



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

2019-2020 Youth Program Quality Intervention Evaluation Report

November 2020



Building Louisville's Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS) 2019-2020 Youth Program Quality Intervention Evaluation Report

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This report provides a comprehensive overview of the previous detailed Network and site-level data summaries provided to the BLOCS team during the 2019-2020 program year:

2018-2020 Quality to Outcomes Site and Network Reports, delivered May 2020

2019-2020 SAPQA and YPQA Network and Site Reports available in Scores Reporter

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Communications Brief

Since 2014, the Building Louisville’s Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS) and David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality have partnered to implement the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI), an evidence-based approach to continuous quality improvement, in support of BLOCS’ program model that states that high-quality out-of-school time (OST) programs 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. The 2020 program year was thoughtfully designed to provide essential staff trainings and data collection activities committed to increasing quality staff practices in support of social and emotional gains for participating youth. In March 2020, the majority of in-school and afterschool programs closed unexpectedly in response to the rising COVID-19 pandemic disrupting progress made and end-of-year activities designed to close-out the year.

With data collection interrupted, this year’s evaluation focused on the relationship between program quality and youth’s SEL outcomes over the past three years, with an emphasis on identifying patterns at the scale level. Using a series of descriptive analyses and statistical models, this report examined change in program quality during the 2018-2020 program years and the importance of high-quality instructional practices as a necessary predictor for social emotional skill development among BLOCS programs and participants.

2018-2020 Data Available for Longitudinal Impact Analysis

Data Source		2018		2019		2020	
		Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020
School-Age Program Quality Assessment	<i>Sites</i>	49	49	56	52	60	14
Youth Program Quality Assessment	<i>Sites</i>	27	28	47	46	54	13
Staff Rating of Youth Behavior	<i>Sites</i>	59	57	88	87	97	42
	<i>Youth</i>	1,092	912	1,757	1,373	3,281	1,490

Conclusions and Recommendations

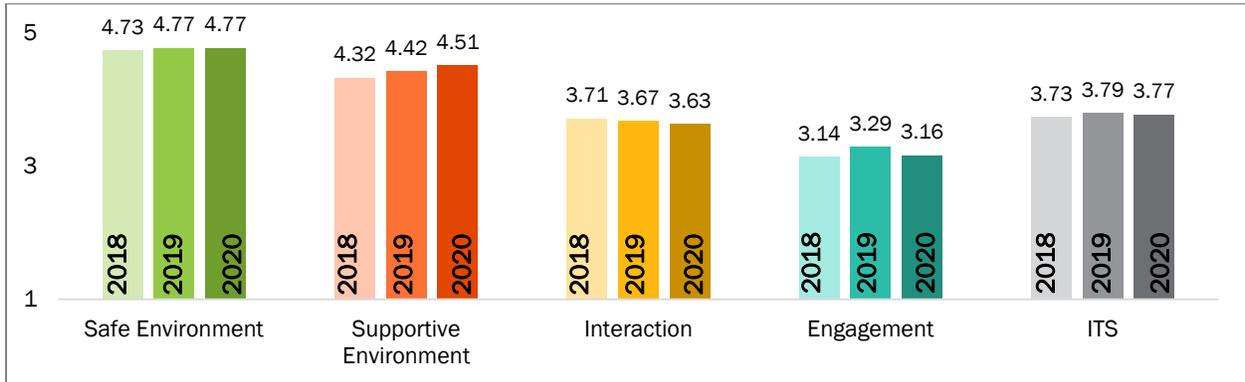
The following conclusions and recommendations not only highlight the significant advancements in program quality and social and emotional skills that have been made over the past three years, but also attribute this progress to the ongoing investments and capacity building efforts provided by the BLOCS team.

- ❖ Program Quality scores remained consistent, with Safe and Supportive Environment staff practices observed more frequently than Interaction and Engagement practices. In comparison

to previous years, programs in 2020 almost doubled the amount of growth observed in Interaction and Engagement practices from fall to spring.

Recommendation: Additional staff training and coaching resources to support Leadership and Planning practices would be beneficial.

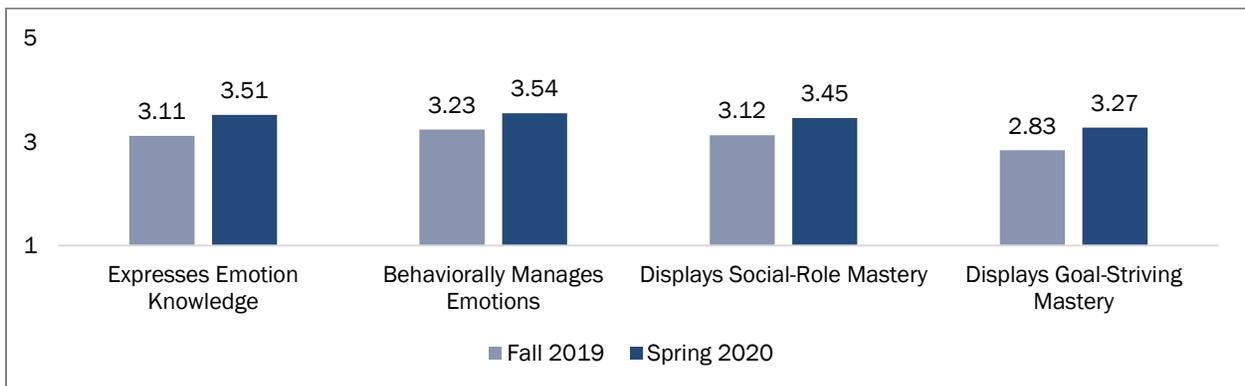
2018-2020 External PQA Domain Means



❖ All Social and Emotional skills significantly improved during the 2020 program year at both the individual youth and program level. Multi-year analyses showed that these positive results were also found during previous years, and that the growth in SEL skills has gotten stronger each year.

Recommendation: As the SEL Methods continue to be introduced to the BLOCS network, consider prioritizing the Emotion suite, especially Emotion Coaching, to provide additional support for youth’s emotion management and emotion knowledge skills.

2019-2020 SRYB Program Means (n=49 matched programs)



Note: Expresses Emotion Knowledge: $t(48) = 5.731, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .63$; Behaviorally Manages Emotions: $t(48) = 4.275, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .58$; Displays Social-Role Mastery: $t(48) = 4.501, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .55$; Displays Goal-Striving Mastery: $t(47) = 4.955, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .70$

Note: Cohen’s d values were employed to measure the relative size of each significant effect and can be interpreted in the following way: small effect = .20, medium effect = .50, and large effect = .80.

Spring 2019-Fall 2019-Spring 2020 Change in SRYB Program Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (η^2_p)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	$n = 40$	3.29	3.13	3.56	$F(2,78) = 5.791, p = .005$	.129
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	$n = 40$	3.24	3.21	3.46	$F(2,78) = 4.380, p = .016$	.101
Displays Social-Role Mastery	$n = 40$	3.11	3.12	3.45	$F(2,78) = 7.580, p = .001$	.163
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	$n = 39$	2.99	2.80	3.24	$F(2,76) = 8.943, p < .001$	.191

Note: Partial eta-squared (η^2_p) values were employed to measure the relative size of each effect and can be interpreted in the following way: .01 = small effect, .06 = medium effect, and .14 = large effect.

- ❖ Quality practices within the Supportive Environment domain significantly predicted growth in program-level SEL skills from fall 2019 to spring 2020, with large effects observed for Behaviorally Manages Emotions and Displays Goal-Striving Mastery.

Recommendation: With BLOCS’ focus on SEL skill development for participating youth, these findings suggest staff practices within the Supportive Environment deserve the most reinforcement. Consider spending additional time on these practices during onboarding, and address challenges with Supportive Environment scales quickly to help programs stay on track with their SEL goals.

Predicting Change in Program-Level SEL Skills over 2019-2020

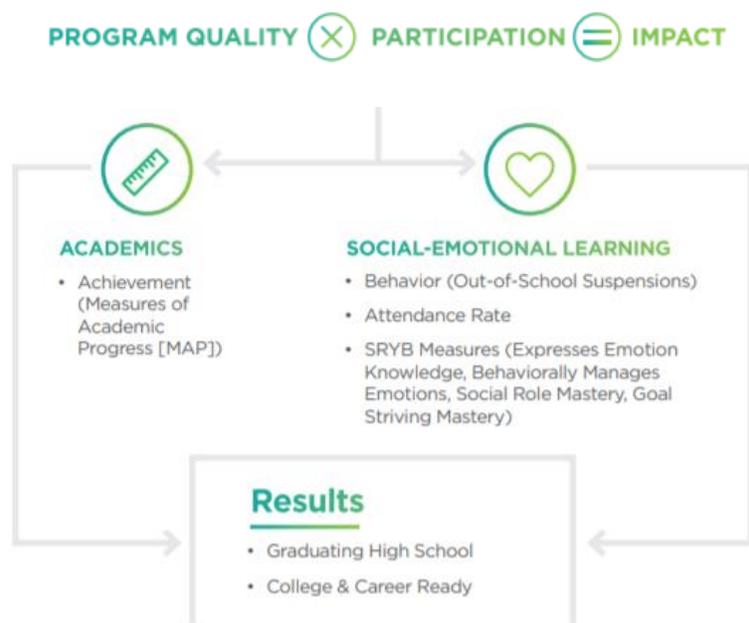
SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Safe Env	Supportive Env	Interaction	Engagement
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	$n = 49$	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	$n = 48$	<i>ns</i>	$F(1,44) = 7.785, p = .008$ $\eta^2_p = .150$	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Displays Social-Role Mastery	$n = 49$	<i>ns</i>	$F(1,44) = 4.788, p = .034$ $\eta^2_p = .098$	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	$n = 48$	<i>ns</i>	$F(1,43) = 7.715, p = .008$ $\eta^2_p = .152$	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Note: “ns” = non-significant findings from statistical significant tests

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.¹ 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.²

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



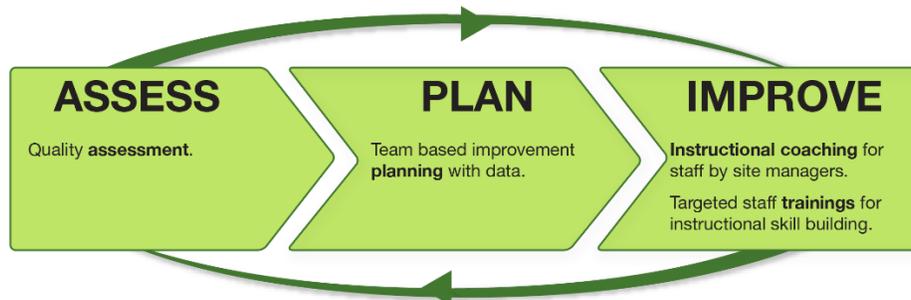
Central to this model is a commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement. Since 2014, BLOCS has partnered with the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (CYPQ) to establish and implement the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) a data-driven continuous improvement process centered on 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

¹ <https://www.louisvilleblocs.org/>

² 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 that support quality practices. Finally, managers and other identified coaches provide technical assistance and ongoing support to program staff.³ With Weikart support to guide system-level decisions, the YPQI (see Figure 2) is designed to embed a culture of continuous assessment, planning, and improvement within the network.

Figure 2. Youth Program Quality Intervention



As shown in Table 1, this year began with a BLOCS-hosted project kick-off in August 2019 to establish expectations and timelines for the year for the 113 participating sites. In September, all staff completed a PQA Basics training, with new staff participating in a live training and veterans completing an online self-paced course. At the same time, up to 25 staff were invited to complete PQA External Assessor Reliability training (EART), both online or in-person depending on previous experience. From September – November 2019, sites completed both self and external program quality assessments to collect objective data about staff-youth interactions within programs at each site using the Youth and School-Age PQA’s. Sites were then able to review their program strengths and growth opportunities in an online Planning with Data workshop and subsequently submit Program Improvement Plans detailing goals, timelines, necessary resources, and staffing supports to achieve desired improvements.

To support these goals, managers and staff had access to ongoing training opportunities throughout the year to improve targeted instructional skills. To deepen BLOCS’ commitment to social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes, one internal coach completed the SEL Methods Training of Facilitators in July 2019 and then facilitated a local SEL Methods Workshop Summit in October 2019

³ 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.

to enhance the SEL skills of site staff. Additional Youth Work Methods summits were offered throughout the year to support identified program improvements. Supplemented by ongoing technical assistance and coaching supports, including SEL Quality Instructional Coaching, these opportunities were made available to all participating programs to reinforce continuous improvement practices.

To wrap-up the year, sites were expected to complete one more external program quality assessment in March 2020. Complemented by fall and spring reports of youth’s SEL skills using the Staff Rating of Youth Behavior (SRYB), this data collection was scheduled to assess the impact of high-quality BLOCS programming on youth participants. Unfortunately, on March 13, 2020 the majority of in-school and afterschool programs throughout the United States closed unexpectedly in response to the rising COVID-19 pandemic. This abrupt program change disrupted both data collection and training efforts for the year.

Table 1. 2020 Project Timeline

Activity	Timeline	Performance Measures
SEL Methods Training of Facilitators	July 21-25, 2019	
Afterschool Programming	August 2019 – May 2020	
Kickoff Workshop	August 2019	
Program Quality Assessments	Time 1: September – November 2019 Time 2: March 2020	Self (fall only) and External YPQA and SAPQA
Staff Training: PQA Basics EART Planning with Data Youth Work Methods SEL Methods Quality Coaching	September 2019 – May 2020	Performance Improvement Plans
Youth Outcomes	Time1: Fall Time 2: Spring	SRYB

Evaluation Design

To assess the impact of BLOCS YPQI engagement, the partnership with the Weikart Center also included a longitudinal impact evaluation to assess improvements in program quality and youth’s social emotional skills. Given the disruption to data collection efforts during the 2020 program year, this evaluation design expanded to examine the relationship between program quality and youth’s SEL outcomes over the past three years, with an emphasis on identifying patterns at the scale level. Building on previous evaluation reports, the primary purpose of this report is to examine change in program quality during the 2018-2020 program years and the importance of high quality

instructional practices as a necessary predictor for social emotional skill development among BLOCS programs and participants.

The key questions guiding this evaluation were:

1. What did program quality look like across BLOCS Programs during the 2020 program year?
2. What social and emotional skills did BLOCS youth demonstrate during the 2020 program year?
3. To what extent does program quality influence the development of social and emotional skills among participating youth?

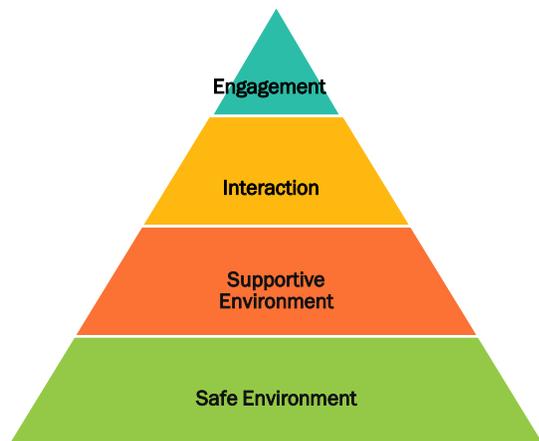
Each year, the evaluation approach has included steps to guide data collection efforts across sites, but also support staff in their efforts to interpret the findings and apply these learnings to continuous improvement decisions. For the 2020 program year, the BLOCS team invested in additional capacity-building supports to transition SYRB data collection in-house. By having direct and consistent access to SRYB data, the BLOCS team was able to provide greater site-level supports for data collection and guide SEL-focused program decisions. To support these conversations, site-level data summaries were delivered in May 2020 to guide planning efforts for the upcoming year. Coupled with this comprehensive evaluation report, BLOCS actively used multiple data sources throughout the year to identify key successes and priorities for continuous improvement in support of positive outcomes for the young people in Louisville.

Performance Measures

Multiple data sources were collected each year from participating sites to evaluate the impact of BLOCS programs. Starting with the 2018 program year, sites submitted Program Quality Assessment (PQA) data, Program Improvement Plans (PIP), and youth Social and Emotional outcomes using the Staff Rating of Youth Behavior (SRYB). The following performance measures were used to address the key evaluation questions:

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 – 6th grades.
- The **Youth PQA** is composed of 63 items comprising 18 scales. The Youth PQA is appropriate for observing programs that serve youth in 4th – 12th grades.

PQA self-assessments were conducted each fall, and external assessments were conducted in the fall and spring. To collect self-assessment data, each site identified and trained an internal team to observe staff practices using the PQA. The team then held a scoring meeting to discuss their notes and reach consensus on the score for each item. BLOCS hired trained reliable assessors, endorsed by achieving 80% agreement with the Weikart Center’s master scores on the PQA, to collect external assessment data. Scores were entered into Scores Reporter, a Weikart Center online data collection platform, where data reports could be retrieved as needed. Given the primary focus and setting of BLOCS programs, assessors were instructed not to score the Child-Centered Space scale of the SAPQA. That scale is therefore not included in the Supportive Environment Domain score or ITS score throughout this report.

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).

Staff Rating of Youth Behavior

Beginning with the 2018 program year, BLOCS sites were able to assess youth’s social and emotional skills using the Staff Rating of Youth Behavior (SRYB). This tool consists of 14 items that staff use to assess youth social and emotional behaviors across 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.

Evaluation Sample

During the 2020 program year 252 program quality assessments were received from the 113 participating sites, including 59 SAPQA and 52 YPQA self-assessments conducted in the fall, and 74 SAPQA and 67 YPQA external assessments completed in the fall and spring (See Table 3). In total, all but one participating site completed a program quality assessment, with 5 sites choosing to submit both a SAPQA and YPQA. Additionally, staff submitted 3,281 individual SRYB assessments in the fall representing 97 sites (86% response rate) and 1,490 assessments in the spring representing 42 sites (37% response rate). While programs closed in March 2020 due to COVID-19 and interrupted spring assessments, it is impressive to note that more than one-quarter of sites were able to collect both external PQA and SRYB data, allowing for change over time comparisons.

To address the key questions of our adjusted evaluation plan, the following analyses focus specifically on external assessments collected over the past three years, since the adoption of the SRYB assessment, to examine the longitudinal impacts of program quality on youth’s social and emotional outcomes. Given that trained and reliable-certified assessors are required for external assessment, these scores provide the most valid data point to examine impact. Preliminary analyses for 2020 PQA data, as well as analyses conducted in previous years show minimal and non-significant differences between SAPQA and YPQA scores (see 2014-2019 BLOCS Evaluation Report). For the purposes of simplicity, external SAPQA and YPQA scores were combined for all analyses conducted in this report. A full summary of the available data for this report is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. 2018-2020 Data Available for Longitudinal Impact Analysis

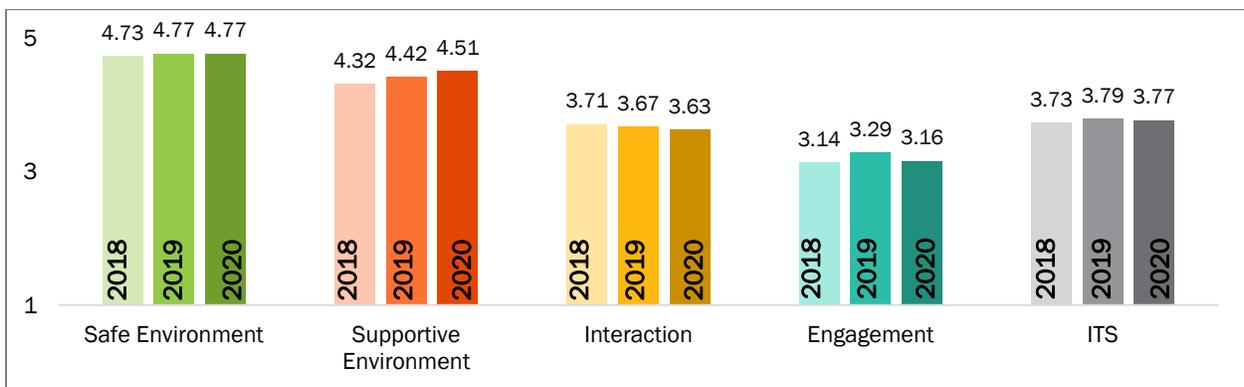
Data Source		2018		2019		2020	
		Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020
School-Age Program Quality Assessment	<i>Sites</i>	49	49	56	52	60	14
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Staff Rating of Youth Behavior	<i>Sites</i>	59	57	88	87	97	42
	<i>Youth</i>	1,092	912	1,757	1,373	3,281	1,490

Results

Program Quality Improvements

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 attendance⁴, as well as positive academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes.⁵

Chart 1. 2018-2020 External PQA Domain Means



Looking at the past three years of external assessments, the data show that 2020 program quality scores remained consistent in comparison to previous years, with no statistically significant changes observed over time. **Safe and Supportive Environment quality staff practices continued to be more frequently observed than quality staff practices that promote Interaction and Engagement within programs** (See Chart 1). When examining changes within the year, **the data show consistent growth between fall and spring over the past three years** (See Chart 2). Given the high scores at the beginning of each year and possible ceiling effects for Safe and Supportive Environment practices, those domain scores repeatedly started strong and remained high throughout each program year. In contrast, quality staff practices within the Interaction and Engagement domains increased from fall to spring each year. Most notably, **while previous years experienced an average of 4% growth in Interaction and a 9% growth in Engagement, the 2020 year almost doubled these rates of change with Interaction scores increasing by 9% and Engagement scores increasing by 16% from fall to**

⁴ Smith, C., & Hohmann, C. (2005). *Full findings from the youth program quality assessment validation study*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

⁵ 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.

spring. While some caution is needed in interpreting these results given the smaller sample of spring assessments collected in 2020, these optimistic findings speak to the continued investments that BLOCS has made in staff training and coaching throughout year to build high-quality youth programs throughout Louisville.

Chart 2. 2018-2020 Fall to Spring Change in External PQA Domains



Examining scale scores does identify more specific staff practices that would benefit from additional training and support (see Charts 3-6). While needed improvements for Reframing Conflict and Managing Feelings were achieved this past year, staff practices around **Leadership and Planning**

continue to stand out as a topic that would benefit from additional training and coaching opportunities.

Chart 3. 2018-2020 External Safe Environment Scale Scores

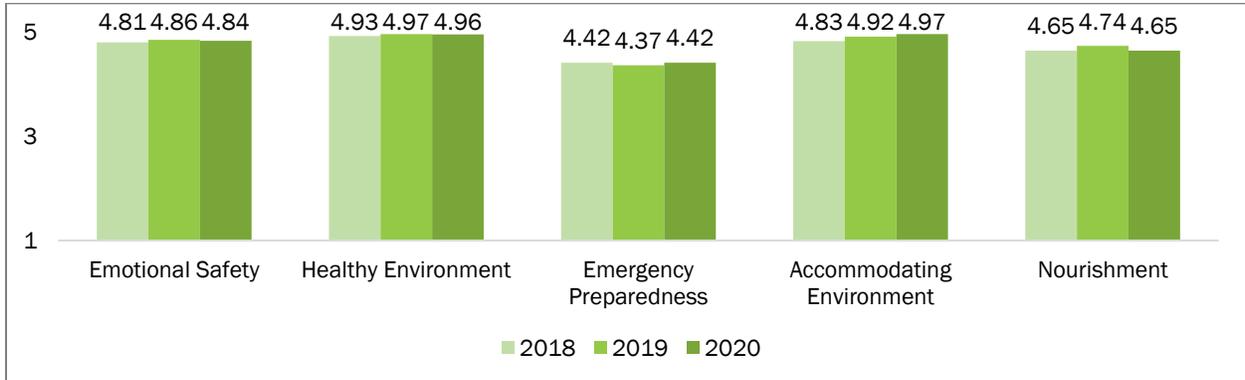
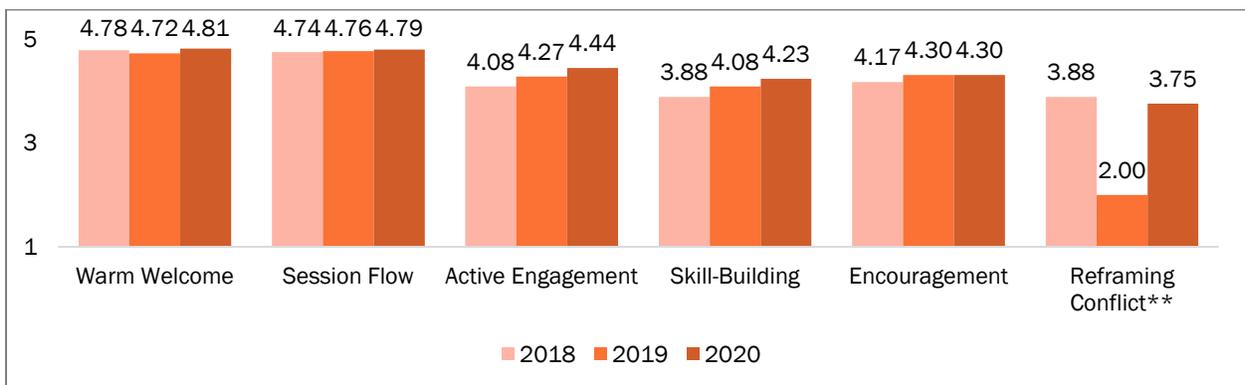
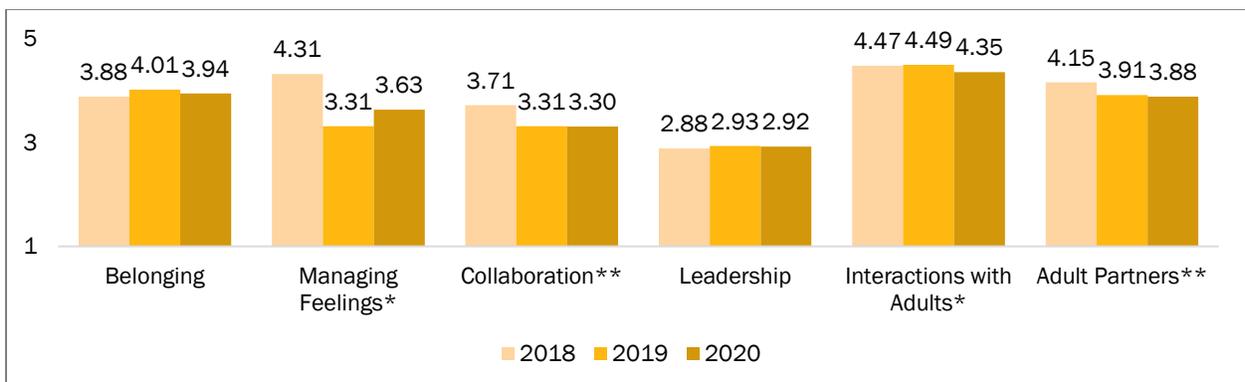


Chart 4. 2018-2020 External Supportive Environment Scale Scores



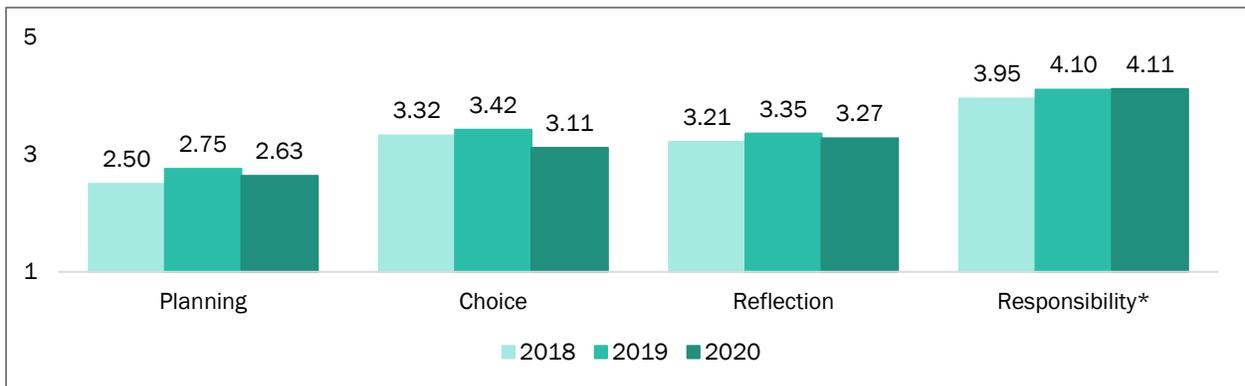
Note: **YPQA only scales

Chart 5. 2018-2020 External Interaction Scale Scores



Note: *SAPQA only scales; **YPQA only scales

Chart 6. 2018-2020 External Engagement Scale Scores

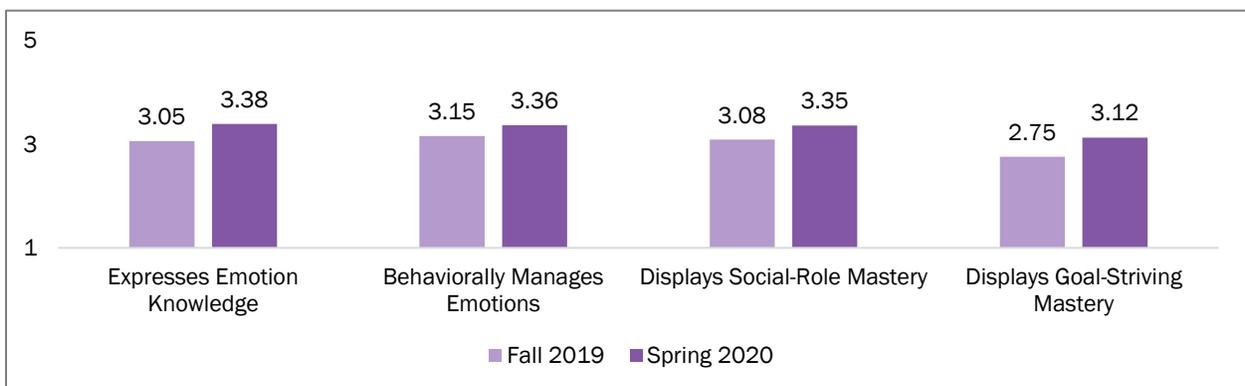


Note: *SAPQA only scales

Growth in Youth's Social and Emotional Skills

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.⁶ Parallel to the priority of continuous quality improvement, BLOCS increased their focus on social and emotional learning during the 2020 program year, offering staff additional SEL focused trainings, coaching and program supports.

Chart 7. 2019-2020 SRYB Youth Means (n=1,488 matched youth)

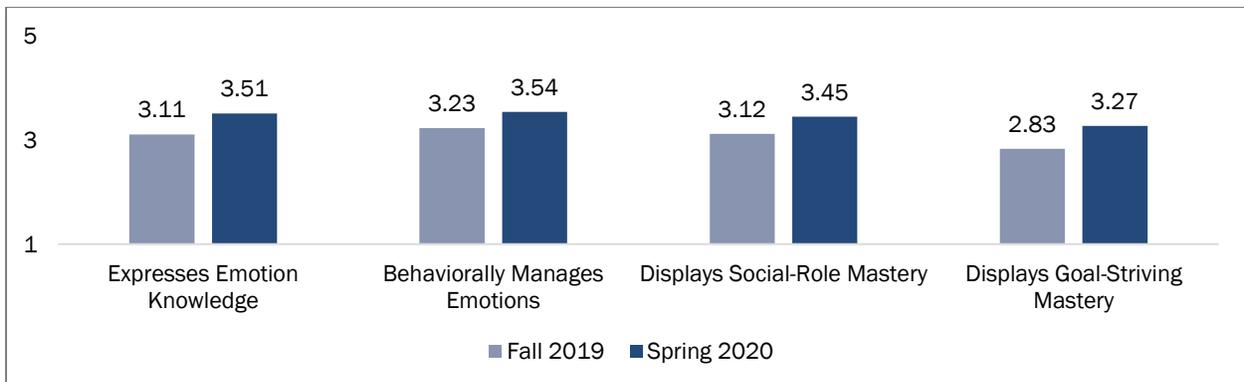


Focusing the analysis on youth with SRYB data at both time points, the results show that youth demonstrated growth in SEL skills from fall to spring during the 2020 program year (see Chart

⁶ 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.

7). Paired sample *t*-tests were conducted to examine the strength of these changes and **the improvements observed in youth’s SEL skills across all SRYB scales were found to be statistically significant.**⁷ There was a small-to-medium effect observed for each scale, with the greatest improvements achieved for Goal-Striving Mastery and Expresses Emotion Knowledge.⁸ Looking at all available SRYB data, youth showed the greatest gains in *Monitors progress towards goals, Creates plans with few steps or guidelines, and Descriptive vocabulary for emotions* (see 2018-2020 Quality to Outcomes Site and Network Reports delivered in May 2020). Aligned with scale scores, youth showed the smallest growth in behaviors aligned to managing emotions. Examined alongside 2020 PQA scores, these findings reinforce the need to provide additional training and supports to staff around Reframing Conflict and perhaps Emotion Coaching. When staff are intentional to process challenging program experiences with young people, they not only enhance aspects of safety and supportive relationships, but also model for youth ways to recognize, understand and articulate different emotions that help them strengthen emotion management skills.⁹

Chart 8. 2019-2020 SRYB Program Means (n=49 matched programs)



Building on the positive findings that individual youth demonstrated significant growth in SEL skills throughout the year, a follow-up analysis was conducted to examine aggregate program-level improvement in SRYB scores. Since PQA scores provide an estimate of program quality at the program level, it was necessary to examine SRYB scale scores at the program level as well in preparation to analyze the relationship between program quality and change in SEL skills. Again,

⁷ Expresses Emotion Knowledge: $t(1487) = 14.838, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .32$

Behaviorally Manages Emotions: $t(1485) = 8.391, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .20$

Displays Social-Role Mastery: $t(1485) = 11.156, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .27$

Displays Goal-Striving Mastery: $t(1489) = 16.115, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .38$

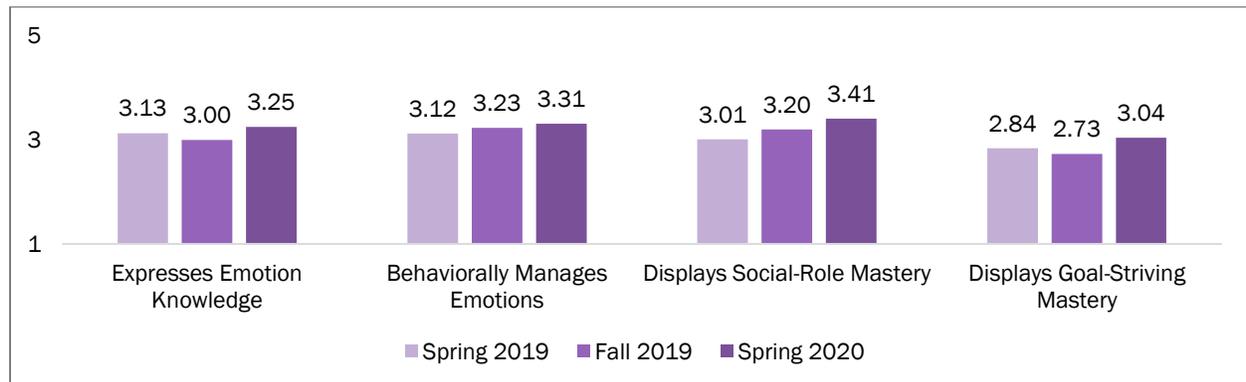
⁸ Cohen's *d* values were employed to measure the relative size of each significant effect and can be interpreted in the following way: small effect = .20, medium effect = .50, and large effect = .80.

⁹ Rusk, N., Larson, R. W., Raffaelli, M., Walker, K., Washington, L., Gutierrez, V., ... & Perry, S. C. (2013). Positive youth development in organized programs: How teens learn to manage emotions. In *Research, applications, and interventions for children and adolescents* (pp. 247-261). Springer, Dordrecht.

paired sample *t*-tests were used to explore changes in average SRYB scale scores from fall to spring. SRYB scores were first aggregated up to the program level and then the average of youth ratings was calculated for each program in the BLOCS Network. From fall 2019 to spring 2020, the average program score for each SRYB scale improved significantly over time, resulting in a medium-to-large effect size (see Chart 8).¹⁰ Together, **these analyses confirm that youth participating in BLOCS programs demonstrated significant growth in SEL skills over the course of the 2020 program year.**

Using the longitudinal SRYB dataset, additional analyses were conducted to examine trends in SEL skill development for participating youth over multiple years. These next analyses focused on changes across the three previous terms; Spring 2019, Fall 2019 and Spring 2020. A Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to explore changes in average SRYB scale scores for the same youth with multiple paired data points over time.

Chart 9. Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020 Youth SRYB Averages (n=445 youth)



The results again show that **youth participating in BLOCS programs demonstrate significant growth in all four SEL skill areas over multiple years of program attendance**, with medium-to-large effect sizes observed for each scale, especially Displays Social-Role Mastery and Expresses Emotion Knowledge.^{11,12} Scale averages indicate that there were linear improvements in most skills across these timepoints, however with some scales (Expresses Emotion Knowledge and Displays Goal-

¹⁰ Expresses Emotion Knowledge: $t(48) = 5.731, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .63$

Behaviorally Manages Emotions: $t(48) = 4.275, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .58$

Displays Social-Role Mastery: $t(48) = 4.501, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .55$

Displays Goal-Striving Mastery: $t(47) = 4.955, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = .70$

¹¹ Expresses Emotion Knowledge: $F(2,184) = 10.317, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .101$

Behaviorally Manages Emotions: $F(2,198) = 17.713, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .152$

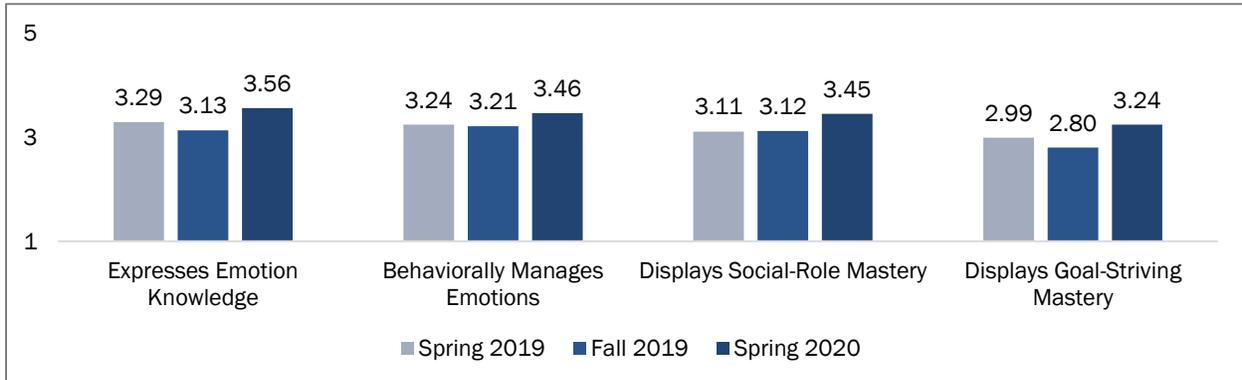
Displays Social-Role Mastery: $F(2,198) = 28.379, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .211$

Displays Goal-Striving Mastery: $F(2,184) = 10.589, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .103$

¹² Partial eta-squared (η^2_p) values were employed to measure the relative size of each effect and can be interpreted in the following way: .01 = small effect, .06 = medium effect, and .14 = large effect.

Striving Mastery) there were declines in the average scores from Spring 2019 to Fall 2019, and then improvements during the following term (see Chart 9).

Chart 10. Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020 Program SRYB Averages (n=40)



Repeated Measures ANOVA's were also conducted using the aggregated program-level SYRB dataset to explore average program improvements in SEL skills. Similar to the individual level findings, **programs demonstrated significant growth in SEL scale scores over multiple years, with medium-to-large effect sizes shown for all scales**, especially Displays Goal-Striving Mastery and Displays Social-Role Mastery (see Chart 10).¹³ At the program-level, only the Displays Social-Role Mastery scale showed linear improvement across all three time points, with the three other scales demonstrating an initial decline from Spring 2019 to Fall 2019, before increasing in Spring 2020. There are many possible explanations for this persistent effect, it is worth acknowledging that assessment scores often drop during the first few data collection cycles as both staff and youth become more familiar with SEL behaviors.

To explore this phenomenon in more depth, additional analyses were conducted to examine whether there were significant changes in SRYB during the 2018 and 2019 program years. Both within year and across year effects were explored and the results remained consistent. Since the introduction of SRYB during the 2018 program year, youth participants and programs have reported significant increases in SEL skills both within one program year and across years. Most interestingly, **these improvements appear to get stronger each year**, with initially only one or two scales showing significant improvements over time to now all scales showing significant improvement within the same program year, three years later (see Appendices A and B).

¹³ Expresses Emotion Knowledge: $F(2,78) = 5.791, p = .005, \eta^2_p = .129$
 Behaviorally Manages Emotions: $F(2,78) = 4.380, p = .016, \eta^2_p = .101$
 Displays Social-Role Mastery: $F(2,78) = 7.580, p = .001, \eta^2_p = .163$
 Displays Goal-Striving Mastery: $F(2,76) = 8.943, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .191$

Quality to Outcomes

To analyze the relationship between program-level staff practices, as measured by the School-Age and Youth PQAs, and program-level change in SEL skills, as measured by SRYB, four separate Repeated Measures Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) models were run. These analyses were selected because they allow for changes over time to be examined when influenced by other predictive variables. Each SRYB scale was run separately, and the role of Fall 2019 external PQA scores was used to predict change in site-level SRYB means from Fall 2019 to Spring 2020.

The results of this analysis concluded that **the Supportive Environment PQA domain significantly predicted improvements in program-level SEL means from Fall 2019 to Spring 2020**. More specifically, mean scores for the Supportive Environment domain were statistically significant predictors of change in three of the four SRYB scales; Behaviorally Manages Emotions, Displays Social Role Mastery, and Displays Goal Striving Mastery (see Table 4). Other PQA domains did not demonstrate statistically significant predictive relationships with SRYB scale means over time.

Table 4. Predicting Change in Program-Level SEL Skills over 2019-2020

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Safe Env	Supportive Env	Interaction	Engagement
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	<i>n</i> = 49	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	<i>n</i> = 48	<i>ns</i>	$F(1,44) = 7.785, p = .008$ $\eta^2_p = .150$	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Displays Social-Role Mastery	<i>n</i> = 49	<i>ns</i>	$F(1,44) = 4.788, p = .034$ $\eta^2_p = .098$	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	<i>n</i> = 48	<i>ns</i>	$F(1,43) = 7.715, p = .008$ $\eta^2_p = .152$	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Note: “ns”=non-significant findings from statistical significance tests.

Supportive Environment practices center on intentional decisions that staff make to create a positive and welcoming space (Warm Welcome, Session Flow, Reframing Conflict, Child-Centered Space) and to promote content understanding and learning (Active Engagement, Skill Building and Encouragement). These practices speak to the mentor-mentee type of relationships that have repeatedly been found to promote positive youth development, especially for young people growing up in communities challenged by multiple economic and social risks.¹⁴ These supportive relationships motivate young people to set and achieve higher learning goals, both in the short- and long-term, and also advance positive social and emotional skill development that will support youth’s

¹⁴ DuBois, D. L., Holloway, B. E., Valentine, J. C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American journal of community psychology*, 30(2), 157-197.

success within the program and in other aspects of their life.¹⁵ Given the strong connection between positive adult-youth interactions that create an emotionally-safe space rich with opportunities for young people to explore and understand social, emotional and cognitive learning experiences, it makes sense that staff practices within the Supportive Environment domain would contribute the most to youth's social and emotional skill development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Beginning with well-planned intentions for another successful year, BLOCS launched the program year with staff trainings and data collection activities committed to increasing quality staff practices in support of social and emotional gains for participating youth. In March 2020, the majority of in-school and afterschool programs closed unexpectedly in response to the rising COVID-19 pandemic disrupting the progress made and end-of-year activities designed to close-out the year. Adjusting to those unexpected challenges, the evaluation design shifted to examine the relationship between program quality and youth's SEL outcomes over the past three years, with an emphasis on identifying patterns at the scale level. The primary purpose of this report is to examine change in program quality during the 2018-2020 program years and the importance of high-quality instructional practices as a necessary predictor for social emotional skill development among BLOCS programs and participants. The following conclusions and recommendations not only highlight the significant advancements in program quality and social and emotional skills that have been made over the past three years, but also attribute this progress to the ongoing investments and capacity building efforts provided by the BLOCS team.

- ❖ Program Quality scores remained consistent, with Safe and Supportive Environment staff practices observed more frequently than Interaction and Engagement practices. In comparison to previous years, programs in 2020 almost doubled the amount of growth observed in Interaction and Engagement practices from fall to spring.
Recommendation: Additional staff training and coaching resources to support Leadership and Planning practices would be beneficial.

- ❖ All Social and Emotional skills significantly improved during the 2020 program year at both the individual youth and program level. Multi-year analyses showed that these positive results were also found during previous years, and that the growth in SEL skills has gotten stronger each year.

¹⁵ Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child development*, 82(1), 405-432.

Recommendation: As the SEL Methods continue to be introduced to the BLOCS network, consider prioritizing the Emotion suite, especially Emotion Coaching, to provide additional support for youth’s emotion management and emotion knowledge skills.

- ❖ Quality practices within the Supportive Environment domain significantly predicted growth in program-level SEL skills from fall 2019 to spring 2020, with large effects observed for Behaviorally Manages Emotions and Displays Goal-Striving Mastery.

Recommendation: With BLOCS’ focus on SEL skill development for participating youth, these findings suggest staff practices within the Supportive Environment deserve the most reinforcement. Consider spending additional time on these practices during onboarding, and address challenges with Supportive Environment scales quickly to help programs stay on track with their SEL goals.

Appendix A. Significance Tests of Individual-Level SYRB Change 2018-2020

Change Across Two Time Points

Table 4. Fall 2017-Fall 2018 Change in SRYB Youth Means (n = 237 matched youth)

SRYB Scale	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	2.80	3.21	$t(226) = 4.776, p < .001$	.37
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	3.02	2.90	<i>ns</i>	
Displays Social-Role Mastery	2.86	2.76	<i>ns</i>	
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	2.60	2.91	$t(226) = 3.913, p < .001$	.29

Table 5. Fall 2018-Fall 2019 Change in SRYB Youth Means (n = 1,157 matched youth)

SRYB Scale	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	2.93	2.96	<i>ns</i>	
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	2.83	3.22	$t(1156) = 8.932, p < .001$	.35
Displays Social-Role Mastery	2.64	3.16	$t(1155) = 11.626, p < .001$	.46
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	2.64	2.78	$t(1141) = 3.719, p < .001$	.14

Table 6. Fall 2019-Spring 2020 Change in SRYB Youth Means (n = 1,488 matched youth)

SRYB Scale	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Sig. Test Results	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	3.05	3.38	$t(1487) = 14.838, p < .001$	.32
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	3.15	3.36	$t(1485) = 8.391, p < .001$	.20
Displays Social-Role Mastery	3.08	3.35	$t(1485) = 11.156, p < .001$	.27
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	2.75	3.12	$t(1489) = 16.115, p < .001$	.38

Change Across Three Time Points

Table 7. Fall 2018-Spring 2019-Fall 2019 Changes in SRYB Youth Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (η^2p)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	n = 919	2.98	3.27	2.96	$F(2,1836) = 35.908, p < .001$	.038
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	n = 919	2.91	3.26	3.20	$F(2,1836) = 37.561, p < .001$	.039
Displays Social-Role Mastery	n = 917	2.73	3.10	3.17	$F(2,1832) = 62.385, p < .001$	.064
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	n = 907	2.68	2.93	2.81	$F(2,1812) = 22.525, p < .001$	.024

Table 8. Spring 2019-Fall 2019-Spring 2020 Changes in SRYB Youth Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (η^2_p)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	n = 445	3.13	3.00	3.25	$F(2,888) = 9.258$, $p < .001$	.020
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	n = 444	3.12	3.23	3.31	$F(2,886) = 4.859$, $p = .008$	.011
Displays Social-Role Mastery	n = 445	3.01	3.20	3.41	$F(2,888) = 23.787$, $p < .001$	.051
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	n = 437	2.84	2.73	3.04	$F(2,872) = 16.283$, $p < .001$	.036

Table 9. Fall 2017-Fall 2018-Fall 2019 Changes in SRYB Youth Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (η^2_p)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	n = 93	2.83	3.08	3.46	$F(2,184) = 10.317$, $p < .001$	.101
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	n = 100	3.02	2.79	3.62	$F(2,198) = 17.713$, $p < .001$	.152
Displays Social-Role Mastery	n = 100	2.88	2.61	3.64	$F(2,198) = 28.379$, $p < .001$	.211
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	n = 93	2.69	2.72	3.22	$F(2,184) = 10.589$, $p < .001$	.103

Table 10. Spring 2018-Spring 2019-Spring 2020 Changes in SRYB Youth Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Spring 2018	Spring 2019	Spring 2020	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (η^2_p)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	n = 56	3.24	3.36	3.79	$F(2,110) = 8.791$, $p < .001$	.221
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	n = 56	3.35	3.24	3.45	ns	
Displays Social-Role Mastery	n = 56	3.36	3.20	3.55	ns	
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	n = 54	3.16	3.04	3.26	ns	

Appendix B. Significance Tests of Program-Level SYRB Change 2018-2020

Change Across Two Time Points

Table 11. Fall 2017-Fall 2018 Change in SRYB Program Means (n = 55 matched sites)

SRYB Scale	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	2.94	3.16	t(54) = 2.119, p = .039	.35
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	3.01	2.97	ns	
Displays Social-Role Mastery	2.81	2.68	ns	
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	2.64	2.78	ns	

Table 12. Fall 2018-Fall 2019 Change in SRYB Program Means (n = 84 matched sites)

SRYB Scale	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	3.11	3.15	ns	
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	2.88	3.30	t(48) = 4.275, p < .001	.72
Displays Social-Role Mastery	2.67	3.18	t(48) = 4.501, p < .001	.80
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	2.78	2.88	ns	

Table 13. Fall 2019-Spring 2020 Change in SRYB Program Means (n = 49 matched sites)

SRYB Scale	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Sig.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	3.11	3.51	t(48) = 5.731, p < .001	.63
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	3.23	3.54	t(48) = 4.275, p < .001	.58
Displays Social-Role Mastery	3.12	3.45	t(48) = 4.501, p < .001	.55
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	2.83	3.27	t(47) = 4.955, p < .001	.70

Change Across Three Time Points

Table 14. Fall 2018-Spring 2019-Fall 2019 Change in SRYB Program Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (η^2_p)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	n = 82	3.09	3.40	3.12	F(2,162) = 12.217, p < .001	.131
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	n = 82	2.87	3.35	3.28	F(2,162) = 21.191, p < .001	.207
Displays Social-Role Mastery	n = 82	2.68	3.17	3.17	F(2,162) = 24.146, p < .001	.230
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	n = 82	2.78	3.04	2.86	F(2,162) = 7.841, p = .001	.088

Table 15. Spring 2019-Fall 2019-Spring 2020 Change in SRYB Program Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (η^2_p)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	$n = 40$	3.29	3.13	3.56	$F(2,78) = 5.791, p = .005$	.129
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	$n = 40$	3.24	3.21	3.46	$F(2,78) = 4.380, p = .016$	.101
Displays Social-Role Mastery	$n = 40$	3.11	3.12	3.45	$F(2,78) = 7.580, p = .001$	.163
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	$n = 39$	2.99	2.80	3.24	$F(2,76) = 8.943, p < .001$	.191

Table 16. Fall 2017-Fall 2018-Fall 2019 Change in SRYB Program Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Sig. Tests	Effect Size (η^2_p)
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	$n = 52$	2.90	3.15	3.15	$F(2,102) = 4.423, p = .014$	.080
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	$n = 52$	2.98	2.95	3.32	$F(2,102) = 9.643, p < .001$	.159
Displays Social-Role Mastery	$n = 52$	2.77	2.72	3.21	$F(2,102) = 12.964, p < .001$	.203
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	$n = 52$	2.61	2.78	2.90	$F(2,102) = 4.312, p = .016$	.078

Table 17. Spring 2018-Spring 2019-Spring 2020 Change in SRYB Program Means

SRYB Scale	Sample Size	Spring 2018	Spring 2019	Spring 2020	Sig. Tests
Expresses Emotion Knowledge	$n = 25$	3.55	3.40	3.51	<i>ns</i>
Behaviorally Manages Emotions	$n = 25$	3.46	3.26	3.46	<i>ns</i>
Displays Social-Role Mastery	$n = 25$	3.42	3.15	3.47	<i>ns</i>
Displays Goal-Striving Mastery	$n = 24$	3.16	3.01	3.25	<i>ns</i>