Afterschool Centers on Education

Cycle 10 Boys and Girls Clubs of the Austin Area

Final Report 2020–2021

Department of
Research and Evaluation
AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) is the program administered through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grants authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95). The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Austin Area (BGCAA) received Cycle 10 21st CCLC funding to provide a comprehensive range of out-of-school-time (OST) academic assistance, academic enrichment, college and career readiness, and family engagement activities. Building on the existing infrastructure of evidence-based OST activities and partnerships, ACE BGCAA collaborates with a range of partners to provide a comprehensive menu of before-school, afterschool, and summer programming to complement their regular academic programs. The ACE BGCAA's Cycle 10 program exists to provide intentional afterschool program experiences that are high quality, are challenging, and inspire all program participants to improve their school outcomes. By serving students at Title I schools, ACE Austin strives to achieve the overarching goal of narrowing the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and students of more affluent families. Across activities and centers, the afterschool program focuses on three primary objectives:

- increase academic achievement
- decrease school-day absences
- decrease in-school suspensions

Key Accomplishments

The ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program is aligned with the campus needs assessments and goals identified in the campus improvement plans (CIP) of each center. The findings of this report were mixed. For example, regular participants (i.e., students who participated for 45 or more days) had a greater average percentage grade change than did nonregular participants (i.e., students who participated for fewer than 45 days). However, no significant differences were found between regular and nonregular participants who were targeted for improvement in reading, math, and school-day attendance across grade-level groups. None of the program participants at ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 experienced in-school suspensions for this school year. The majority of the parents and guardians agreed that their child's school provided adequate opportunities to participate in activities and programs after and before school. The majority of the teachers at ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 schools agreed that the ACE program benefited the students and/or families. Specifically, teachers across ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 campuses agreed that the ACE program benefited students and families by building positive behavior, motivating

for school-day attendance, developing social emotional learning (SEL) skills, and making connections to the school. Despite challenges amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACE Austin Cycle 10 program remained committed to providing quality programming that was accessible, flexible, and supportive of the development of students' full potential. Table 1 summarizes the major key accomplishments, based on Texas 21ˢᵗ CCLC ACE component areas.

Table 1.

Summary of Key Accomplishments

Program measure and outcome	Result
Student population served	☺
Academics	
Reading	😐
Math	😐
Grade average	☺
School-day attendance	😐
Discipline	•
Family engagement	•
Program impact	
Teachers' perceptions	☺

Note. Independent sample *t*–tests were conducted to compare program participants on each student outcome (i.e., reading and math grades, average grades, and school-day attendance rate) between regular participants and nonregular participants.

  ☺ Indicates a positive outcome for the measure
  😐 Indicates a neutral or no change for the measure
  ☹ Indicates a negative outcome for the measure
  . Indicates limited or no data available

Areas for Improvement

The ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program staff remained committed to offering quality programming amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. As we strive to go back to normalcy, the ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program staff continue to identify opportunities to assist students in maximizing the benefits of program participation. While we achieved a positive impact on many student outcomes this year, program managers, site coordinators, and program staff should continue to examine best practices to recruit and retain students in the program. Working collaboratively with parents, school-day campus teachers, and administrators is key to ensuring that students who need assistance are identified and are recruited into the program to take advantage of this free-of-charge, quality afterschool programming. Professional development opportunities to improve program effectiveness should be provided to ACE staff on areas deemed important.

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

The Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) is funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) federal grant, and is authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95). The Texas ACE program is administered through the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Austin Area (BGCAA) received Cycle 10 21st CCLC funding to provide a comprehensive range of out-of-school-time (OST) academic assistance, academic enrichment, college and career readiness, and family engagement activities. Building on the existing infrastructure of evidence-based OST activities and partnerships, ACE Austin collaborates with a range of partners to provide a comprehensive menu of before-school, afterschool, and summer programming to complement our regular academic programs. The ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program exists to provide intentional school program experiences that are high quality, are challenging, and inspire all program participants to improve their school outcomes.

By serving students at Title I schools, ACE BGCAA strives to achieve the overarching goal of narrowing the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and students of more affluent families. Across activities and centers, the afterschool program focuses on three primary objectives:

- increase academic achievement
- decrease school-day absences
- decrease in-school suspensions

The Texas ACE program is at 32 schools across the district. This report examines outcomes for the 1,318 ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 participants at nine campuses at AISD during 2020–2021: four elementary schools (Cook, McBee, Overton, and Walnut Creek), three middle schools (Burnet, Garcia, and Webb), and two high schools (Navarro Early College and LBJ). At each school, activities are offered at least 15 hours per week for 31 weeks during the academic year and 16 hours per week for 6 weeks during the summer. All activities are in one or more of the four Texas 21st CCLC core component areas: academic assistance, enrichment, family engagement, and college and career readiness (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
ACE BGCAA Texas 21ˢᵗ CCLC Core Component Areas

Family engagement

ACE BGCAA staff partner with the AISD Adult Education Department and parent support specialists to provide family engagement activities that help connect families to schools and enable them to support their students' academic achievement.

College and career readiness

The ACE BGCAA participants are provided with activities to help them prepare for college and career. Students investigate careers, visit area colleges and universities, practice public speaking skills, and participate in service projects.

Academic assistance

ACE BGCAA offers activities designed to improve students' achievement by providing extra assistance and support through tutoring and homework help for students who are struggling in core subjects, including science, math, reading, and social studies.

Enrichment

ACE BGCAA offers skill-building enrichment activities to which some students would otherwise lack access, including fine arts, technology, games, health and fitness, outdoor and environmental education, and youth leadership and development.

EVALUATION STRATEGY

Expectations

The Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) staff and ACE BGCAA program staff together reviewed the grant requirements and developed an evaluation plan and timeline for the program, which were published online, as part of the DRE work plan (https://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dept/dre/docs/2021_DRE_Evaluation_Plans_2020-2021.pdf). Throughout the duration of the grant program, evaluators worked closely with program staff to collect and submit identified data in a timely fashion and met regularly to monitor progress and make any needed adjustments.

The evaluation plan was used to ensure continuous improvement for (a) program management, by monitoring program operation; (b) staying on track, by ensuring the program stayed focused on the goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes; (c) efficiency, by streamlining service delivery and lowering the cost of services; (d) accountability, by producing evidence of program effects; and (e) sustainability, by providing evidence of effectiveness to all stakeholders.

The ACE BGCAA program staff used the TX21ˢᵗ student tracking system to track students' program attendance and other program data needed for TEA reports. The DRE evaluator extracted students' records from AISD's data warehouse and assisted program staff with formatting and data entry into the TX21ˢᵗ student tracking system to ensure accurate reporting to TEA.

Measurement

Program participation files and AISD student records provided demographic information and inputs for each of the school-related outcomes. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, AISD kept its school buildings and facilities open at a limited capacity, following the national safety and state health precautionary guidelines and measures. A wide array of learning models and activities (i.e., in-person, synchronous "live" virtual learning, asynchronous "anytime" virtual learning activities, and a hybrid model that combined two or more learning models) was offered to students and families to suit their individual needs for optimum learning and campus involvement, with safety and health at the core of every programming decision.

Similar to last year (dela Cruz, Andrews, and Christian, 2020), this year's end-of-year outcome measures were limited to the available data. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the usual program surveys given to parents and students were not administered this school year so they could focus on matters deemed important and essential related to students' learning and family life. Due to delays in test data availability from TEA at the time this report was written, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) could not be used as an outcome variable this year. No targeting for average grades was done due to inconsistencies in the reporting periods in the prior year. In addition, very little campus discipline occurred, likely due to the majority of students attending virtually for much of the school year. This made using campus discipline as an outcome not possible. However, the data generated from the district-wide surveys, such as the AISD Family Survey and the End-of-Year Multi-program Survey (formerly Employee Coordinated Survey), that were relevant to ACE programming were analyzed to complement and support the grant's reporting requirements.

Data analyses were conducted to examine the impact of program participation on students' outcomes (i.e., academic achievement in reading and math, average grades across all core subjects (i.e., English language arts, math, science, and social studies), and school-day attendance), based on participation status. Program participation status was categorized based on the total number of days students participated in the afterschool program during the 2020–2021 school year: regular participants were students who participated for 45 or more days, and nonregular participants were students who participated for fewer than 45 days. In this report, independent sample *t*-tests were used to compare regular and nonregular targeted students on academic achievement in reading and math, grade average, and school-day attendance.

Prior to running the appropriate data analyses, descriptive statistics were compiled to report on the percentages of targeted participants who showed improvement on each of the outcomes. Table 2 presents a summary of the methodology used in this report, based on program objectives.

Table 2.
Summary of Program Methodology

Program objective	Data analysis	Data collection/ source
Improve participants' academic performance in reading and math	An independent t–test was used to compare regular and nonregular targeted program participants' average grade change in reading and math.	Program participation file; AISD student grades
Improve grade average	An independent t–test was used to compare regular and nonregular program participants' grade average.	Program participation file; AISD student grades
Improve participants' school-day attendance	An independent t–test was used to compare regular and nonregular targeted program participants who had a school-day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior year and demonstrated an improved attendance in the current school year.	Program participation file; AISD student attendance
Improve participants' discipline	Due to a very small percentage of students who experienced in-school suspensions, this outcome is not reported.	Program participation file; AISD student discipline

PROGRAM TIMELINE

The ACE BGCAA calendar was full, even at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the opening of school of year 2020–2021, DRE staff and ACE BGCAA program staff together reviewed the grant requirements and developed an evaluation plan and timeline for the program (Figure 2). Equipping program staff with knowledge and skills on afterschool program management and implementation (e.g., needs assessments, recruiting and retaining participants, and program services monitoring) through continuing professional development opportunities is key to quality afterschool programming.

Figure 2.
ACE BGCAA Program Timeline

Figure 2. ACE BGCAA Program Timeline
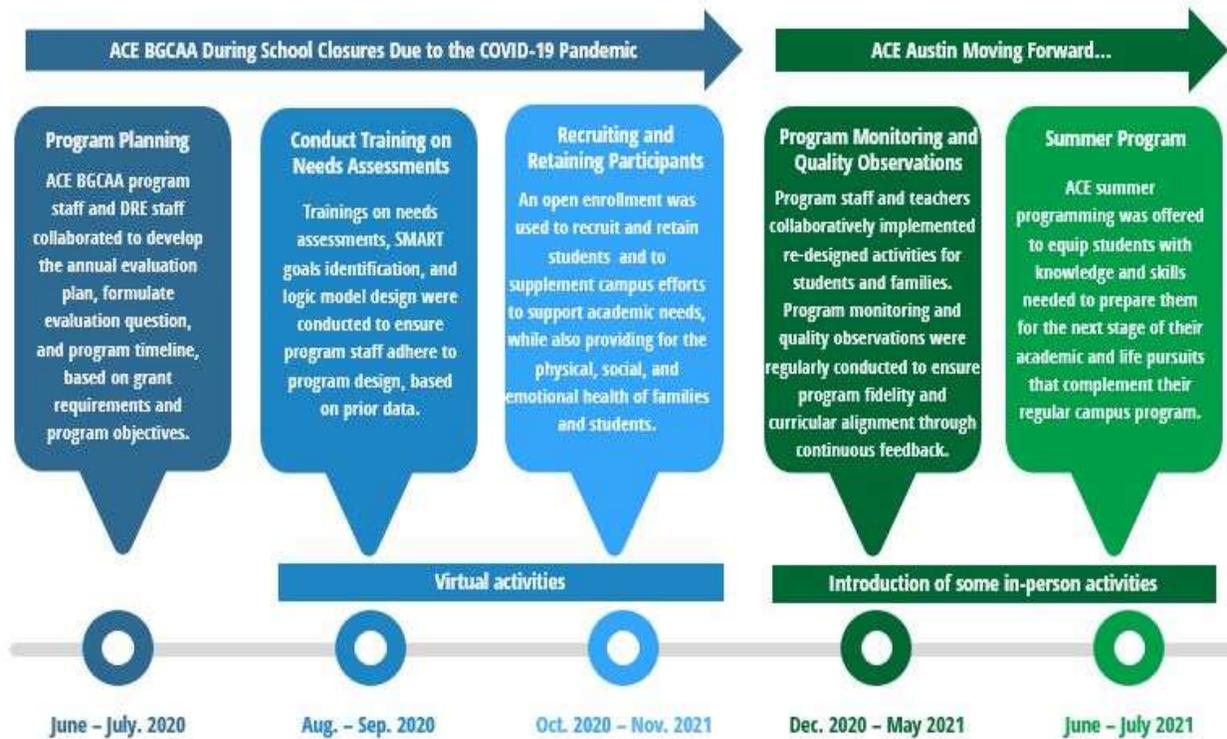
Goals that were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound (SMART) were identified, and logic models were created for each campus. DRE staff helped program staff to pull data needed for the timely submission of required academic, attendance, and discipline data to TEA. For school year 2020–2021, an open enrollment was used to optimally recruit and retain students and to supplement campus efforts to support students' academic needs, while providing for the physical, social, and emotional health of families and students. Additionally, program staff and teachers collaboratively redesigned lessons and activities to meet the unique needs of the students and families. Regular monitoring of program services and activities was conducted to ensure curricular alignment and fidelity to the core goal of the program through continuous feedback. ACE BGCAA offered a 6-week summer programming to equip students with knowledge and skills, based on students' needs and campuses' assets. It is hoped that providing additional learning time through ACE BGCAA summer programming would enable the students to cushion the potential effect of learning loss due to school building closures brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, and would ultimately prepare them for the next stage of their academic and life pursuits.

ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 in the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the first stay-at-home orders were issued in mid-March 2020, individuals across the state of Texas and the nation have experienced the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives and livelihoods. As states enacted safety measures to combat this COVID-19 pandemic, families struggled with school building closures, job losses, food insecurity, and more. ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program staff joined local and district efforts to address the urgent needs of children and families, while at the same time dealing with their own uncertain future.

In response to this crisis, the ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program immediately switched gears and innovatively redesigned its afterschool programming to stay connected with students and their families and to keep them safe, healthy, and engaged in learning. Due to continuously evolving health and safety standards developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the reopening of schools—and consequently the ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program—necessitated a radical rethinking of the way the program serves its students and families to meet their unique needs and circumstances. This required a collaborative approach that leans into community partnerships and builds on the campuses' strengths and assets.

The program areas remained the same. ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 continued to offer targeted academic support, a variety of enrichment opportunities, and family engagement. Centers were also encouraged to intentionally integrate social-emotional supports, both through activities designed for social emotional learning (SEL) and by embedding SEL skills into other areas.

To support the program throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ACE BGCAA staff adapted services and activities that normally are conducted in person, to meet the hybrid model. Committed to serving the students, families, and surrounding communities, ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 continuously rolled its Club on the Go (COTG) outreach program, which provided the following resources:

- sustainable snacks and meals for the week, which align with USDA nutritional guidelines
- themed and do-it-yourself activities and supplies for the week, including kits dedicated to academic enrichment; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); art; character development; and more
- nutritional and healthy habits tips and recipes
- guidelines to help parents keep their children engaged while home
- a bilingual resource list and contacts for health and social services available throughout the Austin area

COTG has been remarkably successful with more than 75,000 bags provided to the community, containing over 308,000 meals, 301,000 milks, 323,000 snacks, and 1,000,000 educational and enrichment supplies (Figure 3). The success and popularity of the program has allowed the

BGCAA team to increase its distribution sites from 9 to 24, including multiple Title I school locations. In addition to COTG services, club staff was able to reach out to families and offer BGCAA programming to any child who might need extra assistance with online learning. Academic case managed members were also targeted to receive direct BGCAA services to ensure that academic goals were achieved for school year 2020–2021.

GRANTEE AND CENTER OVERVIEW

During the 2020–2021 school year, ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 provided afterschool services at nine AISD campuses: four elementary schools (Cook, McBee, Overton, and Walnut Creek), three middle schools (Burnet, Garcia, and Webb), and two high schools (Navarro Early College and LBJ). District data indicated that the percentage of students at Cycle 10 campuses who had low socioeconomic status (SES; i.e., qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch) and the percentage of students who were considered at risk of dropping out of school were above the district and state averages. Also, the percentage of students who were classified as emerging bilingual was above district and state averages at eight of the nine Cycle 10 campuses (Table 3).

Table 3.
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 Campuses Served and Relevant Demographics

School	Percentage low SES	Percentage emerging bilingual	Percentage at risk
Cook Elementary School (n = 519)	94%	71%	83%
McBee Elementary School (n = 464)	96%	78%	87%
Overton Elementary School (n = 521)	98%	71%	84%
Walnut Creek Elementary School (n = 668)	97%	79%	88%
Burnet Elementary School (n = 968)	96%	63%	84%
Garcia Middle School (n = 399)	93%	46%	79%
Webb Middle School (n = 661)	96%	68%	90%
Navarro Early College High School (n = 1,522)	80%	53%	81%
LBJ High School (n = 850)	73%	28%	71%
AISD	53%	28%	50%
State	60%	20%	51%

*Source.* **2020–2021 AISD student data; 2019–2020** *Texas Academic Performance Report*

Participants

The ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program served 1,318 students and hosted events or activities for 470 families. Program participants were categorized as regular (i.e., attended the afterschool program for 45 days or more) and nonregular participants (i.e., attended the afterschool program

for fewer than 45 days). Program participants represented less than one-fifth of the students enrolled at Cycle 10 campuses. At all campuses served, regular participants (n = 1,096) outnumbered nonregular participants (n = 334; Figure 3). The ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 participants mirrored the student demographics at the nine campuses served (Appendix A).

Figure 3.

ACE regular participants **ranged from 6% to 36% of the student body and outnumbered**
ACE nonregular participants **at all campuses served.**

Campus	Regular participant	Nonregular participant	Nonparticipant
Cook ES (n = 537)	24%	1%	75%
McBee ES (n = 457)	28%	2%	70%
Overton ES (n = 505)	36%	1%	62%
Walnut Creek ES (n = 687)	19%	3%	78%
Burnet MS (n = 1,021)	13%	8%	79%
Garcia MS (n = 354)	28%	6%	66%
Webb MS (n = 683)	13%	4%	83%
Navarro ECHS (n = 1,732)	6%	2%	93%
LBJ HS (n = 891)	11%	3%	86%
Overall (N = 6,867)	16%	3%	81%

■ Regular participant   ■ Nonregular participant   ■ Nonparticipant
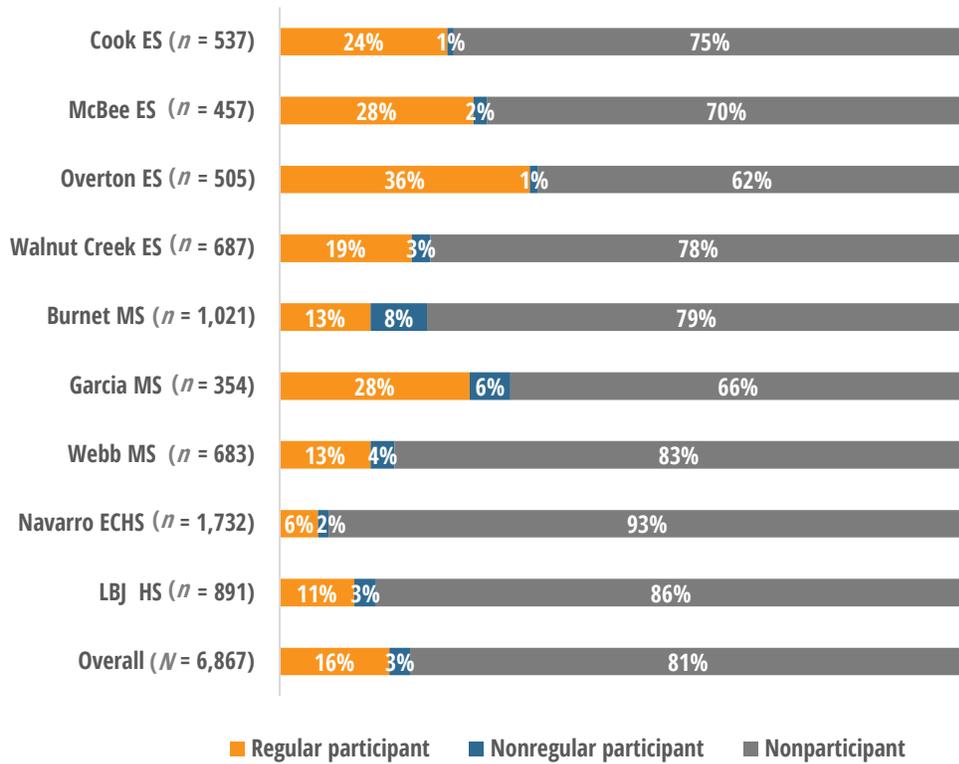
Source. TX21st Student Tracking System 2020–2021; AISD student records.

PROGRAM QUALITY IMPLEMENTATION

Guided by the ACE BGCAA continuous quality improvement cycle, programming was developed based on the needs of each campus (Figure 4). Campus needs assessments were conducted collaboratively by the site directors and project directors. The BGCAA administrators reviewed each school's test results and student data to determine what types of afterschool activities to offer. The site directors created campus needs assessments with which they surveyed principals, teachers, other school administration, and parents. They also reviewed the school's campus improvement plan to further guide them in determining the activities needed. The project directors and site directors met or emailed on a monthly basis with principals to check in and see

how the program was going and ask for feedback. In addition, site directors had daily or weekly contact with school principals to inform them about what was going on in the program.

ACE BGCAA Continuous Quality Improvement Cycle

5. Reassess and improve

Program outcomes are reassessed and needed changes are made for continuous quality improvement.

1. Center-level needs assessment

Site directors, campus leaders, and the program director collaborate with each other to assess the needs of individual centers.

2. Logic model development

Following campus needs assessments, logic models are designed to guide quality implementation at each center.

4. Quality observations

Quality program observations are regularly conducted to ensure quality program outcomes and fidelity to program implementation.

3. Implementation

Using a logic model as a guide, quality implementation is closely monitored and programmatic changes are documented over time.

Following campus needs assessments, logic models were designed to guide quality implementation at each center. Site directors, in collaboration with the project directors, developed the logic models, which also served as a tool for documenting programmatic changes over time. Each center logic model included six components: resources, implementation practices, outputs/activities, outputs/participation, intermediate outcomes, and impact.

OUTCOMES

Across activities and centers, the ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 primary program goals were to: improve academic achievement, increase school-day attendance, and improve discipline. Guided by these goals, site coordinators examined prior data and targeted students to provide them with a wide range of programming activities to improve outcomes. Because we expected the program would have a greater positive impact on students who participated more, we compared regular and nonregular program participants who were targeted for improvement on two of the student outcomes, i.e., academic achievement in reading and math and school-day attendance for school year 2020–2021. Targeting was not available for grade averages. Specific data analytic procedures and statistical tests, including targeting of program participants for improvement for each identified program outcomes were discussed in the following sections.

Academic Achievement Outcomes: Grades in Reading and Math

One of the ACE BGCAA program goals was to have a positive impact on reading and math achievement, based on program participation. Site coordinators focused recruitment efforts and offered programming activities to help students who needed assistance in those subject areas.

Prior to data analyses, ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program participants were grouped by program participation status and grade-level categories to analyze academic achievement in reading and math. Grade-level categories were grouped as follows: early education included participants in prekindergarten through grade 2, elementary included participants in grades 3 through 5, and secondary included participants in grades 6 through 12. The change in grade average in both reading and math was calculated using students' first grading period average grade and their last grading period average grade for school year 2020–2021. Students whose average grades in reading or math fell below the campus grade-level average for reading or math during the first grading period of the school year were targeted for improvement. Independent sample t–tests were conducted to compare the average grade change between the first and last grading period for regular and nonregular targeted participants in reading and math.

Across grade-level groups, the percentage of regular participants and nonregular participants who were targeted for improvement in reading was not significantly different (Figure 5). Also, regular participants and nonregular participants who were targeted for improvement in math was not significantly different, regardless of grade-level groups (Figure 6). It is not surprising to note that there was no statistically significant difference in the average percentage grade change in reading or in math between regular and nonregular targeted participants, regardless of grade-level groups.

Figure 5.

Across grade-level groups, the percentage of regular participants and nonregular participants who were targeted for improvement in reading was not significantly different.
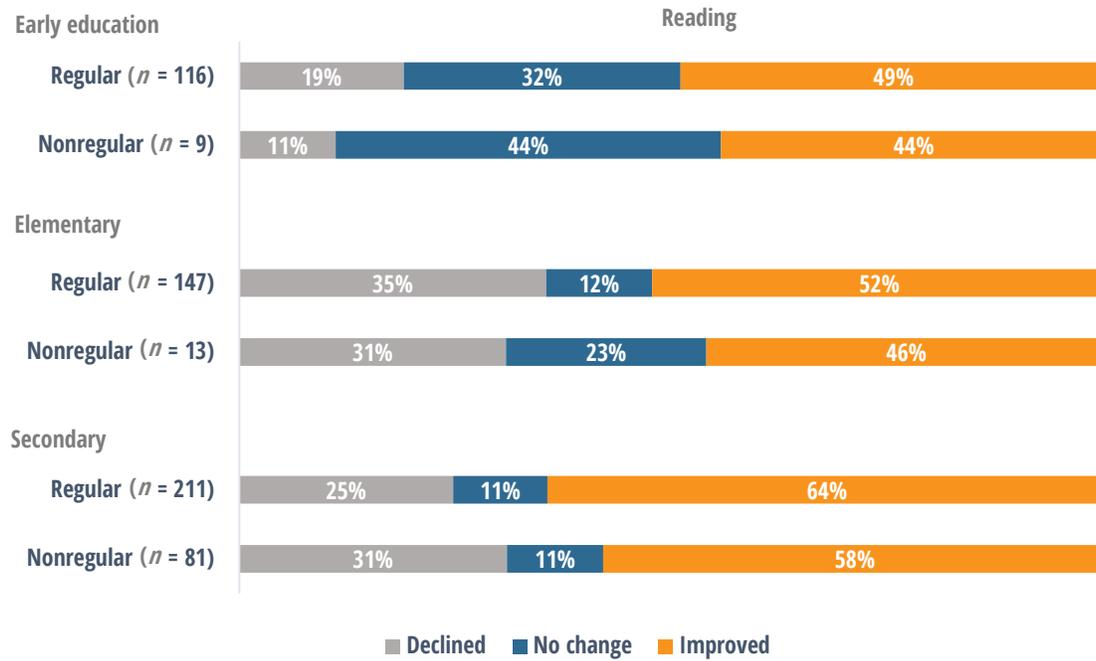
Source. TX21st student tracking system 2020–2021; AISD student records

Figure 6.

The percentage of regular participants and nonregular participants who were targeted for improvement in math was not significantly different, regardless of grade-level groups.
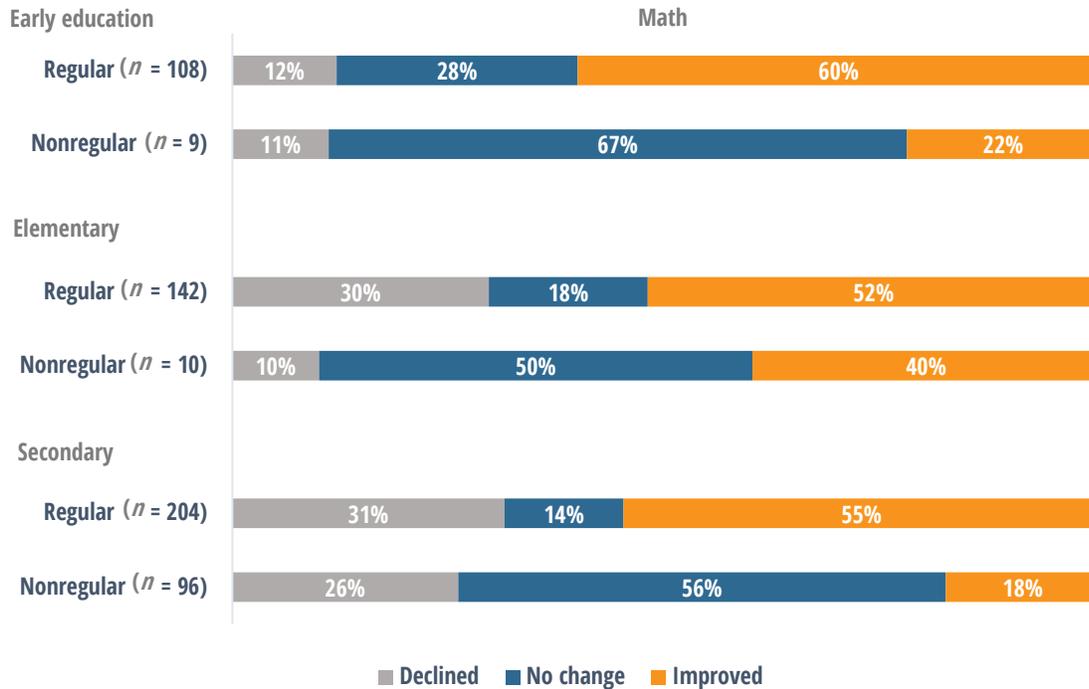
Source. TX21st student tracking system 2020–2021; AISD student records

Academic Achievement Outcome: Grade Average

Another program goal was to improve students' grade averages. We expected that regular program participants would have greater grade averages than those of nonregular participants during the school year. In this report, only the core courses (i.e., English language arts, math, science, and social studies) were considered in computing the grade averages. Due to inconsistencies in the reporting periods from the prior school year, no targeting of students in their grade averages was done.

An independent sample t–test was used to compare participants' grade averages, based on program participation (i.e., regular participants and nonregular participants). Results revealed that regular participants had greater grade average than did nonregular participants. This finding was not only statistically significant, but also was practical and meaningful (i.e., effect size of .45) (Figure 7).

Figure 7.

At ACE BGCAA Cycle 10, regular participants had a significantly greater average grades than did nonregular participants.
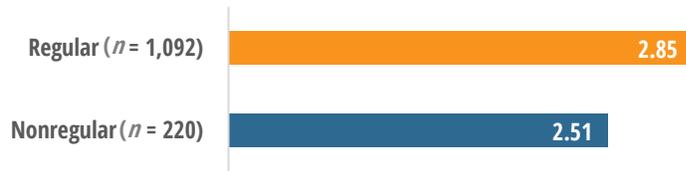
Source. TX21st student tracking system 2020–2021; AISD student records
All grades were converted to numeric grades (4-point scale) and were coded as follows: 100 = 4.00, 99 = 3.9, 98 = 3.8... through 70 = 1.0 and 69 <= 0

Student School-Day Attendance

Another program goal was to improve school-day attendance. We expected that ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 regular participants would show improvement over last year in their school-day attendance rate during 2020–2021. Site coordinators looked at the prior year's attendance data for all students in their schools. Students who had a school-day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior year were targeted for improvement by site coordinators. The impact of program participation on the school-day attendance of targeted participants was compared using an independent sample t–test. Results revealed that the percentage of regular participants and nonregular participants who were targeted for improvement in school-day attendance was not significantly different (Figure 8).

Figure 8.

Changes in school-day attendance was similar for regular participants and nonregular participants.
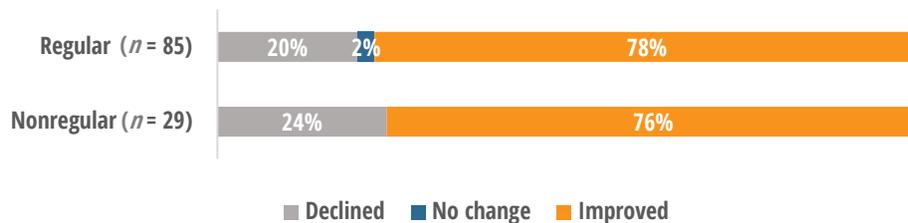
Source. TX21st student tracking system 2020–2021; AISD student records

Student Discipline

Discipline was also examined as one of the program goals. We expected students who regularly attended the program would show improvement in their discipline. Since very few students attended school in-person across the district, there was very little discipline. In fact, very few students ($n = 26$) of the 6,867 students enrolled at the nine campuses served by the ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 experienced any PEIMS reportable discipline (e.g., in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, removal to disciplinary school, etc.) during this school year. Therefore, there was not enough variance in discipline to examine this as an outcome for this year.

Family Engagement

This school year, the ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 family engagement specialist served 470 families for 167 days throughout the 9 campuses. Families participated in one or more of the meaningful family activities that included Family Night, Club on the Go Parents, Drive-Thru-Parents, and Family Support, both for fall and spring semesters. These family engagement activities were designed to provide opportunities for families to connect with their students' schools, spend quality time with their students, learn new skills, improve their students' social emotional skills, and support their students' education and life skills.

Both the ACE Student Survey and the ACE Parent Survey were not administered to allow students and families with the opportunity to focus their attention on other priorities, needs, and issues deemed important during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the districtwide Family Survey and the End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey were conducted. Items from each survey that were relevant to ACE BGCAA programming were used and analyzed to support the grant reporting requirements.

The purpose of the AISD Family Survey is to gather information about parents' and guardians' attitudes on various topics at the campus where their child is enrolled. This survey is administered annually each spring and is offered in multiple languages. For this year, the overall response rate was 33% (district $N = 16,333$). At ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 campuses, the majority (92%) of the parents and guardians who responded ($n = 721$) agreed that their child's school provided adequate opportunities to participate in activities and programs after and before school (Figure 9).

Figure 9.

The majority of the parents and guardians agreed that their child's school provided adequate opportunities to participate in activities and programs after and before school.

43%	49%	6%	2%

■ Strongly agree　□ Agree　■ Disagree　■ Strongly disagree
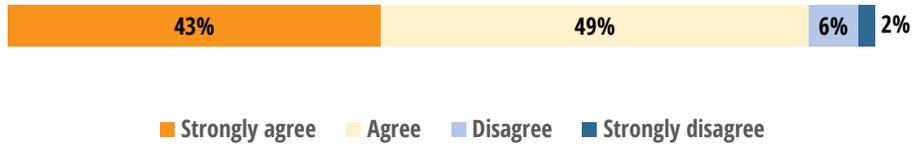
Source. AISD Family Survey, 2020–2021

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRAM IMPACT

AISD is committed to understanding staff members' experiences and perceptions about various work-related topics and district-wide programming. For this reason, DRE administered the End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey in Spring 2021. One of the programming areas for which district employees were asked to provide feedback was the ACE program. Specifically, teachers (73 out of 156, 48% response rate) at ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 campuses were asked about the benefits of the ACE program to students and/or families. The majority of the teachers reported that the ACE program benefited the students and families in many ways, such as building positive behavior (84%), developing social emotional learning skills (82%), motivating for school-day attendance (82%), and making connections to the school (82%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10.

The majority of the teachers at ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 schools agreed that the ACE program benefited students and families.

Percentage of teachers who agreed that the ACE program benefited ...

Students build positive behavior	84%
Students develop their social emotional learning skills	82%
Students are motivated for school-day attendance	82%
Students and families make connections to the school	82%
Students improve their academic skills in core subjects	78%
Students mitigate learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic	72%
Lessons they do in their classroom	71%
Students turn in their homework regularly	62%

Source: **End-of-Year Multi-program Survey, 2020-2021**

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ACE BGCAA CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Reopening campuses during the COVID-19 pandemic was unquestionably challenging in many ways. It was particularly challenging to implement and sustain the ACE BGCAA quality program that capitalized on whole child development, based on the unique academic and social-emotional needs of students. Challenges, however, also opened the door for some opportunities to refine and change program processes and structures to strengthen the ACE BGCAA quality programing and to creatively leverage campus and community assets.

1. Challenge*: The ACE BGCAA program participation was a major concern this school year. Some campuses struggled to recruit and retain participants.*

When school started operating 100% virtually, some campuses struggled with student attendance and retention during the school-day. This translated into program participation issues during out-of-school time. Students were no longer interested in spending additional time online.

Opportunity*: The ACE BGCAA program staff offered numerous participation opportunities and used accessible and user-friendly systems to recruit and retain participants.*

Taking advantage of the flexibility of program recruitment, ACE BGCAA program staff innovatively offered numerous participation opportunities (synchronous live and asynchronous anytime virtual activities, take-home kits, and in-person instruction). While in-person activities were slowly reintegrated on a campus-by-campus basis, in elementary schools, at-home kits allowed students to learn from home with hands-on activities away from the screen. In middle schools, ACE BGCAA worked to target the students most in need of academic support by supplementing tutoring in collaboration with the campus teachers, counselors, and campus leaders. All these recruitment strategies helped to increase program participation, although numbers remained lower than in previous years. Additionally, the virtual format allowed ACE BGCAA to service more students, especially in asynchronous anytime activities that were not restricted to the number of students who could attend the program. All centers opened the program to the entire campus. Some campuses also targeted students for particular activities, using student-level data, including recommendations from parents, teachers, and campus leaders. To help facilitate program recruitment and retention, ACE BGCAA developed a web registration system in which families were able to enroll club members via an online portal that was accessible and user friendly. Additionally, QR codes were handed out to families so they could easily access the electronic registration form.

2. Challenge: *The COVID-19 pandemic created both a public health crisis and an economic crisis that necessitated the ACE BGCAA program support students and families with an unprecedented range of direct resource assistance.*

ACE BGCAA exists within the schools and communities. Due to the economic and health crises, ACE BGCAA served as a community resource and information hub (e.g., serving as a meal distribution site or delivering meals; offering mental health services to cope with trauma and stress; providing care to children of working families; distributing other resources, such as technology; and offering the latest health updates). Specifically, during the COVID-19 pandemic, club staff were assigned to assist in COTG programming. Club staff were able to help put together program bags; order materials for the bags; drive, drop off, and hand out bags; and create instructional YouTube videos to complement the COTG program. While this undertaking was laudable, this approach expanded the scope of responsibility for program staff and resulted in additional social and emotional stress for some program staff, who were balancing taking care of the program while concurrently attending to their own personal and family needs.

Opportunity: *The ACE BGCAA program created an opportunity to deepen its community relations built on trust and partnerships.*

This crisis undoubtedly created opportunities to develop stronger and more long-lasting community alliances and partnerships to support the community with a range of direct services. Building a network of support systems helped the ACE BGCAA program and its staff to support each other. With the community at the epicenter, the ACE BGCAA program not only legitimized its unique niche to assist students with academic needs, but more importantly, was also recognized as a critical agent and community partner to support social services and effect positive change. There is no doubt that ACE BGCAA created an opportunity to strengthen its program, which is built on community trust that promotes program relevance and sustainability.

SUMMARY

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program remained committed to providing quality programming that was accessible, flexible, and supportive of the development of students' full potential. The ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program offered a variety of high-quality activities and services that were designed to support students and families who experienced a negative impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, ACE BGCAA provided programs and services that supported the holistic development of the students they served.

Key Accomplishments

The ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program is aligned with the campus needs assessments and goals identified in the campus improvement plans (CIP) of each center. The findings of this report were mixed. For example, regular participants showed greater average grades than nonregular participants. However, no significant differences were found between regular and nonregular participants who were targeted for improvement in reading, math, and school-day attendance across grade-level groups. None of the program participants at ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 experienced in-school suspensions for this school year. The majority of the parents and guardians agreed that their child's school provided adequate opportunities to participate in activities and programs after and before school. The majority of the teachers at ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 schools agreed that the ACE program benefited the students and families. Specifically, teachers across ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 campuses agreed that the ACE program benefited students and families by building positive behavior, motivating for school-day attendance, developing SEL skills, and making connections to the school. Despite challenges amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACE Austin Cycle 10 program clearly remained committed to providing quality programming that was accessible, flexible, and supportive of the development of students' full potential. Table 4 summarizes the major key accomplishments, based on Texas 21st CCLC ACE component areas.

Table 4.

Summary of Key Accomplishments

Program measure and outcome	Result
Student population served	☺
Academics	
Reading	😐
Math	😐
Grade average	☺
School-day attendance	😐
Discipline	•
Family engagement	•
Program impact	
Teachers' perceptions	☺

Note. Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to compare program participants on each student outcome (i.e., reading and math grades, average grades, and school-day attendance rate) between regular participants and nonregular participants.

  ☺   Indicates a positive outcome for the measure
  😐   Indicates a neutral or no change for the measure
  ☹   Indicates a negative outcome for the measure
  .   Indicates limited or no data available

Areas for Improvement

The ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program staff remained committed to offering quality programming amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. As we strive to go back to normalcy, the ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 program staff continue to identify opportunities to assist students in maximizing the benefits of program participation. While we achieved a positive impact on many student outcomes this year, program managers, site coordinators, and program staff should continue to examine best practices to recruit and retain students in the program. Working collaboratively with parents, school-day campus teachers, and administrators is key to ensuring that students who need assistance are identified and are recruited into the program to take advantage of this free-of-charge, quality afterschool programming. Professional development opportunities to improve program effectiveness should be provided to ACE staff on areas deemed important.

REFERENCES

dela Cruz, W., Andrews, M., & Christian, C. (2020). *Afterschool Centers on Education Boys and Girls Clubs of the Austin Area Cycle 10 Final Report 2019–2020*. Department of Research and Evaluation (Publication No. 19.35). https://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dre-surveys/ACE%20BGCAA%20Cycle%2010%20Final%20Report%202019-2020_0.pdf

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Campus-Level Participation

Table A.1.
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 Campus-Level Participation

School	School enrollment	Number of participants	Number of regular* participants	Number of nonregular* participants	Average number of days of participation
Cook Elementary School	537	136	131	5	90
McBee Elementary School	457	138	129	9	90
Overton Elementary School	505	190	184	6	74
Walnut Creek Elementary School	687	151	132	19	90
Burnet Middle School	1,021	219	135	84	53
Garcia Middle School	354	119	98	21	55
Webb Middle School	683	117	93	24	46
Navarro Early College High School	1,732	123	97	26	79
LBJ High School	891	125	97	28	72
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10	6,867	1,318	1,096	222	72

Source. 2020–2021 AISD student records; 2020–2021 ACE data file
Note. Regular participants are those who participated in the ACE BGCAA program at least 45 days; Nonregular participants are those who participated in the ACE Austin program fewer than 45 days.

Table A.2.

ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 Campus-Level Participants' Demographics

School	Female	Low SES	ELL	At risk
Cook Elementary School (*n* = 136)	47%	90%	74%	78%
McBee Elementary School (*n* = 138)	55%	86%	76%	80%
Overton Elementary School (*n* = 190)	52%	94%	70%	82%
Walnut Creek Elementary School (*n* = 151)	48%	88%	74%	79%
Burnet Middle School (*n* = 219)	42%	93%	53%	82%
Garcia Middle School (*n* = 119)	.	88%	40%	70%
Webb Middle School (*n* = 117)	50%	85%	61%	84%
Navarro Early College High School (*n* = 123)	51%	84%	26%	69%
LBJ High School (*n* = 125)	63%	72%	26%	68%
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 (*N* = 1,318)	46%	87%	57%	77%

Source. **2020–2021 AISD student records; 2020–2021 ACE data file**

Table A.3.

ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 Campus-Level Participants' Race

School	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic	Two or more race	White
Cook Elementary School (*n* = 136)	< 1%	8%	89%	2%	2%
McBee Elementary School (*n* = 138)	.	2%	95%	2%	2%
Overton Elementary School (*n* = 190)	.	17%	82%	.	2%
Walnut Creek Elementary School (*n* = 151)	.	7%	88%	.	6%
Burnet Middle School (*n* = 219)	< 1%	12%	83%	< 1%	3%
Garcia Middle School (*n* = 119)	.	27%	67%	2%	4%
Webb Middle School (*n* = 117)	4%	11%	78%	< 1%	6%
Navarro Early College High School (*n* = 123)	< 1%	22%	67%	2%	8%
LBJ High School (*n* = 125)	< 1%	42%	55%	2%	.
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 (*N* = 1,318)	< 1%	16%	79%	1%	4%

Source. **2020–2021 AISD student records; 2020–2021 ACE data file**

Table A.4.
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 Campus-Level Participants' Grade Level: Elementary

School	Pre-K	Kindergarten	1	2	3	4	5
Cook Elementary School (*n* = 136)	.	7%	11%	21%	25%	13%	23%
McBee Elementary School (*n* = 138)	< 1%	8%	18%	17%	15%	20%	20%
Overton Elementary School (*n* = 190)	5%	2%	23%	23%	19%	14%	14%
Walnut Creek Elementary School (*n* = 151)	2%	17%	21%	9%	20%	16%	16%
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 (*N* = 615)	< 1%	4%	9%	7%	9%	7%	8%

Source. **2020–2021 AISD student records; 2020–2021 ACE data file**

Table A.5.
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 Campus-Level Participants' Grade Level: Secondary

School	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Burnet Middle School (*n* = 219)	28%	40%	32%	.	.	.	.
Garcia Middle School (*n* = 119)	18%	41%	41%	.	.	.	.
Webb Middle School (*n* = 117)	33%	22%	44%	.	.	.	.
Navarro Early College High School (*n* = 123)	.	.	.	18%	25%	32%	25%
LBJ High School (*n* = 125)	.	.	.	11%	18%	34%	38%
ACE BGCAA Cycle 10 (*N* = 703)	9%	12%	13%	3%	4%	6%	6%

Source. **2020–2021 AISD student records; 2020–2021 ACE data file**

Austin Independent School District

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