site-level staff in a sequence of practices that have a cascade of effects on program quality.

Leaders at BLOCS made a commitment to focus on the quality of afterschool programs because they recognize the importance of not just providing a safe space, but the opportunity for additional skill-building that afterschool programs provide.

In implementing the YPQI, BLOCS leaders provided a common focus for quality at the policy level and provided supports for participating organizations, including trainings and resources. In perhaps the most important cross-level step, managers engaged site-based teams of site staff in continuous improvement practices (quality assessment, improvement planning, staff training in instructional skill-building, and performance feedback on instructional practices), leading staff to enact higher-quality instructional practices in programs with youth.
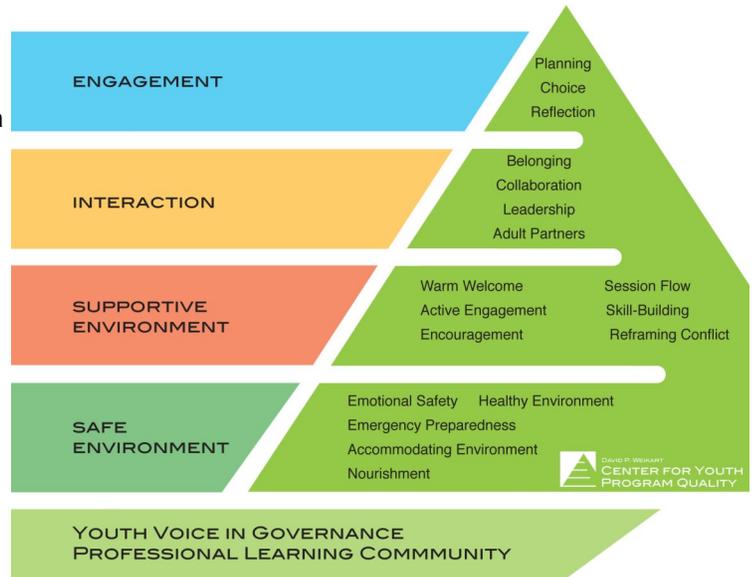
"As I learn more about the most effective ways to work with children and youth and how to best design and tailor our program to their needs and learning styles, our participants are better off as a result of this work. We are focusing on providing more opportunities for students to make choices and take leadership roles, as well as to make their voice and opinion heard by implementing more opportunities for student feedback." - BLOCS participant

About the Program Quality Assessments

BLOCS used both the **School-Age** and **Youth Program Quality Assessments.** These program quality assessment tools scored programs within the network on four domains: **Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement.**

Scale items within the domains are scored as a 1, 3, or 5: a score of 1 indicates the practice was not present, a score of 3 indicates there was limited presence of the practice, and a score of 5 indicates full presence of the practice.

Through the PQA domain scores we also calculate the **Instructional Total Score** (ITS) which measures the extent to which high quality instructional practices are delivered. It is composed of ratings of youth worker practice in three domains: A structured environment facilitated through guidance and encouragement (Supportive Environment), opportunities for leadership and collaboration (Interaction), and the capacity to promote planning and reflection (Engagement).

ENGAGEMENT
- Planning
- Choice
- Reflection

INTERACTION
- Belonging
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Adult Partners

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT
- Warm Welcome
- Active Engagement
- Encouragement
- Session Flow
- Skill-Building
- Reframing Conflict

SAFE ENVIRONMENT
- Emotional Safety
- Healthy Environment
- Emergency Preparedness
- Accommodating Environment
- Nourishment

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YOUTH VOICE IN GOVERNANCE
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Program Quality Assessment Scores 2014 – 2018

BLOCS followed the common trend amongst quality improvement systems with the highest domain scores on Safe Environment and Supportive Environment and lower scores moving up the pyramid on Interaction and Engagement.

The School-Age ITS is **3.78** and the Youth ITS is **3.61**.

The pilot year scores from Fall 2014 and last years aggregated external PQA scores are included on the School-Age PQA graph to the right and the Youth PQA graph below.

The Safe Environment domain scores have remained stable and their appears to be fluctuation but overall growth in the Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement domains on both tools.

School-Age PQA Domain Scores 2014-2018

Legend: 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018

Domains: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, Engagement
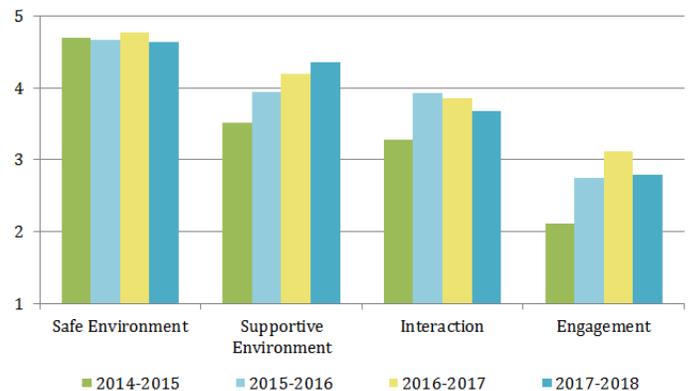
Source: External School-Age PQA 2014-2015 (n = 14), 2015-2016 (n = 37), 2016-2017 (n = 50), 2017-2018 (n = 49)

Youth PQA Domain Scores 2014-2018

Legend: 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018

Domains: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, Engagement
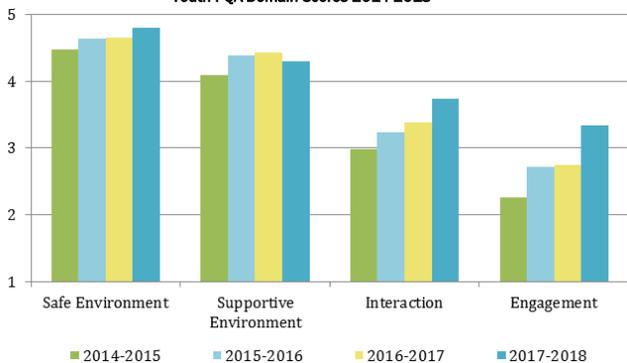
Source: External Youth PQA 2014-2015 (n = 24), 2015-2016 (n = 26), 2016-2017 (n = 27), 2017-2018 (n = 28)

"As we seek to scale our program the assessment tool is great for training and for ensuring consistency in all classroom implementations." - BLOCS participant

"I think the single most important thing that I learned was the essential nature of reflection for the youth and for our staff. Prior to these trainings, we would conduct pre and post surveys with youth, but these tools helped us learn to infuse reflection throughout our activities. This was impactful for us and the youth we serve."
- BLOCS participant

Fidelity to the Process
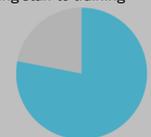
100% of sites submitted a Program Self Assessment

99% of sites submitted a Program Improvement Plan
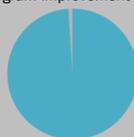
93% of staff reported being coached and **82%** of managers reported coaching staff using the PQA

80% of staff reported being sent to training and **78%** of managers reported sending staff to training

YPQI Implementation and Satisfaction

BLOCS demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the YPQI and a high level of fidelity to the YPQI Model. These results are shown on the right.
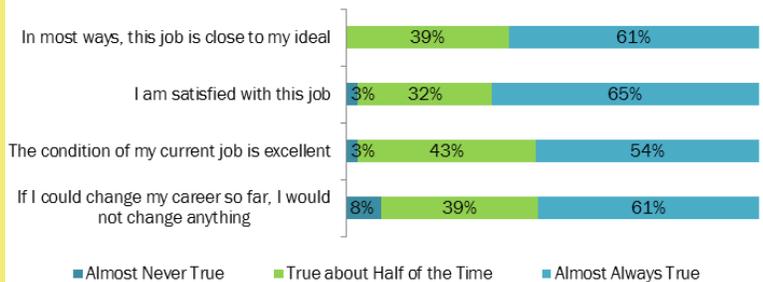
High satisfaction supports successful implementation of the specific elements of the quality improvement process, but it is also known to support staff retention[vii, viii]. Greater fidelity to the implementation of the YPQI elements has also been shown to influence site coordinators' focus on quality practice[ix].

BLOCS' decision to implement the YPQI was a critical first step in developing a wide network of quality programs able to serve children and youth with the highest degree of effectiveness. As the network grows in 2017-2018 the system will be able to establish a culture of continuous improvement and create new norms and high standards for the quality of programs for children and youth.

98% of managers and **100%** of staff thought participation in the quality improvement system was a good fit with their job.

98% of managers and **100%** of staff thought participation in the quality improvement system was a good use of their time and effort and participation in the quality improvement system was supported by their supervisor.

Job Satisfaction Scale

	Almost Never True	True about Half of the Time	Almost Always True
In most ways, this job is close to my ideal		39%	61%
I am satisfied with this job	3%	32%	65%
The condition of my current job is excellent	3%	43%	54%
If I could change my career so far, I would not change anything	8%	39%	61%

■ Almost Never True ■ True about Half of the Time ■ Almost Always True

Youth Outcomes and Lessons Learned

The above Word Cloud represents staff responses to the most important things learned or skills developed from participation in the YPQI

"The most important things I learned as a result of my participation in the quality improvement system is the value and efficacy of including youth in the process of selecting and planning enrichment activities. From selecting our semester theme to planning a community service project, we have included youth in all areas of planning for our program. Next year, we plan to have a youth advisory committee to allow upper grade students a chance to take on continued leadership and partnership within the program. Also, I found the training on active engagement to be very useful in helping me to rethink the way I offer students praise versus encouragement." -BLOCS participant

Program Quality to Youth Outcomes

Two youth outcomes measures were used: Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes Youth Survey (SAYO-Y) and Staff Rating of Youth Behavior (SRYB).
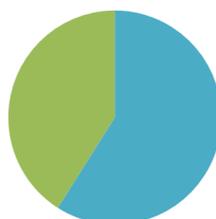
**17** sites submitted SAYO-Y   **58** sites submitted SRYB

SAYO-Y scores increased from the 2016-2017 to the 2017-2018 year on the following scales: Youth feel challenged, Sense of competency as a learner, and Youth believe program has helped social/personal skills.

SRYB scores were compared to the program quality scores. In the sites with the lowest quality scores, 41% of youth increased their SRYB scores from Time 1 to Time 2. In the sites with the highest program quality, 57% of youth increased their SRYB scores from Time 1 to Time 2.

Low Quality Cluster   High Quality Cluster
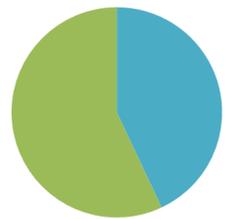
■ Did not Improve
■ Improved

Priorities for Improvement

Sites prioritized improvement goals around the results of their program self assessments. Managers and staff expressed strong agreement with regard to future professional development priorities.

Staff asked for additional training in several **instructional skills,** including: youth voice, STEM, and planning and reflection.

Staff prioritized the following areas of **youth skill development:** teamwork, initiative and responsibility, communication, problem solving, empathy, and emotion management.

Site managers agreed the YPQI process provided valuable information that could be used for **administrative skills development**. The top three areas identified were: connections to parents and families, coaching staff on instructional quality, and connections to school.

Looking Forward

The success from the past three years of BLOCS quality improvement intervention has emphasized scaling up within the network. In 2015-2016, 29 new sites were added into the YPQI and in the 2016-2017 program year, 22 new sites joined.

For the 2018-2019 program year, BLOCS will continue their Youth Program Quality Intervention work and expand to approximately 105 sites with an estimated 28 new sites. Key areas of focus include:

Continuing to strengthen the professional learning community of participating sites through community wide goal setting, continuing to offer Quality Coaching Workshops for participating managers, and continuing to offer Youth Work Methods Workshops.

Increasing program self-sufficiency by pushing managers to take greater ownership of the quality improvement work. This includes increasing managers capacity to collect their programs data, specifically with the SRYB, and coach their staff.

Increasing ability to look at quality programming's effect on outcomes. This includes having all sites use the Staff Rating of Youth Behavior.

BLOCS is dedicated to improving the lives of children and their communities through the active engagement of volunteers, supportive partners, and the establishment of strong programs where young people can come and develop the skills to do the same. In focusing on quality improvement across program sites, BLOCS is helping assure continued community development in the Louisville region.

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