

MEMORANDUM

September 22, 2014

TO: Board Members

FROM: Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **STACY AND BO PORTER S.E.L.F. FOUNDATION AFTERSCHOOL PILOT PROGRAM AT KEY MIDDLE SCHOOL, 2013–2014**

CONTACT: Carla Stevens, (713) 556-6700

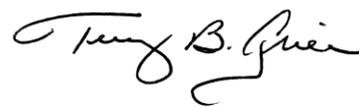
During the 2013–2014 academic year, the Stacy and Bo Porter S.E.L.F. (Sports, Education, Life-Skills, and Faith) Foundation engaged 32 predominately at-risk students at Key Middle School in a broad array of academic and enrichment afterschool activities, including tutorial assistance, life skills development, sports, spiritual enrichment, and field trips to support their academic, social, and emotional development. Guest speakers and inspirational messages were an integral part of the program, focusing on self-esteem and character-building.

Combined passing rates for sixth through eighth-grade students improved in reading and mathematics on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) by three and six percentage points, respectively, from 2013 to 2014. An overwhelming majority of students indicated that they were benefitting from all of the program components, particularly, physical activities (100%) and tutorials (96%). Overall in-school and out-of-school suspension rates decreased. Rates of unexcused absences decreased for 28%, and increased for 50% of the participating students.

Consideration should be given to broaden program components associated with student benefits (e.g., physical activities), while incorporating their interests (e.g., goal setting), needs (e.g., school safety), character-building (e.g., confidence to do well in school), and behavioral supports. These activities may assist students further with discipline and school attendance.

Administrative Response: The HISD Strategic Partnership Department, Afterschool Programs, and Middle Schools Office will continue to coordinate the expansion of the Stacy and Bo Porter S.E.L.F. Foundation program to additional schools in HISD. Collaboration among schools and departments will ensure the alignment of program activities with the District’s core values related to student learning and safety.

Should you have any questions or require any further information, please contact me or Carla Stevens in the Department of Research and Accountability, at 713-556-6700.


_____ TBG

TBG/CS:vh
cc: Superintendent’s Direct Reports
Chief School Officers
School Support Officers
Caleen Allen

Annie Wolfe
Lucy Bremond
Rose Adams



RESEARCH

Educational Program Report

A PILOT STUDY OF THE STACY AND BO PORTER S.E.L.F. FOUNDATION
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM EFFECTS ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE AT KEY
MIDDLE SCHOOL, 2013-2014



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Department of Research and Accountability

Venita Holmes, Dr.P.H.

Research Manager

Houston Independent School District
Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center
4400 West 18th Street Houston, Texas 77092-8501

www.HoustonISD.org

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EVALUATION REPORT

BUREAU OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

Volume 8, Issue 1, August 2014

A Pilot Study of the Stacy and Bo Porter S.E.L.F. Foundation Afterschool Program Effects on Student Performance at Key Middle School, 2013–2014

By Venita Holmes, Dr.P.H.

During the 2013–2014 academic year, the S.E.L.F. Foundation engaged 32 predominately at-risk students at Key Middle School (KMS) in afterschool tutorials and enrichment activities to support their academic, social, and emotional development. Outcome measures consisted of reading and mathematics performance before and after program implementation. In addition, student perceptions regarding program benefits were gathered via surveys. Combined passing rates for sixth through eighth grade students improved on both the STAAR reading and mathematics assessments by three and six percentage points, respectively from 2013 to 2014, although grade-level performance varied. Sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade program students outperformed all KMS student groups in mathematics on STAAR. Paired t-test analysis showed increases in STAAR scale scores for sixth and seventh-grade program students in reading, statistically significant increases in scale scores for six and eighth-grade program students in mathematics, and decreases in other areas. An overwhelming majority of students indicated that they were benefitting from all of the program components, with the largest majority specifying physical activities (100%) and tutorials (96%). Although still prevalent, overall discipline rates decreased, while differences in rates of unexcused absences for program students before compared to during the program were lower for 28% of students, and increased for 50% of the students. Consideration should be given to expand program components where students expressed benefits (e.g., physical activities), while incorporating interests (e.g., goal setting), needs (school safety), character-building activities (e.g., confidence to do well in school), and behavioral supports to assist with discipline and school attendance.

Background

The Stacy and Bo Porter S.E.L.F. (Sports, Education, Life-Skills, and Faith) Foundation collaborated with the Houston Independent School District (HISD) beginning in the 2013–2014 academic year to implement a pilot afterschool program at Key Middle School. The foundation was established in 2012 by Bo Porter, Houston Astros manager, and his wife Stacy, to provide mentoring and coaching for youth. At Key Middle School, the S.E.L.F. Foundation offered a broad array of academic and enrichment activities, including tutorial assistance, life skills development, sports, spiritual enrichment, and field trips. Guest speakers were an integral part of the program, focusing on character and self-esteem building activities. Inspirational messages were communicated to students by Stacy and Bo Porter through personal campus visits throughout the year. Students were provided dinner at

the end of each day of the program. The program operated on Monday through Thursday throughout the regular school year and during the summer as of February 17, 2014.

Additional enrichment activities designed to complement and enhance students' social and emotional development, and motivate them to succeed in school and in life were offered during the regular academic year or planned to be offered after the end of the regular school year. These activities include flag football with professional athletes and coaches for sixth-grade students (fall 2014); club baseball, with the support and resources for students to pursue their athletic interests (spring 2015). "Day at the Ballpark" was offered in 2014 and exposed students to Houston Astros experiences, where they watched a baseball game, observed batting practice, met, and talked to players and Houston Astros staff. The Summer Bridge Program (summer 2014) will be facilitated by certified HISD teachers and S.E.L.F.

volunteers, to prepare eighth-grade students for transition to high school. During the Summer Bridge Program, students will receive breakfast and lunch. There are future plans to improve campus facilities. There are also plans to expand the S.E.L.F. afterschool program to two additional middle schools during the 2014–2015 academic year.

Review of the Literature

There are contrasting views regarding the impact of afterschool programs on students' growth and development. Many educators believe that afterschool programs are vital to ensure that children are safe, while providing opportunities for them to engage in academically and socially-enriching activities that support parents during out-of-school hours (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001; Afterschool Alliance, 2013). A meta-analysis of 68 afterschool studies found that students participating in high-quality afterschool programs went to school more, behaved better, received better grades and performed better on tests compared to non-participants (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). Research on nearly 3,000 low-income students at 35 high-quality afterschool programs across the United States found that students who regularly attended afterschool programs, compared to their routinely unsupervised peers, made significant gains in their standardized math test scores; experienced reductions in teacher-reported misconduct, and reduced drug and alcohol use over two years (Vandell, et. al., 2007). Further, after controlling for baseline obesity, poverty, race and ethnicity, the prevalence of obesity was significantly lower for afterschool program participants compared to non-participants (Mahoney, et. al., 2005).

The U.S. Department of Education (2014) funds afterschool programs through 21st Century Community Learning Centers to support education and enrichment, specifically for students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. A report released in 2004 found that academic test scores of student participants were no better than scores of students not involved in the programs and, in some cases, behavior appeared to worsen (Ed Week, 2004).

While trends have varied relative to the impact of afterschool programs on students' academic, social, and emotional development, an in-depth examination of specific program activities among targeted student populations is needed to clearly understand which programs work, for whom, and under what circumstances. To that end, this report is designed to explore factors, found in the literature, to impact afterschool program participation, including students' academic performance, school attendance, and

discipline. The report also offers insight concerning which components students considered beneficial toward enhancing their social and emotional growth and development, as well as their perceptions relative to safety, education, and developmental assets.

Methods

Measures and Variables

Academic achievement of Key S.E.L.F. Foundation students was measured quantitatively using their passing rates on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading and mathematics tests (first test administration). The STAAR is aligned with the state curriculum standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The standards are designed to prepare students for postsecondary education and to ensure that they are competitive with other students both nationally and internationally (TEA, 2010). The passing rates of program students on the STAAR reading and mathematics tests were compared to the performance of all students at KMS in comparable grade levels. In addition, a paired t-test analysis, based on STAAR scale scores, was conducted as a pre-posttest measure to determine whether there were significant differences in the reading and mathematics performance of program students who were administered the tests in 2013 (pretest) compared to 2014 (posttest). Student discipline was based on the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions before compared to during the program (Chancery). Attendance was based on program students' unexcused absenteeism rates retrieved from the data warehouse. Unexcused absences were measured by dividing the number of unexcused absences for each student by all unexcused absences for all program students before and during the program. Differences in the percentages were calculated. The differences represented decreases, no change, or increases in unexcused absences during the two time periods.

Qualitative analysis was also conducted based on a paper-and-pencil survey that was administered to Key S.E.L.F. Foundation students in May 2014. Survey components measured students' perceptions relative to: (1) safety, education, and developmental assets (17 items) (SEARCH Institute, 2014); (2) benefits of specific program components (5 items), and (3) assessment of students' social and emotional interests and needs (19 items). Finally, S.E.L.F. students were asked to express their feelings about the program in an open-ended question format. A total of 30 out of the 32 program students completed the survey, yielding a 94% survey participation rate.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and proportions, were calculated based on students’ STAAR results and responses to survey items using IBM SPSS software. Paired sample t-test analysis was conducted using STAAR scale scores. Scale scores allow direct comparisons of student performance between specific sets of test questions from different test administrations (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

Student Sample

A profile of S.E.L.F. Foundation students at Key Middle School during the 2013–2014 academic year is presented in **Table 1**. The students were more likely to be African American (72%), male (69%), economically disadvantaged (94%), and at risk (69%). In addition, a higher proportion of sixth-grade students (44%) participated in the program compared to seventh (25%) and eighth-grade students (31%). Key Middle School S.E.L.F. Foundation students were fairly representative of the general student population at Key Middle School during the 2013–2014 academic year.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Key S.E.L.F. Students Compared to All Key Students, 2013-2014

	S.E.L.F.		All Key	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	22	69	347	53
Female	10	31	307	47
Ethnicity				
African Am.	23	72	443	68
Hispanic	6	19	193	30
White	1	3	17	2
Al	2	9	4	<1
Grade Level				
Sixth	14	44	239	37
Seventh	8	25	201	31
Eighth	10	31	214	33
LEP	1	3		
Program				
Special Ed.	5	16	101	15
G/T	1	3	11	2
Eco. Disadv.	30	94	609	93
At Risk	22	69	441	67

What was the performance of S.E.L.F. Foundation students on the STAAR reading and mathematics assessments?

Passing rates defined as Level II Satisfactory performance at the phase-in I standard on the STAAR reading and mathematics tests are presented in **Figures 1** and **2**, respectively. (Number of students tested is presented in **Table 2**.) The 2013 passing rates reflect students’ performance before program

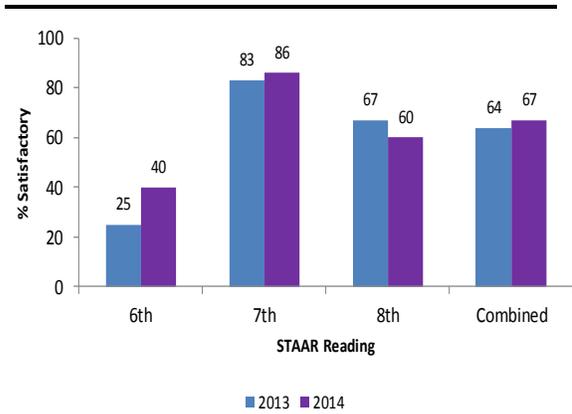


Figure 1. STAAR reading results of S.E.L.F. students before and after S.E.L.F. program participation (2013 vs. 2014).

participation, while the 2014 passing rates represent their performance after program participation. The passing rates are for the paired student groups. The sixth-grade students’ passing rate dramatically increased over the two-year period by 15 percentage points (Figure 1). There was a modest increase in the passing rate of seventh-grade students by two percentage points. However, the reading results of eighth-grade students dropped by seven percentage points. An overall increase of three percentage points was noted in the combined reading performance of program students.

On the STAAR mathematics assessment, for paired student groups, the passing rate of sixth-grade students reflected a sharp increase by 25 percentage points; whereas, seventh and eighth-grade students’ passing rates on the assessment decreased by 25 and 7 percentage points, respectively (Figure 2).

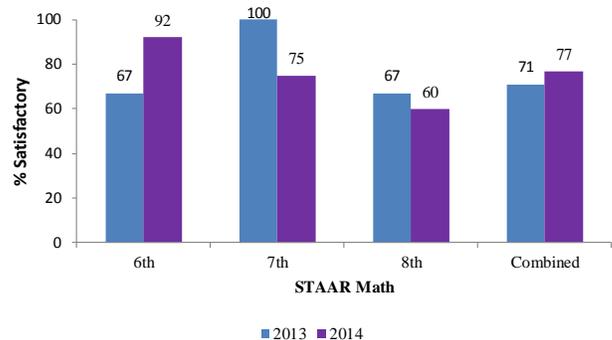


Figure 2. STAAR mathematics results of S.E.L.F. students before and after S.E.L.F. program participation (2013 vs. 2014).

Table 2: Paired T-test Analysis Based on STAAR Results of KMS S.E.L.F. Students with Two Years of Test Data, 2013 vs. 2014

	Pre STAAR Scale Scores 2013			Post STAAR Scale Scores, 2014			MD	t	p
	n	M	Std	M	Std				
Reading									
6th	9	1488	147	1531	94	43	1.25	0.1228	
7th	7	1593	142	1621	128	28	1.16	0.1447	
8th	6	1615	93	1610	71	-5	-1.740	.4343	
Math									
6th	9	1495	131	1618	96	123	2.96	.0091*	
7th	6	1672	106	1595	100	-77	-2.36	.0325*	
8th	6	1545	45	1632	62	87	3.54	.0083*	

Table 3: STAAR Reading and Mathematics Passing Rates for Key S.E.L.F. Students with 2014 Data Compared to All Key Students by Grade Level, First Test Administration, 2014

	Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
	S.E.L.F. (n = 13) %	All Key (n = 204) %	S.E.L.F. (n = 7) %	All Key (n = 174) %	S.E.L.F. (n = 10) %	All Key (n = 185) %
Reading	40	52	86	54	60	68
Mathematics	92	70	75	47	60	71

However, the combined performance of these students reflected an increase of six percentage points in mathematics.

Table 2 presents paired t-test analysis based on STAAR reading and mathematics scale scores of students with test results in 2013 and 2014. There were increases in scores for sixth and seventh-grade students in reading, and statistically significant increases in scales scores for six and eighth-grade students in mathematics ($p < .05$). The largest gains were noted in sixth and eighth grade mathematics (123 and 87 points, respectively). At the same time, a drop in scale scores were observed in eighth-grade reading (-5) and in seventh grade mathematics (-77 points). Results were statistically significant in seventh grade mathematics ($p < .05$).

Table 3 compares the 2014 STAAR reading and mathematics passing rates of all Key S.E.L.F. Foundation students with 2014 data to the 2014 passing rates of all students at Key. The reading performance of program students exceeded the performance of all Key students at sixth and eighth grades in mathematics as well as in seventh grade in both reading and mathematics.

What was the rate of disciplinary actions and absenteeism among program participants before and during the program?

Figure 3 displays disciplinary action rates of program participants prior to the start of the program (August 30, 2013 through February 15, 2014) and during the program (February 17, 2014 through May 15, 2014). The percentage of in-school suspensions dropped from 38% to 28%. The percentage of out-of-school suspensions also dropped over the same time period from 19% to 16%. Twelve students were represented in the in-school suspension data and six were included in the out-of-school data prior to the start of the program. In contrast, nine students were represented in the in-school suspension and five students were represented in the out-of-school suspension results during the program.

Attendance was measured using the number of days that students were absent from school without an excuse based on HISD policy. There were 56 days during the program and 108 days before the program that students were required to be in attendance. Percentages were calculated for each student based on the total number of unexcused absences (during the program (56 unexcused absences) and before the

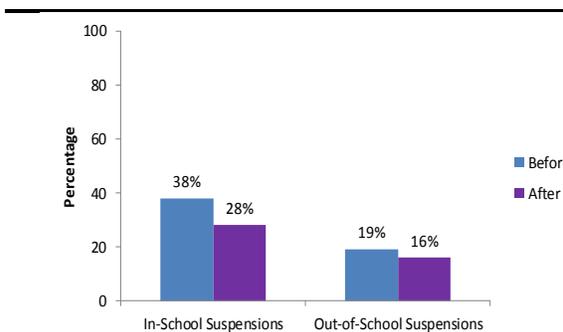


Figure 3. Percentage of students with disciplinary actions, 2013–2014

Source: Chancery Student Information System (as of 6/23/2014)

Table 4. Differences Between Number and Percentage of Students with Unexcused Absenteeism Before and During the Program, 2013–2014

	Change in Rate of Unexcused Absences Before vs. During Program		N	%
	Range			
Decrease	1% - 3%		9	28
Decrease	> 3%		0	0
Unchanged	0 %		7	22
Increase	1% - 3%		10	31
Increase	> 3%		6	19
Total			32	100

Source: Data Warehouse program (108 unexcused absences). The differences between the percentages were, then calculated to determine whether there was a decrease, no change, or an increase in the percentage of unexcused absences for each student.

Table 4 shows that 28% of the program students had between a 1% and 3% drop in the percentage of unexcused absences. Comparatively 50% of the students had a higher rate of unexcused absences during the program compared to before the program.

What were students’ perceptions regarding program components?

Key S.E.L.F. Foundation students were asked to indicate whether or not afterschool program components benefitted them in school or in their personal life “now”. Thirty students completed the survey, yielding a 94% response rate. The results are presented in Figure 4.

All of the students indicated that they were currently benefitting from “Physical Activities” offered in the program (100%). The program

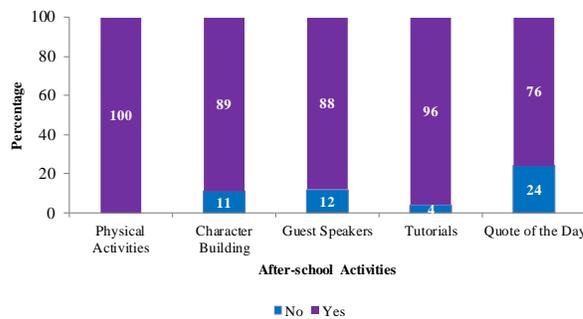


Figure 4. Percentage of students who indicated whether or not they were benefitting “now” from S.E.L.F. program activities, 2014

component that students perceived the next highest benefit was “Tutorials” (96%). Students were least likely to reveal that they benefitted from the “Quote of the Day” (76%).

Nineteen program students wrote general comments about the program components, all of which were positive. Comments from four of the students were:

“I think [the program] helps us with goal setting, what we [want to be] in life.”

“It helps me connect with people.....”

“This activity benefits us kids to cooperate with each other.”

“I feel the S.E.L.F. program has helped me because I look up to adults[;] so having successful adults come and speak and try to guide me in the right direction has really helped me.”

Finally, another student wrote:

“I thank Bo Porter for coming to our school and doing his programs. If it wasn't for him we would've never had a program [to] come to our school and do lots of activities with us.”

An assessment of students’ interests and needs were explored through the survey. The results are reflected in Figure 5. Students were asked whether or not they would benefit from a list of specific topics in

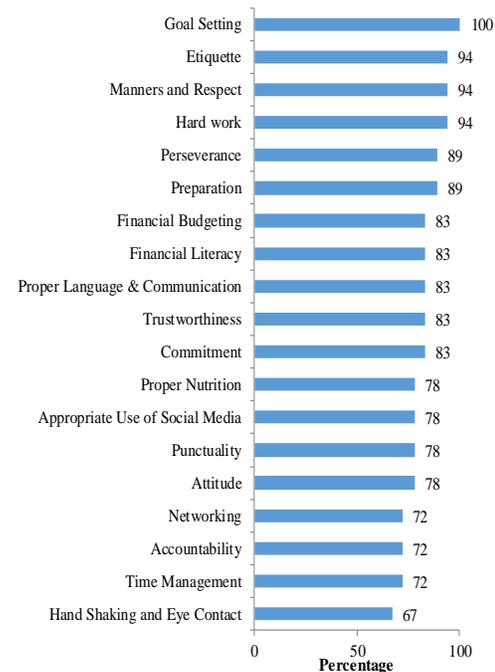


Figure 5. Student perceptions regarding program topics that may benefit them in the “future”, 2014

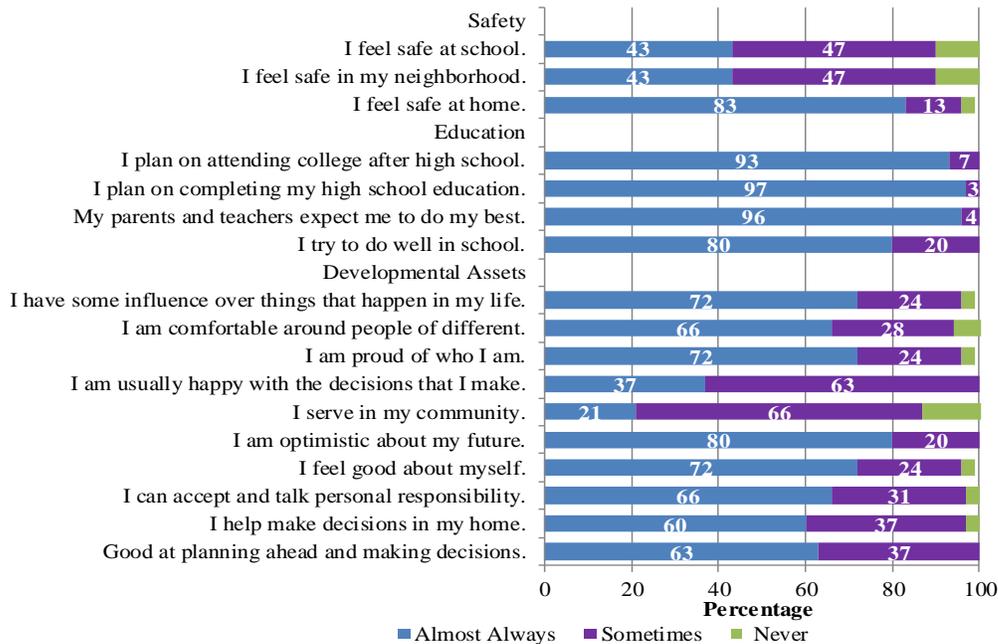


Figure 6. Student perceptions regarding their feelings on issues related to safety, education, and developmental assets since participating in the program, 2014

the “future” at school or in their personal life. These data will be used for planning. The topics were considered to promote growth and development in youth. Thirty students responded to the question. While some students indicated that they would benefit from all of the topics, the highest percentage of students responded to “Goal Setting” (100%) (Figure 5). Students were equally responsive to topics on “Etiquette,” “Manners and Respect,” and “Hard Work” (94%).

What were students’ perceptions relative to safety, education, and developmental assets?

Figure 6 presents results on survey items designed to assess students’ feelings related to safety, education, and developmental assets. Frequency distributions depicting the percentage of students who rated each item as “almost always,” “sometimes,” and “never” are presented in Figure 6. Students were asked to indicate what best reflected their feelings since participating in the program. The results are limited as data related to their feelings in the designated areas were not gathered prior to program

participation. Related to safety, the highest percentage of students expressed that they “almost always” felt safe at home (83%). Students were highly positive concerning their education, with 97% revealing that they “almost always” feel that they plan to complete high school and attend college (93%). Only 80% of students indicated that they “almost always” feel that they try to do well in school. Students were weakest in expression of the developmental assets of serving in their community (21% “almost always”) and happy with the decisions they make (37% “almost always”). They were strongest in feeling “optimistic about their future” (80% “almost always”).

Discussion

The Stacy and Bo Porter S.E.L.F. Foundation has collaborated with the HISD beginning in the spring 2014 to implement a pilot afterschool program at Key Middle School. Student participants were provided mentoring and coaching opportunities along with lectures on topics that supported developmental assets and character building. Engagement in physical activities was an integral component of the

program. The research has shown that there may be social, emotional, and behavioral benefits in youth participating in quality afterschool programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

This report provided analysis of students' performance on the STAAR reading and mathematics tests, discipline, and attendance. Discipline outcomes were measured based on rates of in-school and out-of-school suspensions before compared to during the program. Attendance was assessed by measuring differences in the rate of unexcused absences prior to the program compared to during the program. On STAAR, statistically significant increases were noted in mathematics for sixth- and eighth-grade participants, while significant decreases were found for seventh-grade students. In most cases, program students' test performance exceeded the performance of all Key Middle School students, specifically at sixth-grade in mathematics, seventh-grade in reading and mathematics, and at eighth-grade in mathematics.

There were several issues that were of concern. Specifically, students expressed that they were less likely to feel "safe" at school and in their neighborhoods than at home. At the same time, students' attendance reflected increased proportions of unexcused absences during the program compared to before the program. These issues of safety and attendance may, potentially, highlight a need for exploration of why students are being challenged in these areas and to consider the need for related interventions through the S.E.L.F. Foundation program.

Students' disciplinary actions decreased; however, a large number of students continued to experience in- and out-of-school suspensions. Excessive school absence may be an early warning indicator for poor academic achievement. Thus, targeted behavior support strategies might be offered through the program to address discipline.

Although the vast majority of students indicated that they frequently try to do well in school, efforts should be continued to support them by building academic confidence, possibly through additional academic supports.

There are limitations to this evaluation, including a lack of a statistically-matched comparison group to demonstrate impact. However, the use of a whole school-comparison group may be acceptable for making programmatic decisions, considering that program students were demographically-similar to their school-based peers. Another limitation was that changes in students' perceptions prior to the program were not measured regarding safety, education, and developmental assets using a pre- posttest format. Thus, whether or not their feelings differed over the course of the program was not clearly evident.

In spite of the methodological challenges, there were promising results for students who participated in the Stacy and Bo S.E.L.F. Foundation program, considering that it was a pilot program that was implemented over a brief, three-month period. Students' comments regarding how the program benefitted them in targeted social and academic areas, such as character building, physical fitness, and tutorials, may have long-term benefits as they continue their education and consider careers. It is recommended that these types of activities remain as integral components of the program. Other behavior-related activities, including goal setting, etiquette, manners, respect, and hard work, should be considered as additions to the program because students indicated that they would benefit from them in the future. Issues, such as discipline, attendance, along with school and neighborhood safety can be incorporated in the program, engaging parents, community members, and school staff.

Future evaluations should continue to monitor the academic achievement and development of S.E.L.F. Foundation students at Key Middle School throughout its expansion to assess their perceptions and performance longitudinally. Comparative analysis should be conducted with similar student groups who did not participate in the program as well as future adopters of the program in the 2014–2015 academic year.

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For additional information contact the HISD Department of Research and Accountability at 713-556-6700 or e-mail Research@Houstonisd.org.