

# ESSER III

## ANNUAL REPORT



2022-2023

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## OVERVIEW OF ESSER III

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The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), administered by the U.S. Department of Education in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided emergency financial assistance to public school districts nationwide.

ESSER III funding allowed state and local education agencies to ensure safe in-person instruction, address unfinished learning, and support evidence-based, sustainable programs that mitigated the pandemic's impact on students.

In May 2021, the State Board approved the creation of the ESSER Collaborative ELO in partnership with Beyond School Bells (BSB)—Nebraska's statewide afterschool and summer learning network and a program of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF). This collaboration supported the distribution and administration of ESSER III funds for summer and expanded learning programs. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) served as the fiscal agent, with NCFF-BSB providing technical assistance, support, and professional learning.







## ESSER ELO COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES

To identify highly impacted communities and sites, the NDE triangulated school identification (e.g., CSI, TSI, ATSI) and achievement data, COVID-19 impact, and measures of a community's ability to respond to crisis (social vulnerability index). ESSER III dollars were provided to highly impacted districts with pre-existing after-school and summer programs and to start new programs that would help students recover learning loss from the pandemic. Selected communities were categorized into Incubator, Accelerator, or Accelerator with Incubator sites.

**Incubator sites** are newly developed programs and/or sites that do not receive 21st Century Community Learning Center funds.

**Accelerator sites** are established programs and/or sites that receive 21st Century Community Learning Center funds in addition to ESSER funding.

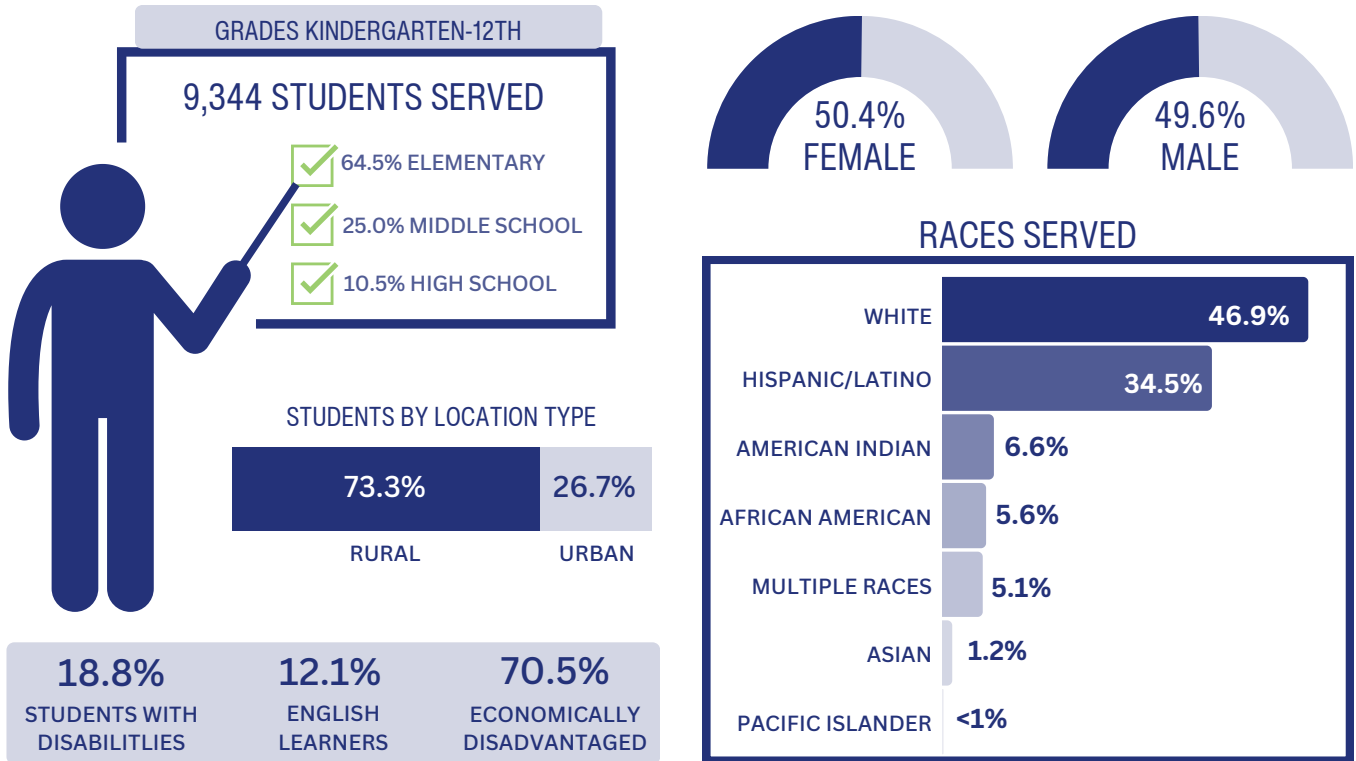
**Accelerator with Incubator sites** are established programs that added additional new programming sites with ESSER funds.





# WHO WE SERVED

## ALL ESSER-FUNDED SITES



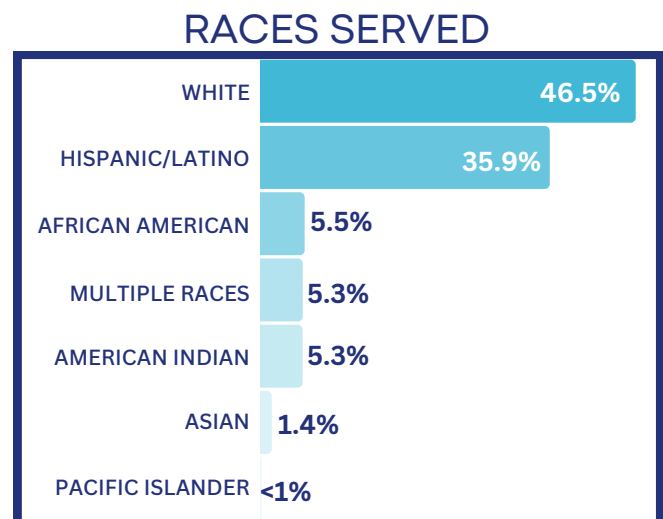
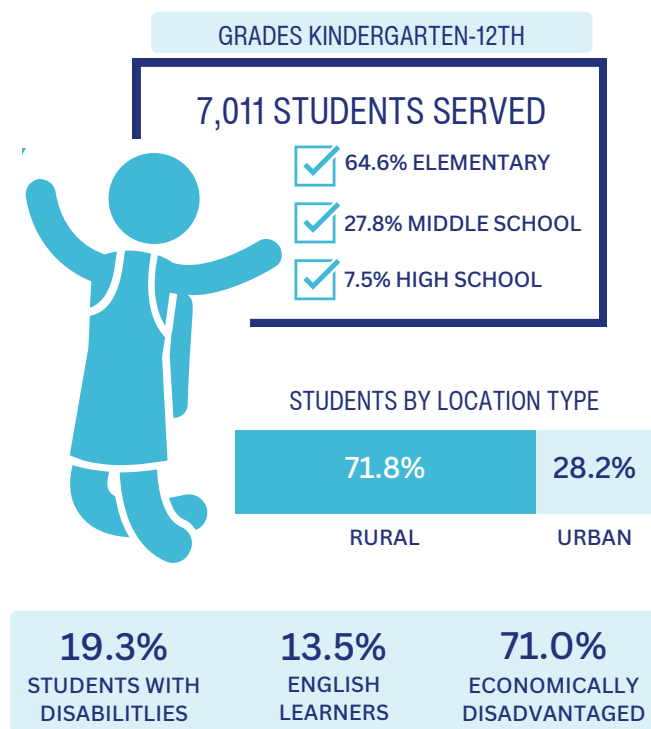
## 2022-2023 SITE LOCATIONS

### ESSER Collaborative ELO Communities





## ACCELERATOR SITES



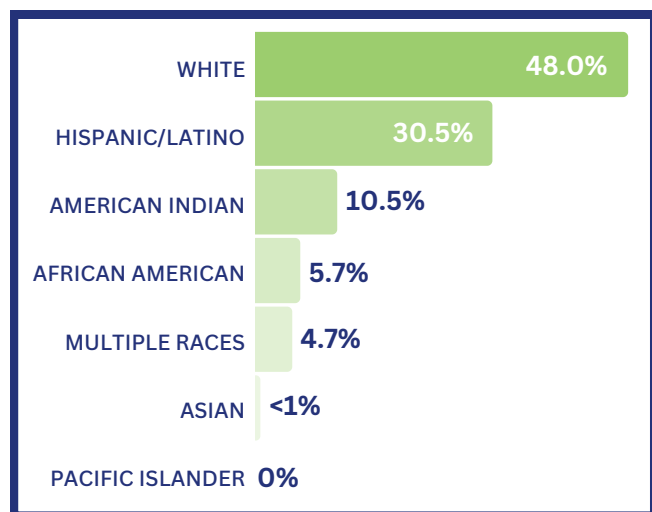




## INCUBATOR SITES



### RACES SERVED



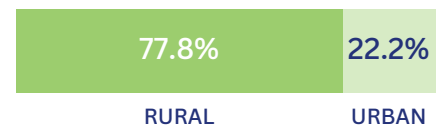
### GRADES KINDERGARTEN-12TH

2,333 STUDENTS SERVED

- ☒ 64.1% ELEMENTARY
- ☒ 16.4% MIDDLE SCHOOL
- ☒ 19.5% HIGH SCHOOL



### STUDENTS BY LOCATION TYPE



17.3%  
STUDENTS WITH  
DISABILITIES

8.0%  
ENGLISH  
LEARNERS

69.3%  
ECONOMICALLY  
DISADVANTAGED



# PROGRAM STRUCTURE

## AFTERSCHOOL STAFF

Staff carry out a number of responsibilities at afterschool programs, including supervision, academic support, activity development, and collaboration with caregivers, teachers, and community partners. By encouraging strong staff-student relationships where students feel seen and accepted, programs provide safe spaces for students to connect with peers and feel confident engaging with new or challenging enrichment activities.



### MOST AFTERSCHOOL STAFF WERE PAID MEMBERS OF THEIR PROGRAM TEAMS

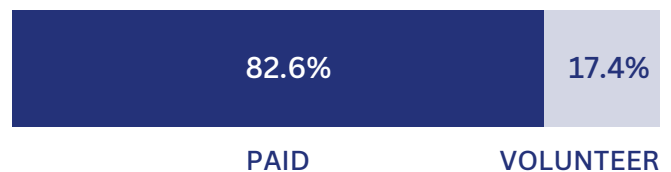
More than 80% of statewide staff were paid by programs. The percentage of volunteer staff was higher for Accelerator programs. Most Accelerator volunteers were community members (e.g., community partners) or college students.

### YOUTH STAFF

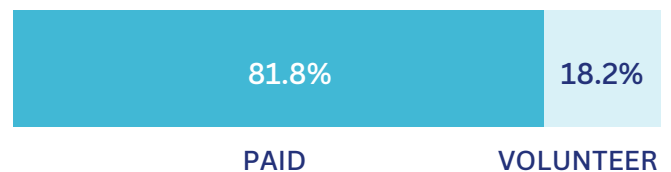
Staffing shortages impact afterschool programs nationwide. Leveraging the youth workforce allows afterschool programs to meet staffing needs, connect participants with near-peer role models, and provide job experience for high school or college students who are considering careers in education or working with children.

- Incubator programs reported hiring 23 high school students and 13 college students in Fall 2023.
- Accelerator programs reported that youth staff accounted for 34.2% of paid staff in Fall 2023, with 151 college students and 123 high school students working at afterschool sites.

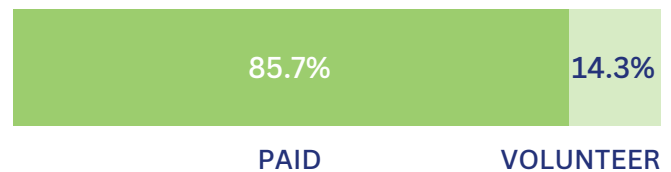
#### ESSER STATEWIDE



#### ACCELERATOR



#### INCUBATOR





## ACTIVITIES

Afterschool programs provide students with hands-on opportunities to explore areas of interest and develop new skills. The clubs and activities supported by ESSER III funds allowed students to dive into topics that complement school day learning in fun, engaging, and inventive ways.

ESSER sites provided almost 18,000 hours of programming in six key areas:



### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM)



**87**

Sites offering programming



**4607**

Total hours of programming

### ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT (INCLUDING TUTORING AND HOMEWORK HELP)



**79**

Sites offering programming



**5388**

Total hours of programming

### COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS



**14**

Sites offering programming



**439**

Total hours of programming

### HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE



**82**

Sites offering programming



**6373**

Total hours of programming

### YOUTH LEADERSHIP\*



**11**

Sites offering programming



**31**

Total hours of programming

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER SUPPORT



**12**

Sites offering programming



**1113**

Total hours of programming

Programs also provided opportunities for students to engage in activities involving arts and music, entrepreneurship, telecommunications, and mentoring.

\* Note: Due to differences in reporting methods, only Incubator sites provided data on youth leadership programming.



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Afterschool programs often collaborate with multiple community partnerships to provide additional funding, programming opportunities, supplies, in-kind services or other types of support (e.g., professional development/training). These partnerships can help each program achieve further sustainability.

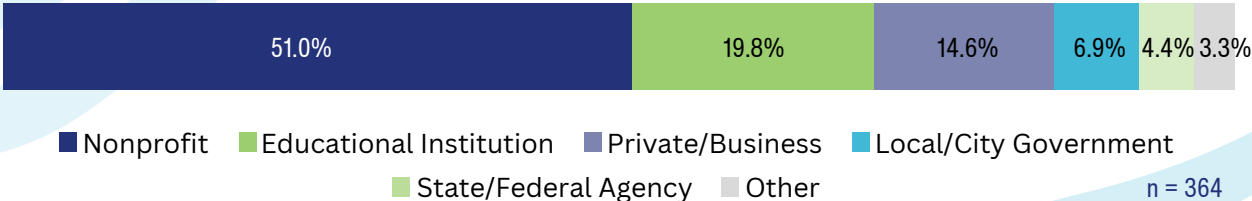
**Incubator sites** identified having *more programming activities* as the resource that community partners provide most.



Nonprofit groups (e.g., YMCA and Future Kids) accounted for the majority of community partners. Many of these organizations’ missions are focused on serving the community and developing students’ strengths. Educational institutions (e.g., University of Nebraska campuses and school district foundations) and businesses (e.g., local stores or restaurants or large-scale companies located in communities)

accounted for over a third of all partners at Accelerator sites and made up a significant portion of self-reported partners for Incubator sites. Local/city governments (e.g., city parks and rec and public libraries), State/Federal Agencies (e.g., state parks or natural resources districts), as well as other families or individual volunteers in the community also added support to afterschool programs.

## 2022-2023 Accelerator Partnerships



**Accelerator sites** had 5 community partners on average.







## INCUBATOR PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

Incubator sites reported numerous ways that partners provided programming opportunities and supplies or in-kind services to their program.

### Supplies/In-kind Services

- Supplies ranged from technology/skill-based materials (e.g., iPads, STEM backpacks, sewing machines, mobile libraries, craft supplies) to additional snacks for breaks and rewards.
- In-kind services included providing career strengths test at no cost, support with family nights or activities, and curriculum development for programming.
- Services allowed students exposure to a variety of healthy practices in nutritional offerings and materials for physical activities.

### Programming Opportunities

- Partners provided a diverse range of programming (e.g., dancing, cooking, mindfulness, cultural education, sewing, skateboarding, and restaurant business creation).
- STEM programming (agronomy, rocket and circuit board activities), Arts (play and theater production), and Entrepreneurship (business marketing, planning, aptitude testing) were frequently listed in partnered programming.
- Some programming gave opportunities for mentorship between different age groups.



# EVALUATION PLAN AND ACTIVITIES

## NEBRASKA AFTERSCHOOL QUALITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM (NAQCIS)

The Nebraska Afterschool Quality and Continuous Improvement System (NAQCIS) Self-Assessment (Johnson, et al., 2019) was completed by 91 sites in the fall of 2022.

NAQCIS is purposely aligned with quality framework indicators adopted by the Nebraska State Board of Education and includes a self-assessment, external observation tool with a corresponding feedback form, and a monitoring form.

## EVALUATION OUTCOMES

For this reporting period, outcomes are reported for quality (self-assessment), teacher, caregiver, student, and afterschool staff feedback, and demographics of those served by the program.

**Rationale:** Quality matters in afterschool programs for student safety, social-emotional development, academic growth, and engagement with programming. Quality practices are aligned with the Nebraska State Board of Education quality framework.



## STUDENT OUTCOMES

Student outcomes are based on afterschool program attendance and survey results from students, teachers, and caregivers.

**Rationale:** Many student outcomes, including engagement with the school and peers, and academic achievement, have a positive relationship with attending afterschool programming (Vandell et al., 2020). High caregiver engagement positively impacts student outcomes, including academic achievement and school-day attendance. (Barger et al., 2019; Reschly & Christensen, 2019; The Aspen Institute, 2018).





Belonging: Research on student belonging at school indicates increased positive outcomes for health, well-being, mental health, and academics when compared to students who feel less of a sense of belonging with school (Parchia, 2021; Ryan et al., 2019).

Student Well-Being: Student well-being includes feeling accepted, having friends, persevering through difficult tasks, self-regulation, and having appropriate peer and adult interactions.

## CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT\*

Caregiver engagement outcomes are derived from caregiver and teacher surveys and program highlights.

**Rationale:** Caregiver engagement in their student's education results in increased school success and student outcomes, and improved attendance. (Barger et al., 2019; Reschly & Christensen, 2019; The Aspen Institute, 2018). Caregiver surveys were completed by over 3400 caregivers in spring of 2023.

Caregivers recognized the quality of the programs and the relationships between program staff and students. They appreciated students' access to enrichment activities and opportunities to develop peer relationships. Overall, the sites were rated positively and seen as important resources in their communities.

\*Note: To include all family structures, the ESSER report refers to the adults responsible for students at home as caregivers.





## SURVEY OUTCOMES

### 2022-2023 SURVEY RETURN RATES

SURVEY	RESPONDENTS	RETURN RATE
Caregiver	3411	37%
Teacher	5056	54%
K-2 Student	1655	58%
3rd-5th Student	1696	53%
6th-12th Student	1100	33%
Afterschool Staff	730	N/A

#### **\*Survey Return Rate Calculations**

The Teacher, Caregiver, and Student Survey Return Rates are calculated by dividing the number of completed surveys by the total number of students who attended 10 or more hours, who were not opted out of the survey process, and whose information was entered into the database by the February 1st deadline.





# CAREGIVER SURVEY OUTCOMES (N=3411; 37% RETURN RATE)

The caregiver survey was provided to caregivers of all students who were attenders during the 2022-2023 school year. The survey was designed to provide a snapshot of program quality, experiences of the student and reasons for enrolling their student in the program.

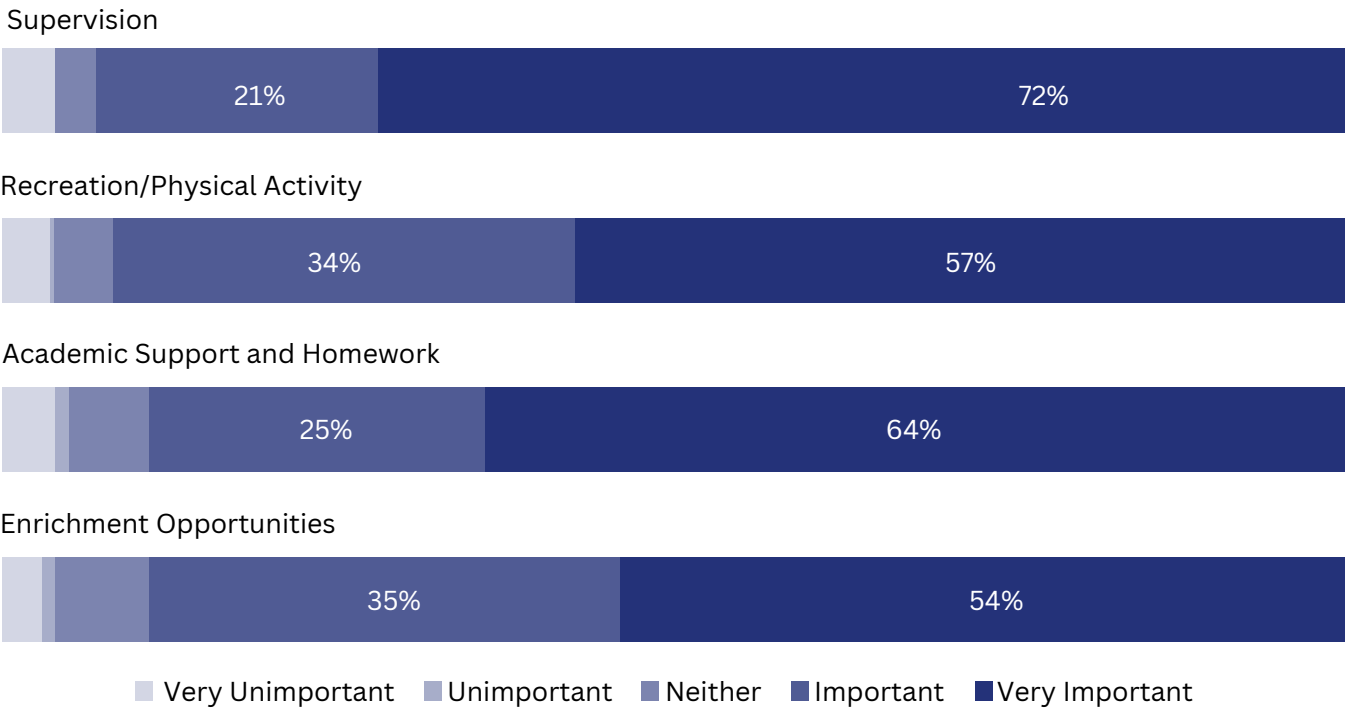
Caregivers (N=3411) were asked why they enrolled their students in afterschool programming. They rated each component as being very unimportant, unimportant, neutral, important or very



important. The highest-ranking reason why caregivers reported enrolling their students in programs was Supervision (important or very important: 93%), but all of the components were rated as either important or very important by at least 89% of caregivers.

## SUPERVISION WAS RATED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR CAREGIVERS ENROLLING STUDENTS IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (N=3411)

*Caregivers also appreciate the opportunities for physical activity and academic support*

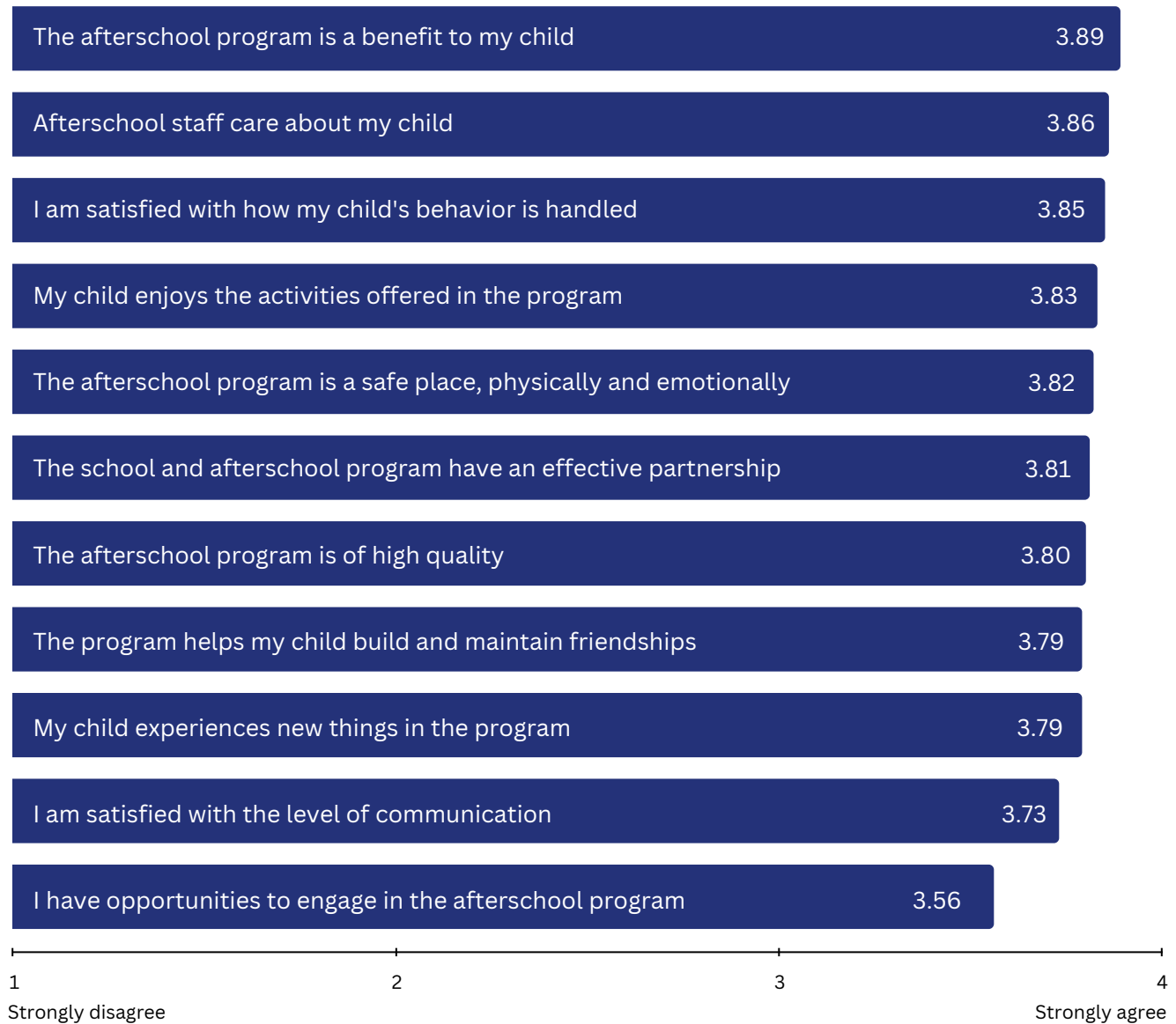


\*Note: To include all family structures, the ESSER report refers to the adults responsible for students at home as caregivers.



## ON AVERAGE, CAREGIVERS GAVE PROGRAMS HIGH RATINGS IN ALL AREAS (N=3411)

*They view programs as safe places and beneficial for their children*



Caregivers were asked to rate the following items on a 1 to 4 scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 4=Strongly Agree).

Caregivers gave the programs high ratings across all items. In particular, they viewed the program as a benefit to their child, that staff care about their child, and that they are satisfied with how the program addresses behavior. Caregivers also viewed the programs as safe places for their child to be and agreed that their child enjoyed the activities offered.





## K-12 TEACHERS REPORTED HIGHEST RATES OF IMPROVEMENT IN AREAS RELATED TO HANDLING AND PERSERVERING THROUGH CHALLENGES (N=5056)

*About half of students in each area needed no improvement from fall to spring*

Handles challenging situations



Seems to “bounce back” from setbacks or failures



Perseveres with difficult or challenging tasks



Gets along well with others



Is adaptable/flexible when changes occur



Developed and maintained friendships



Able to regulate emotions



Able to consider perspectives of others



■ Not Improved ■ Improved ■ None Needed

## TEACHER SURVEY OUTCOMES (N=5056; 54% RETURN RATE)

As one part of the evaluation process, classroom teachers rated individual students on engagement in learning and their social, emotional, and behavioral development. Using grade-level expectations, teachers determine if each

student either falls below, meets, or performs above expectations. They then rate the student growth from fall to spring on each survey item.

The highest levels of improvement from fall to spring (40%) were reported in the items regarding students handling challenging situations, bouncing back from setbacks, and persevering when



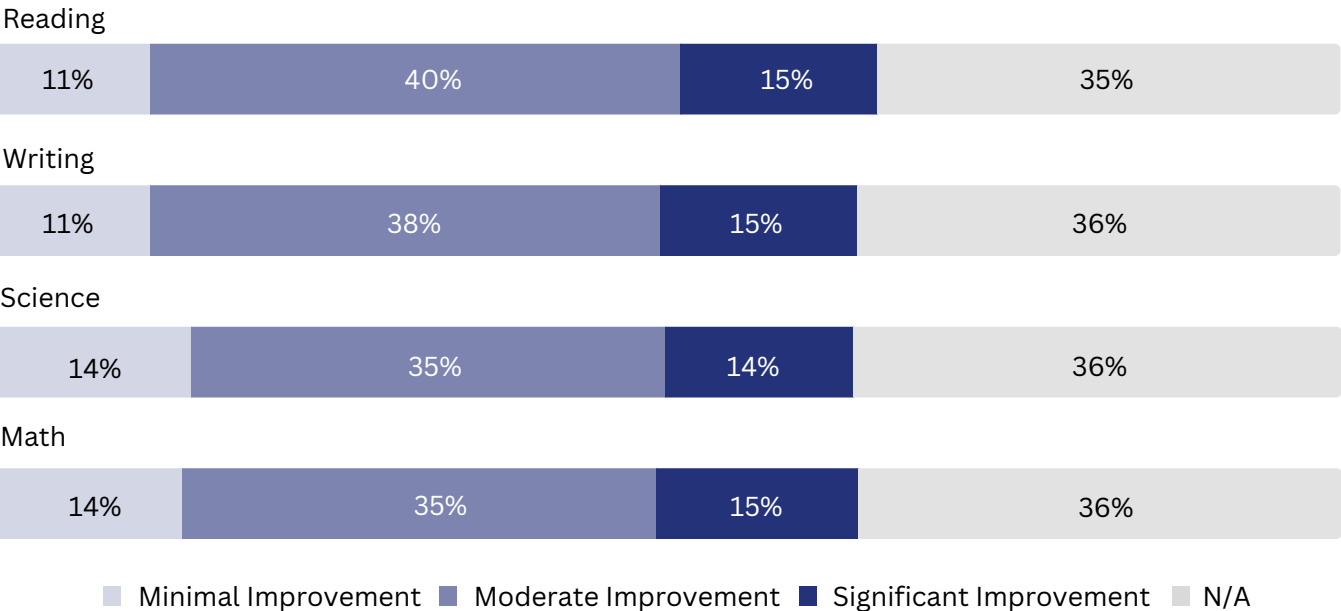
faced with difficult tasks. There was a 2% difference between items with the highest levels of improvement and those with the lowest. The items regarding persevering and handling challenging situations also had the highest percentages of students who did not improve from fall to spring (15% and 14%).

**High School Teacher Survey:** In addition to the questions regarding all students, high school teachers provided feedback about students' performance and improvement in four subject areas

(reading, writing, math, and science) and behaviors connected with academic achievement and collaboration (e.g., class participation and homework achievement).

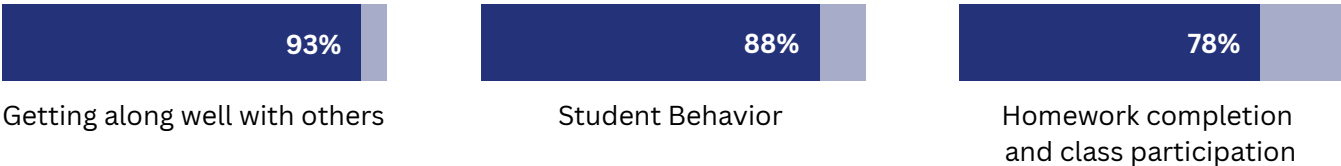
Teachers reported the highest level of improvement in reading, with 55% of students demonstrating moderate or significant improvement. The lowest level of improvement was reported for math (50%). As shown below, the majority of students met or exceeded grade-level expectations for the classroom behaviors at the time of the survey.

### HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS INDICATED THAT AT LEAST HALF OF STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED MODERATE OR SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN EACH SUBJECT AREA (N=256)



### THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS MET OR EXCEEDED GRADE-LEVEL EXPECTATIONS FOR GETTING ALONG WITH PEERS IN SPRING 2023 (N=256)

*Teachers indicated that most students demonstrated expected behavior for their grade levels*





# STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

K-2 (N=1655, 58% return rate)  
Grades 3-5 (N=1696, 53% return rate)  
Grades 6-12 (N = 1100, 33% return rate)

All K-12 students who attended even once during the year were given the opportunity to provide feedback and complete age-appropriate surveys. All student surveys were online and linked to both program and student ID numbers. K-2 students completed a four-item survey on their experiences in ESSER sites. Choice options for each item were: Yes, Sometimes, or No.



K-2 student responses indicated positive relationships and interactions with peers and staff. Most students reported that ESSER programs helped them learn new

things. Student enjoyment had the most mixed responses, with 25% of students reporting they sometimes enjoyed coming to their programs.

## MOST K-2 STUDENTS REPORTED HAVING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR PEERS AND ADULTS (N=1655)

Adults in this program treat kids with respect.



I have friends in this program.



This program helps me learn new things.



I enjoy coming to this program most of the time.

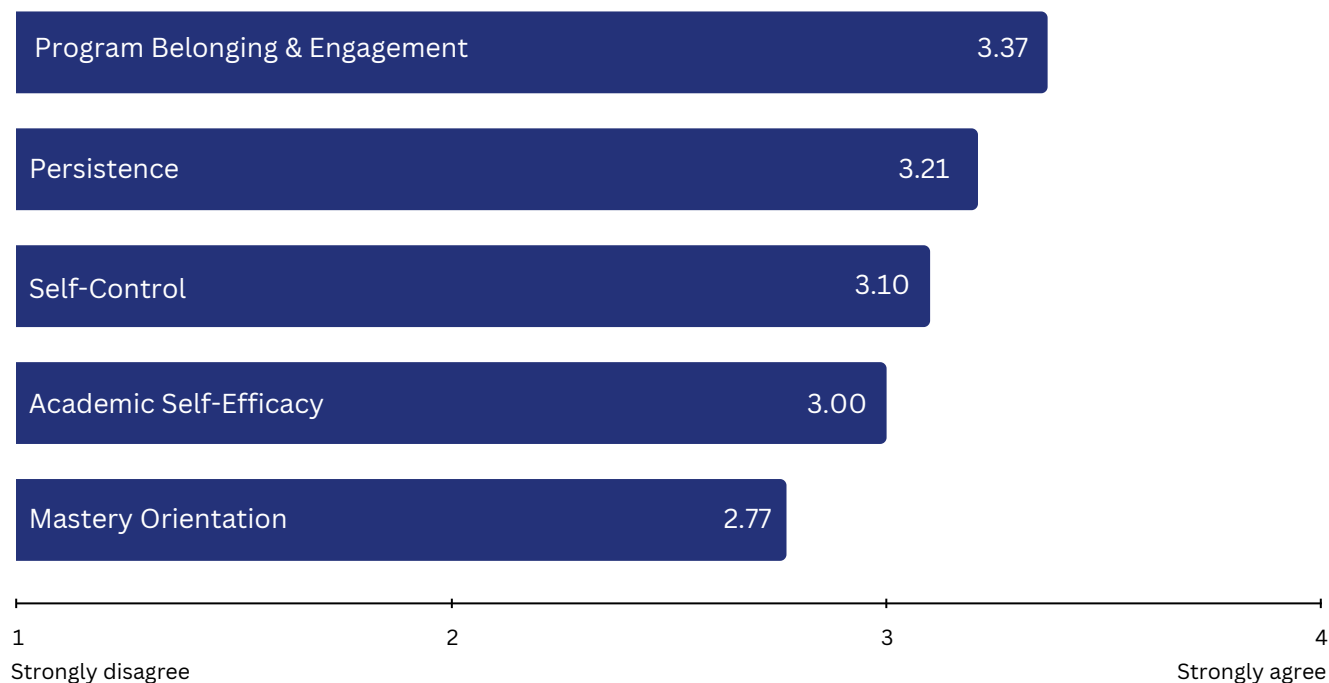


■ No ■ Sometimes ■ Yes



## STUDENTS IN GRADES 3-5 FELT CONNECTED TO PEERS AND PROGRAM STAFF (N=1696)

Respondents said they work hard to complete schoolwork and keep trying after making mistakes on tests and assignments



## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Students in grades 3-12 completed different versions of the student survey (Youth Development Executives of King County, 2015) based on their grade levels. The survey asked questions across several areas pertaining to each student personally and then regarding the impact of the program they had attended. Students were asked to rate each item on a four-point scale (*1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, and 4=Strongly Agree*). Domain means were calculated at the statewide level.

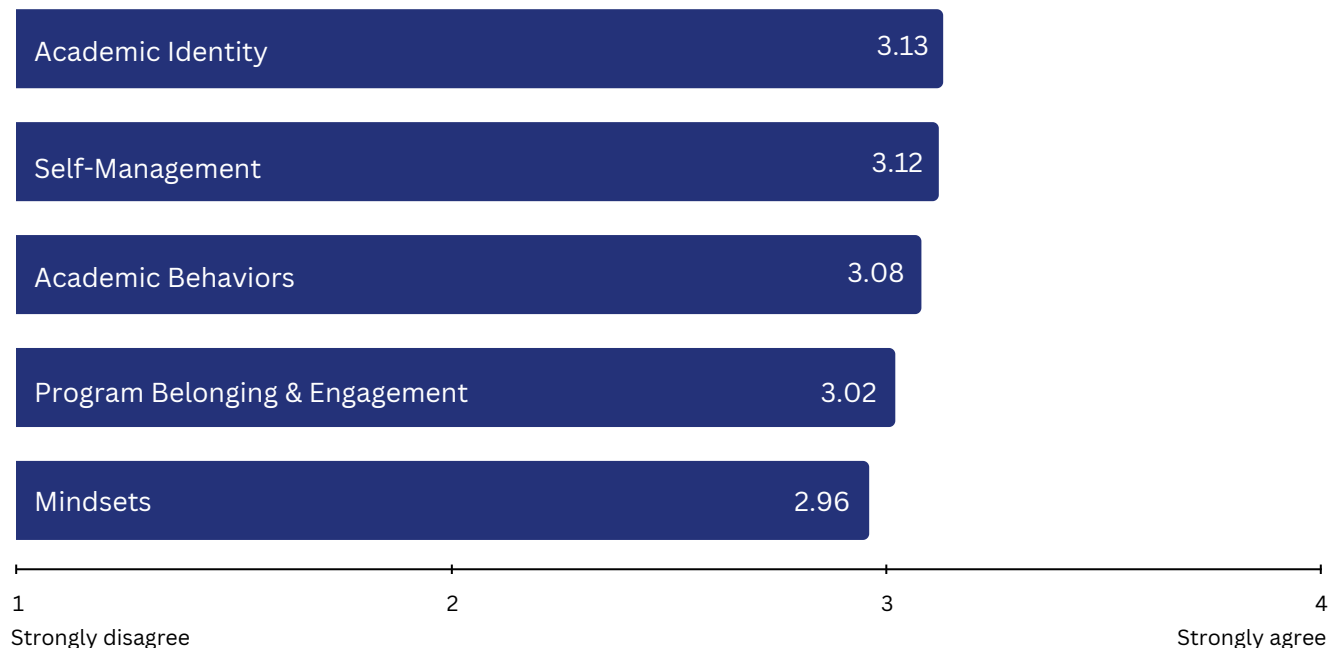
For 3rd-5th grade students (N=1696), the highest ratings were for Program Belonging and Engagement (M=3.37). Items under this domain ask about having friends (M=3.58), learning new things, and adult respect toward students (M=3.52). Persistence was the second-highest scoring domain. Items in this area ask about working hard to complete schoolwork (M=3.39), working harder after doing badly on a test (M=3.38), and continuing to work on missed problems until the answers are correct.





## 6TH-12TH GRADE STUDENTS PLACED HIGH IMPORTANCE ON EARNING GOOD GRADES (N=1100)

*Respondents said programs helped them understand and regulate their emotions*



For 6th-12th grade students (N=1100), Academic Identity had the highest average. Students reported that getting good grades is important to them (M=3.25), as is going to college (M=3.20). The highest item score (M=3.27) was reported for “This program has helped me stop doing something when I know I shouldn’t do it,” part of the Self-Management domain. Students agreed that their programs helped them learn how emotions impact school achievement (M=3.16) ) and improved their patience with others (M=3.14).

Lower-rated items were in the domain of Mindsets, with the lowest-rated items being “I stay focused on my work even when it’s boring” (M=2.74) and “I stay positive when things don’t go the way I want” (M=2.79).



# AFTERSCHOOL STAFF SURVEY OUTCOMES

In 2022-2023, afterschool staff had the opportunity to complete an afterschool staff survey developed by the evaluation team. A total of 730 staff members, including site supervisors and program directors, completed the survey.

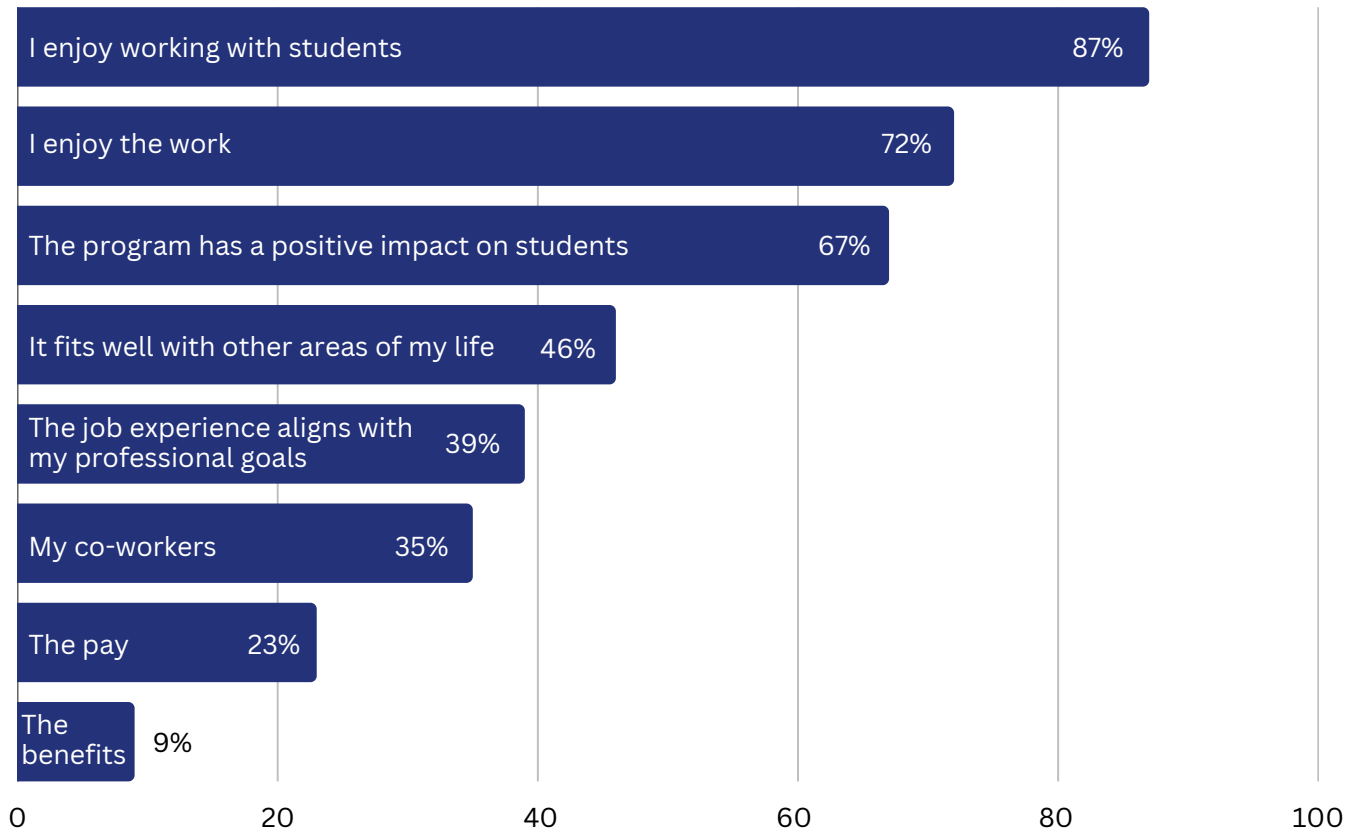
For program staff, 71% reported attending at least some postsecondary education, with 40% attaining a degree or certificate post-high school. Of the staff working in the programs, 20% hold bachelor’s degrees, and 11% have a master’s degree. Incubators had a higher

percentage of staff who reported obtaining a master’s degree (17% vs. 11% at Accelerators). Additionally, 14% of the workforce were current high school students. Accelerators reported more high school students on staff than Incubators (15% vs 6%).

When asked why they work in afterschool, most program staff (87%) responded that they enjoy working with students. Staff commonly indicated that they enjoy the work (72%) and value the program’s impact on students (67%). It was more common for Accelerator staff to say they work at programs for career-aligned job experience (40% vs 33%) and for staff at Incubators to list the pay (27% vs 22%).

## STAFF WORK AT PROGRAMS BECAUSE THEY ENJOY WORKING WITH STUDENTS (N=730)

*Less than a quarter of staff work in the program for the pay and/or benefits*



# AFTERSCHOOL STAFF PREPARATION AND CONFIDENCE

Afterschool staff were asked to rate their levels of preparation for performing many of the job responsibilities involved in an afterschool program, from delivering lessons to managing student behavior to handling an emergency. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a five-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4=Somewhat Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree). Domain means were calculated at the statewide level. Percentages below reflect the number of staff who somewhat or strongly agreed that they felt prepared.

Overall, ESSER program staff felt prepared to implement and deliver required programming. Across all site types, staff felt most prepared to work with others (94%), interact with school staff (90%), lead a club (88%), and address student behavior (88%). Staff at incubator sites tended to report higher levels of preparation. For example, 91% percent of Incubator program staff felt prepared to communicate with caregivers, compared to 78% of Accelerator program staff.

## MOST STAFF FELT PREPARED TO PERFORM JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Work with colleagues



Interact with classroom teachers and other school staff



Lead a club



Address and manage student behavior



Handle an emergency situation



Provide homework assistance



Deliver lessons



Communicate with caregivers



Statewide n=730

Accelerator n=641

Incubator n=89

% of staff who somewhat or strongly agreed that they felt prepared.







## PROGRAM QUALITY

Program quality was assessed through the NAQCIS self-assessment. Eighty-eight sites completed the self-assessment in the fall of 2022.

The **NAQCIS Self-Assessment** (Johnson, et al., 2019) was completed by the site-level management team with team members reaching consensus on the items and agreeing to a rating. Ratings are based on a rubric and help sites to determine if items should be scored as emerging, emerging plus, maturing, maturing plus, or excelling.

**Teams rated their programs on the following components:**

- 1) Administration with sound management and well-developed systems
- 2) Diverse, prepared staff including certificated teachers
- 3) Relationships and interactions
- 4) Professional development
- 5) Intentional programming aligned with school day and engaged learning
- 6) Behavior management
- 7) Family engagement
- 8) Community-School partnerships and resource sharing
- 9) Ongoing assessment and improvement
- 10) Safety, health, and wellness



## NAQCIS SELF-ASSESSMENT

The **NAQCIS Self-Assessment** was designed to be completed by a management team with knowledge and understanding of the goals and daily operations of the program. Members of the team have different roles and may bring different perspectives based on those roles. To complete the self-assessment, members of the management team observed the program within two weeks of the meeting, considered evidence to support their ratings, and came to a consensus on the status of their program across the multiple categories. The Nebraska Afterschool Quality and Continuous



97%

Sites scoring Maturing or higher for  
Relationships and Interactions

78%

Sites scoring Maturing or higher for  
Ongoing Assessment and Improvement

Improvement System Self-Assessment is an annual tool designed to assess the program's own evaluation of its performance on domains deemed necessary for a high-quality afterschool program. Individual items in each domain were rated by the program as emerging (1), emerging plus (2), maturing (3), maturing plus (4), or excelling (5).

Relationships and administration were noted as strengths statewide and were a highlight for many sites. More than ten percent of sites rated themselves in “emerging” category for professional development, community-school partnerships and ongoing assessment and improvement, indicating some programs implement practices at beginning levels.

Sites rated most aspects  
of their program as  
demonstrating at least

**MATURING**  
levels of quality.



## 2022-2023 Statewide ESSER Self-Assessment Results (N=88)

DOMAIN	EMERGING	EMERGING PLUS	MATURING	MATURING PLUS	EXCELLING
Administration with Sound Management and Well-developed Systems	3%	5%	11%	13%	68%
Diverse, Prepared Staff including Certificated Educators	3%	7%	18%	26%	45%
Relationships and Interactions	2%	1%	15%	41%	41%
Professional Development	10%	7%	23%	30%	30%
Intentional Programming Aligned with School Day & Engaged Learning	3%	5%	17%	43%	32%
Behavior Management	3%	8%	21%	41%	26%
Family Engagement	10%	11%	34%	30%	15%
Community-School Partnerships and Resource Sharing	7%	9%	18%	24%	41%
Ongoing Assessment and Improvement	16%	6%	10%	21%	47%
Safety, Health, and Wellness	3%	3%	15%	21%	57%

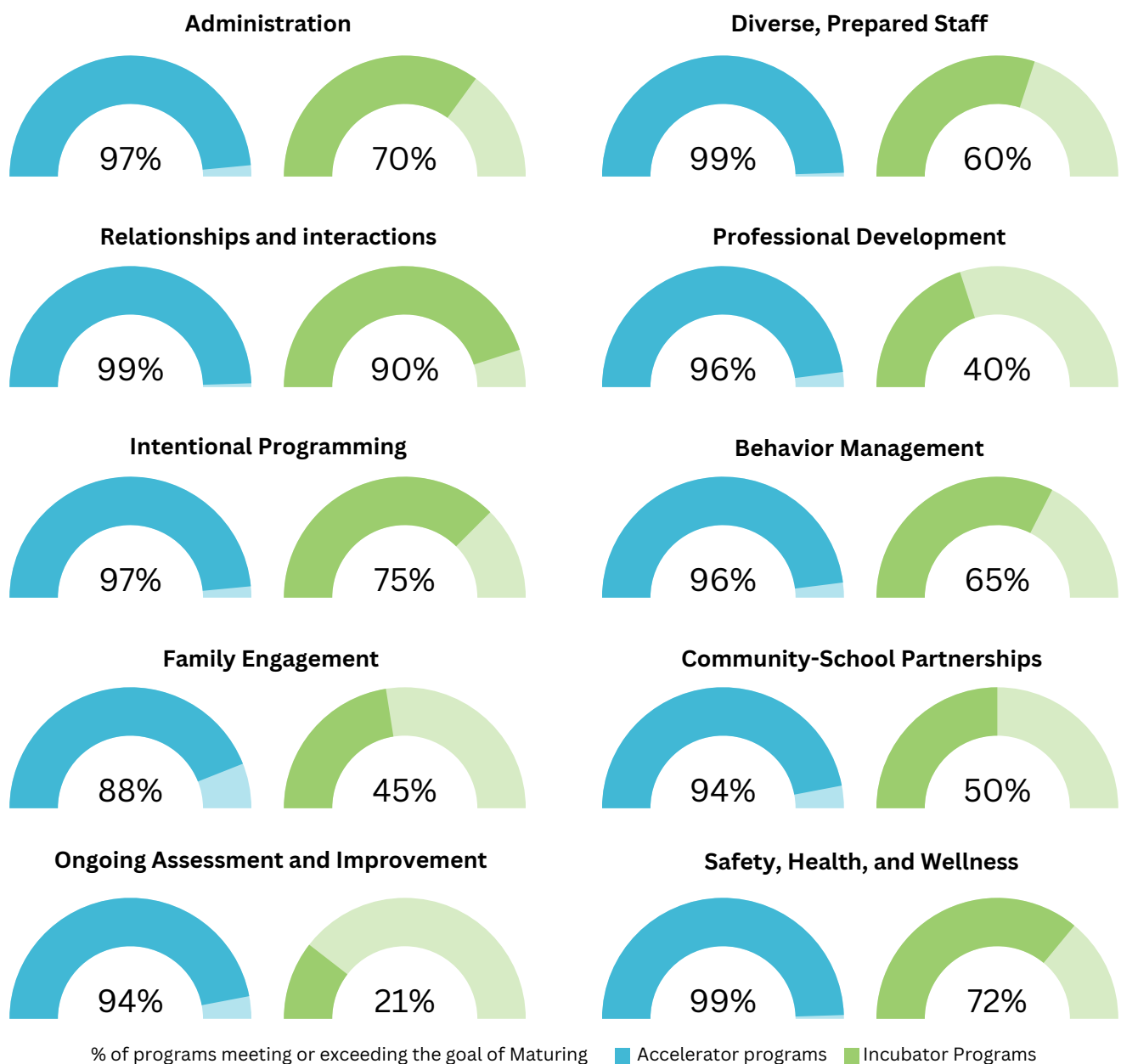




## SELF-ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR ACCELERATOR AND INCUBATOR PROGRAMS

Accelerator programs have been operating for an average of 13 years within the structure of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program. They have participated in multiple years of continuous improvement planning and professional development tailored to address the evidence-based domains of the Self-Assessment tool. In comparison, many Incubator sites were started in response to ESSER fund availability and are at the start of program development. Differences between Accelerator and Incubator programs illustrate the potential for growth in new programs when they receive on-going, responsive, and tailored support for continuous improvement.

Relationships and Interactions was a strength for both site types, with at least 90% of sites scoring at or above the program goal of Maturing. Family engagement had room for improvement for both Incubator and Accelerator programs, supporting the need for many Beyond School Bells Caregiver Engagement initiatives. The Ongoing Assessment and Professional Development domains had the greatest discrepancy between Incubator and Accelerator sites, indicating the impact ongoing support can have in these areas.



# KEY FINDINGS

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- Sites provided over 18,000 hours of programming in 2022-2023. STEM and healthy and active lifestyle programming were popular offerings for more than 80 sites across the state.
- Nonprofit organizations and educational institutions made up the majority of community partners for Accelerator sites and were frequently reported by Incubator sites. Community partnerships provide diversity in programming opportunities, as well as additional materials, in-kind services, and direct funding to sites.
- Students who participated in afterschool programming had positive relationships with peers and adults and generally enjoyed the program. They also felt a sense of belonging.
- Caregivers most valued the supervision provided in after-school programs. The majority of caregivers also valued the recreation, academic support, and enrichment opportunities that were provided. Caregivers felt their children were safe and benefited from programming, and the staff cared about their children.
- Teachers identified several areas where students improved their social, emotional, and behavioral development from fall to spring, such as handling challenging situations.
- Afterschool staff enjoyed their work and working with students. The majority valued the impact the program's impact on the children that attended. Staff felt prepared to perform their job responsibilities, which included leading a club and managing student behavior.
- Accelerator sites showed greater proficiency in all domains compared to Incubator sites in NAQCIS self-assessment. This highlights how the investment into after-school programs with community partners, trained staff, and quality programming benefits sites over time.



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