ESSER III ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Beyond School Bells
nebraskachildren

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OVERVIEW OF ESSER III

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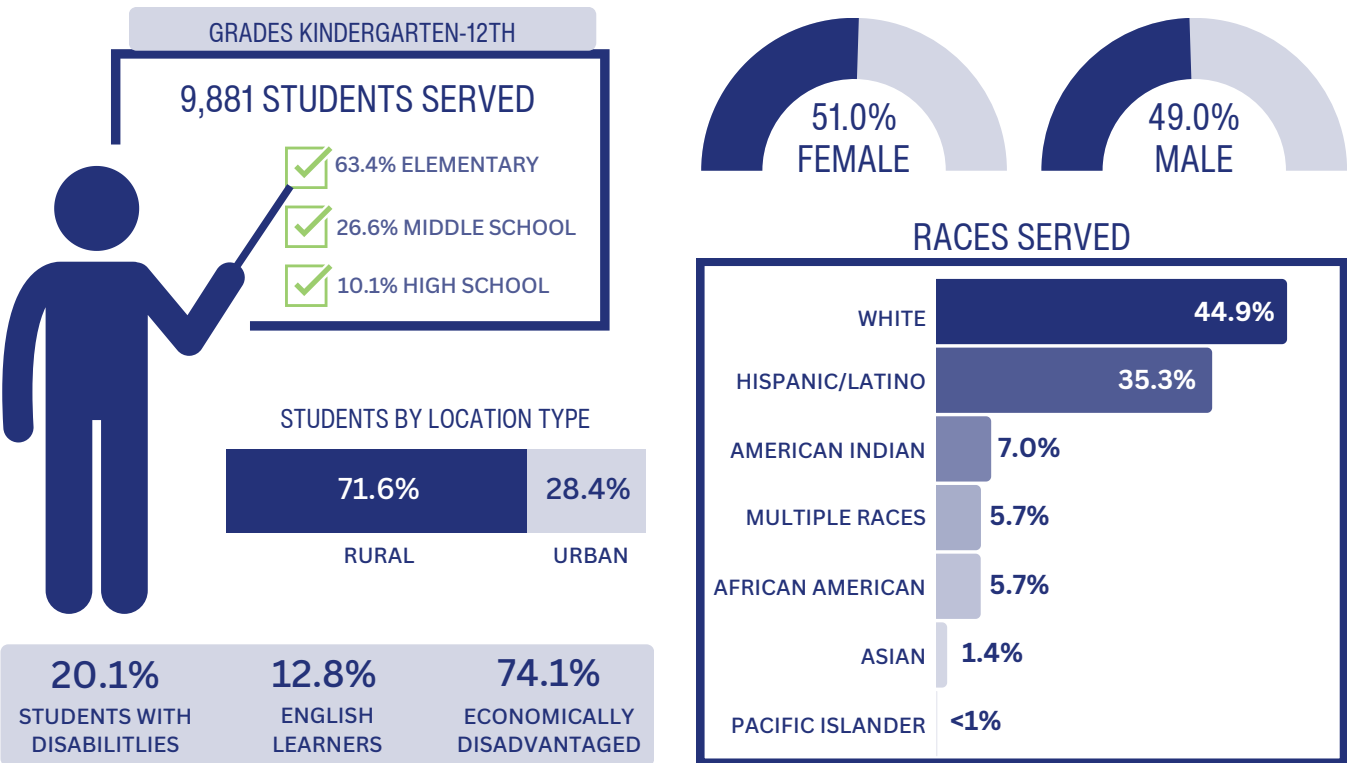
Accelerator sites are established programs and/or sites that receive 21st Century Community Learning Center funds in addition to ESSER funding.

Accelerator with Incubator sites are established programs that added additional new programming sites with ESSER funds.
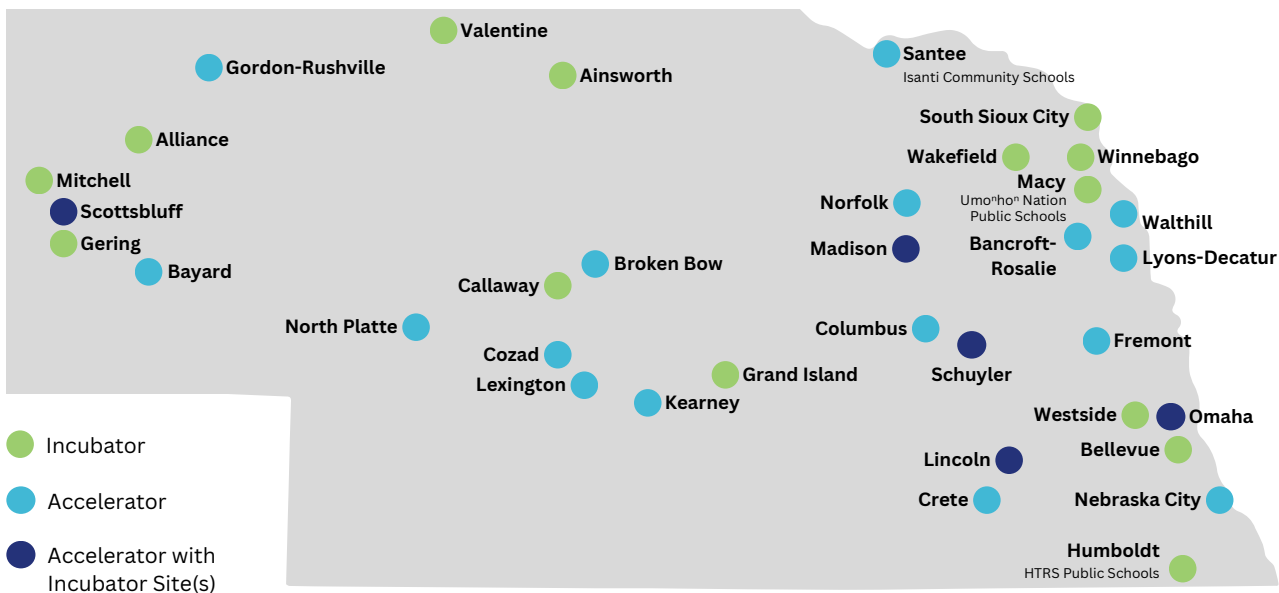
WHO WE SERVED

ALL ESSER-FUNDED SITES

GRADES KINDERGARTEN-12TH

9,881 STUDENTS SERVED

- ✓ 63.4% ELEMENTARY
- ✓ 26.6% MIDDLE SCHOOL
- ✓ 10.1% HIGH SCHOOL

51.0% FEMALE

49.0% MALE

STUDENTS BY LOCATION TYPE

71.6%	28.4%
RURAL	URBAN

20.1% STUDENTS WITH DISABILITLIES

12.8% ENGLISH LEARNERS

74.1% ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

RACES SERVED

WHITE	44.9%
HISPANIC/LATINO	35.3%
AMERICAN INDIAN	7.0%
MULTIPLE RACES	5.7%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	5.7%
ASIAN	1.4%
PACIFIC ISLANDER	<1%

2023-2024 SITE LOCATIONS
ESSER Collaborative ELO Communities

Valentine
Gordon-Rushville
Ainsworth
Santee
Isanti Community Schools
South Sioux City
Alliance
Wakefield
Winnebago
Mitchell
Macy
Umoⁿhoⁿ Nation Public Schools
Scottsbluff
Norfolk
Walthill
Gering
Madison
Bancroft-Rosalie
Lyons-Decatur
Bayard
Broken Bow
Callaway
North Platte
Columbus
Fremont
Cozad
Grand Island
Schuyler
Lexington
Kearney
Westside
Omaha
Bellevue
Lincoln
Crete
Nebraska City
Humboldt
HTRS Public Schools

- 🟢 Incubator
- 🔵 Accelerator
- 🔵 Accelerator with Incubator Site(s)
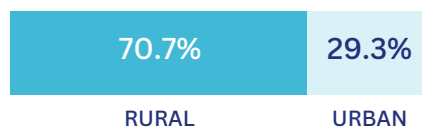
ACCELERATOR SITES

GRADES KINDERGARTEN-12TH

7,734 STUDENTS SERVED

- ✓ 61.3% ELEMENTARY
- ✓ 29.5% MIDDLE SCHOOL
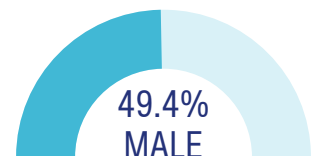- ✓ 9.2% HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENTS BY LOCATION TYPE

70.7%	29.3%
RURAL	URBAN

20.4% STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

13.2% ENGLISH LEARNERS

74.7% ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

50.6% FEMALE

49.4% MALE

RACES SERVED

WHITE	45.1%
HISPANIC/LATINO	35.8%
AMERICAN INDIAN	6.3%
MULTIPLE RACES	6.0%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	5.2%
ASIAN	1.5%
PACIFIC ISLANDER	<1%

INCUBATOR SITES

52.7% FEMALE

47.3% MALE

RACES SERVED

WHITE	44.4%
HISPANIC/LATINO	33.5%
AMERICAN INDIAN	9.4%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	7.4%
MULTIPLE RACES	4.6%
ASIAN	<1%
PACIFIC ISLANDER	0%
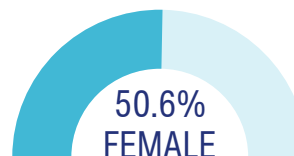
GRADES KINDERGARTEN-12TH

2,147 STUDENTS SERVED

- ✓ 70.8% ELEMENTARY
- ✓ 15.8% MIDDLE SCHOOL
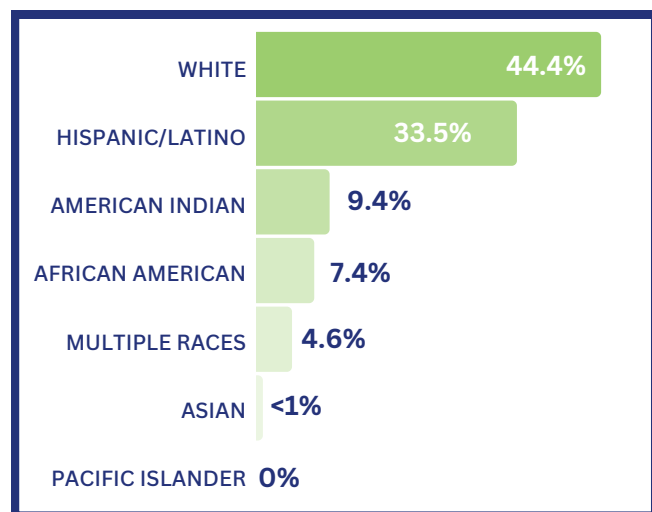- ✓ 13.4% HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENTS BY LOCATION TYPE

74.7% RURAL   **25.3%** URBAN

19.1% STUDENTS WITH DISABILITLIES

11.1% ENGLISH LEARNERS

71.8% ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

AFTERSCHOOL STAFF

Staff members at afterschool programs have various responsibilities. They provide supervision, offer academic support, create activities, and collaborate with fellow staff, caregivers, teachers, and community members.

Programs aim to provide safe environments where students can connect with their peers and build confidence in participating with new or challenging enrichment activities. Having strong staff-student relationships where students know they are valued supports those goals.

INCUBATOR SITES UTILIZED MORE SCHOOL-DAY TEACHERS THAN ACCELERATOR SITES

As sites establish themselves, they often rely on school staff to help fill their programming needs. Incubator sites, where programs are still developing, are relying more on school-day teachers (50.7%) to stay later and help invest in the program. Accelerator sites have more established workforces. Many employees are hired from community members, subcontractors, and parents (25.3%). Both sites utilized a variety of other staff including non-teaching school-day staff (e.g., custodial, security, paras), college students, and high school students.

Other school-day staff **Incubator sites** recruited included speech pathologists, librarians, and guidance counselors.

INCUBATOR SITES

SCHOOL- DAY TEACHERS	NON-TEACHING SCHOOL-DAY STAFF	COMMUNITY MEMBERS		
50.7%	23.3%	15.9%	8.1%	6.7%

COLLEGE STUDENTS
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

ACCELERATOR SITES

COMMUNITY MEMBERS	NON-TEACHING SCHOOL-DAY STAFF	COLLEGE STUDENTS	HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS	SCHOOL-DAY TEACHERS
25.3%	24.9%	21.3%	14.4%	14%
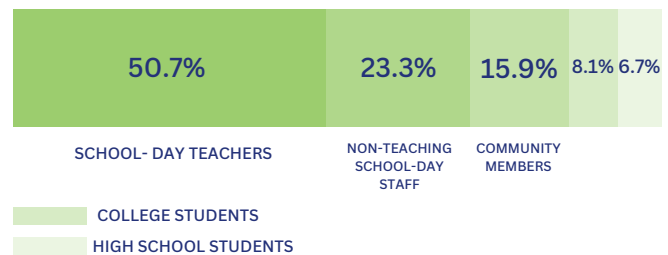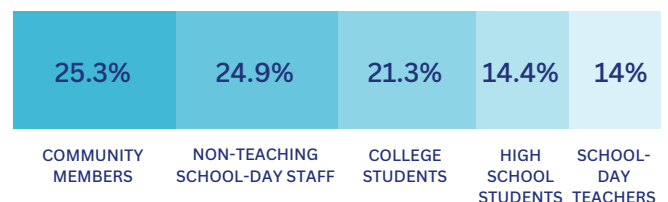
ACTIVITIES

Afterschool programs supported by ESSER III funds allowed students to experience diverse activities that support their learning in fun, engaging, and creative ways. Through hands-on opportunities, students explored different areas of interest while developing new skills.

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

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM)

79 Sites offered programming

ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT (INCLUDING TUTORING AND HOMEWORK HELP)

80 Sites offered programming

CAREER COMPETENCIES AND CAREER READINESS

26 Sites offered programming

HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

83 Sites offered programming

YOUTH LEADERSHIP*

10 Sites offered programming

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER SUPPORT

19 Sites offered programming

In addition to the areas above, both Accelerator and Incubator sites provided a myriad of programming opportunities covering many interest areas. Accelerator sites also included technology education, engineering, entrepreneurship, arts and music, and community/service learning.

Incubator sites included an array of arts, music, trades, and life skills. Beading, drumming, sewing, weaving, hair braiding, woodworking, archery, fishing, Native American arts club, meat judging, and hunting safety are examples of these unique programs.

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

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Most afterschool programs seek out community partnerships to provide additional programming opportunities, supplies, volunteers, funding, field trips, and professional development. These partnerships are another way for some programs to achieve higher quality programming and increase their sustainability.

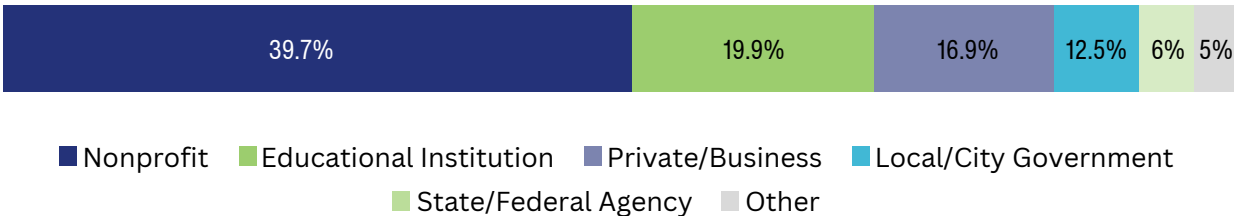> **Incubator sites** had 2 community partners on average.

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

From local organizations within a programs' community, to state and federal agencies, Incubator and Accelerator sites often recruited from various places. For many programs, nonprofit groups (e.g., Boys and Girls Club, 4H, and YMCA) and educational institutions (e.g., University of Nebraska campuses) made up most community partnerships. In Accelerator sites they accounted for more than a third of all partners. Other partnerships with local business, city governments (e.g., public libraries, local chamber of commerce), states/federal agencies (e.g., state parks, natural resource districts) as well as individual community members added support to programs.

2023-2024 Accelerator Partnerships (N=637)

Nonprofit	Educational Institution	Private/Business	Local/City Government	State/Federal Agency	Other
39.7%	19.9%	16.9%	12.5%	6%	5%

■ Nonprofit ■ Educational Institution ■ Private/Business ■ Local/City Government
■ State/Federal Agency ■ Other

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 100 sites in the fall of 2023.

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.

In addition to completing the annual self-assessment, 35 ESSER sites received external observations during the 2023-2024 reporting period. External observations are conducted by the

external evaluation team from UNMC. Feedback is provided to sites within 2 weeks of the observation.

EVALUATION OUTCOMES

For this reporting period, outcomes are reported for quality (both external observations and self-assessment), teachers, parent, and student feedback, afterschool staff feedback, community partner 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).

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 3600 caregivers in spring of 2023.

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

SURVEY OUTCOMES

2023-2024 SURVEY RETURN RATES

SURVEY	RESPONDENTS	RETURN RATE
Caregiver	3673	37%
Teacher	6259	63%
K-2 Student	1884	62%
3rd-5th Student	1878	57%
6th-12th Student	1263	35%
Afterschool Staff	730	N/A
Community Partner	218	30%

*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 even one hour, 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=3673; 37% RETURN RATE)

The caregiver survey was provided to caregivers of all students who attended during the 2023-2024 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=3673) were asked how important different factors were in their childs' afterschool programs. They rated each component as being very unimportant, unimportant, neutral, important, or very important.

For caregivers, Supervision was rated as most important (important or very important: 93%), with all other components rated as either important or very important by at least 90% of caregivers who completed the survey.

SUPERVISION WAS RATED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR CAREGIVERS ENROLLING STUDENTS IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (N=3673)

Caregivers also appreciate the opportunity for academic support and homework help
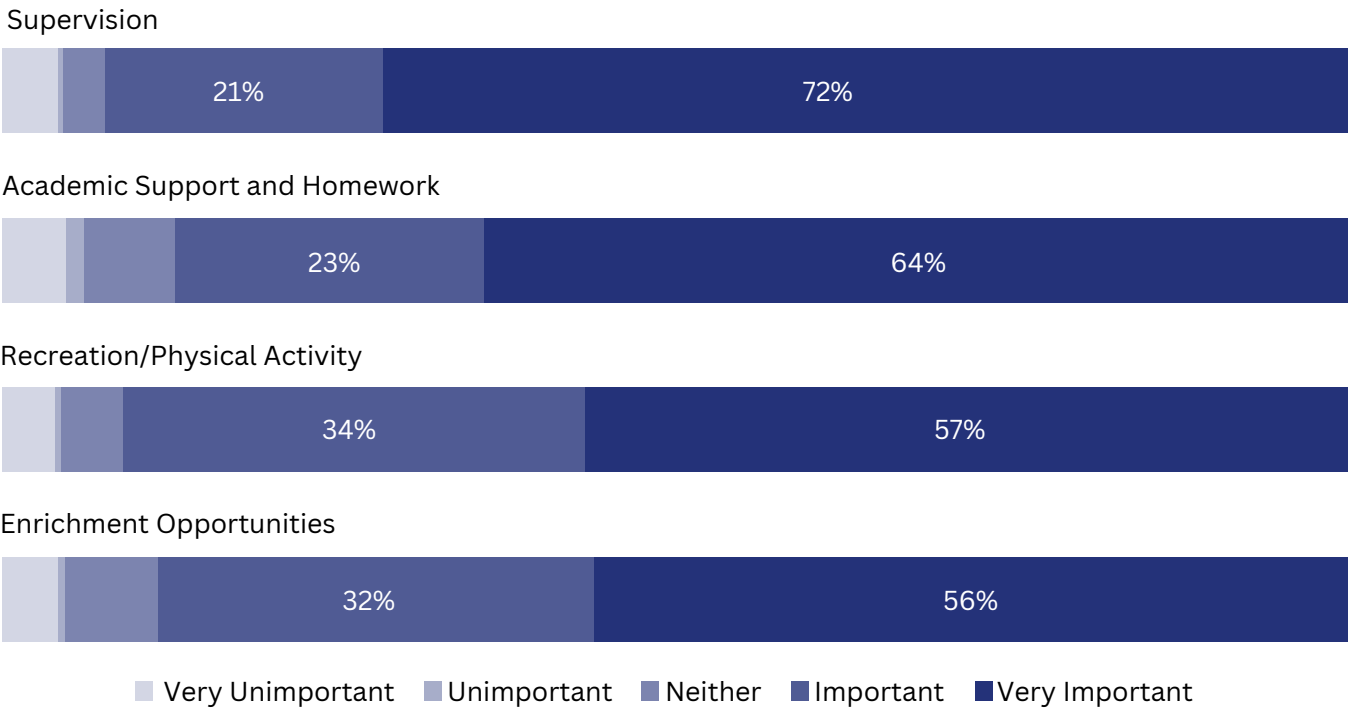
Supervision
21% | 72%

Academic Support and Homework
23% | 64%

Recreation/Physical Activity
34% | 57%

Enrichment Opportunities
32% | 56%

■ Very Unimportant ■ Unimportant ■ Neither ■ Important ■ Very Important

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

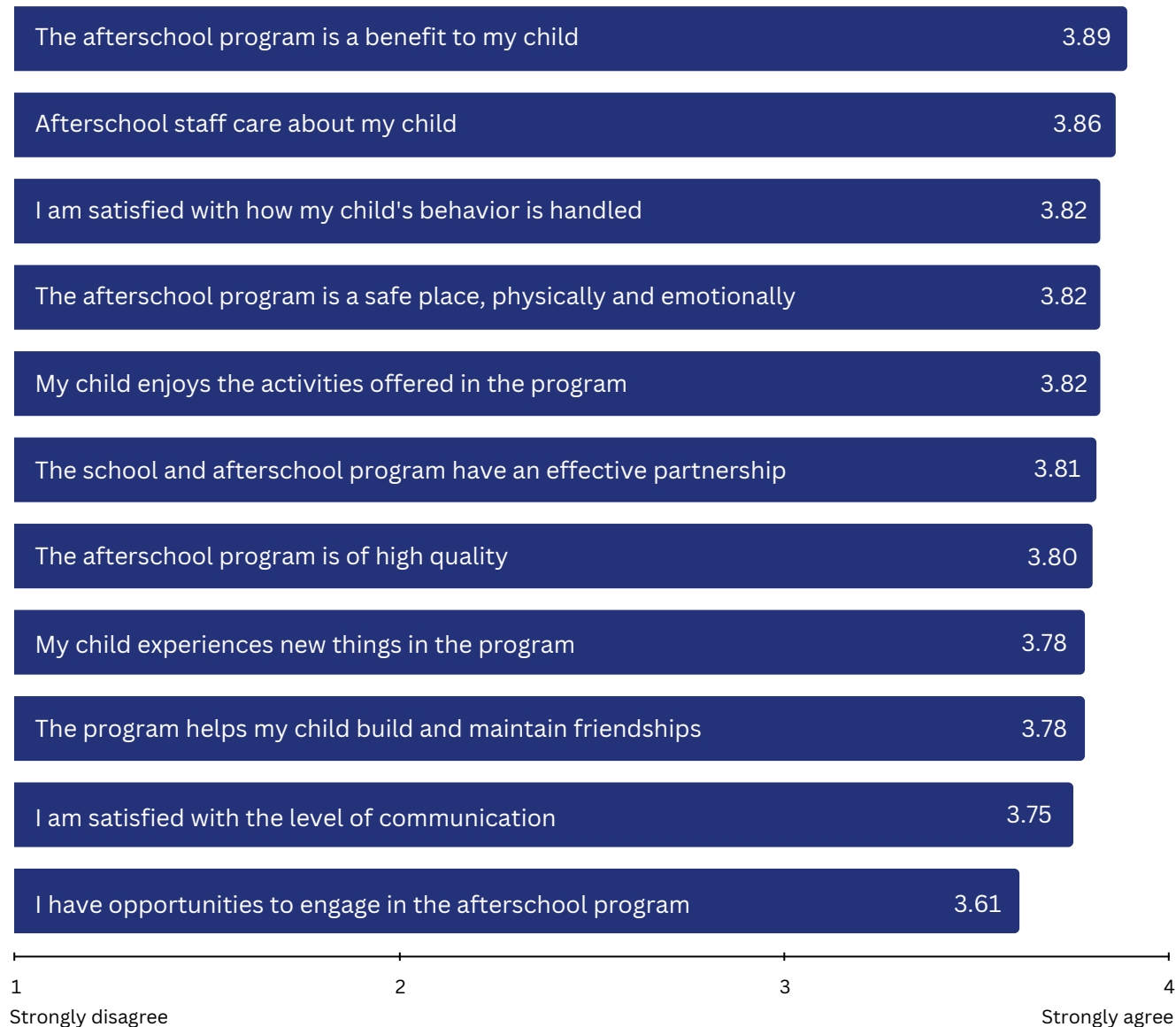## ON AVERAGE, CAREGIVERS GAVE PROGRAMS HIGH RATINGS IN ALL AREAS (N=3673)

They viewed programs as high quality and felt the staff cared about their children.

Item	Rating
The afterschool program is a benefit to my child	3.89
Afterschool staff care about my child	3.86
I am satisfied with how my child's behavior is handled	3.82
The afterschool program is a safe place, physically and emotionally	3.82
My child enjoys the activities offered in the program	3.82
The school and afterschool program have an effective partnership	3.81
The afterschool program is of high quality	3.80
My child experiences new things in the program	3.78
The program helps my child build and maintain friendships	3.78
I am satisfied with the level of communication	3.75
I have opportunities to engage in the afterschool program	3.61

1 — Strongly disagree   2   3   4 — Strongly agree

Caregivers were asked to rate the above items on a 1 to 4 scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 4=Strongly Agree). Caregivers gave all items high ratings, slightly or strongly agreeing with the statements.

Overall, caregivers recognized the quality of the programs and the relationships between program staff and students. They also appreciated students' access to enrichment activities and academic support. Satisfaction with how the program addresses behavior, the program being a safe place both physically and emotionally, and the children enjoying the activities offered were also rated among the highest items. Lower ratings for the item considering family engagement opportunities suggest a need for further training and support.

K-12 TEACHERS REPORTED HIGHEST RATES OF IMPROVEMENT IN AREAS RELATED TO PERSEVERANCE, FRIENDSHIPS, AND HANDLING CHALLENGES (N=6259)

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

Perseveres with difficult or challenging tasks

| 15% | 42% | 43% |

Developed and maintained friendships

| 9% | 42% | 50% |

Handles challenging situations

| 15% | 42% | 44% |

Seems to "bounce back" from setbacks or failures

| 11% | 41% | 48% |

Is adaptable/flexible when changes occur

| 9% | 41% | 50% |

Gets along well with others

| 10% | 41% | 49% |

Able to regulate emotions

| 12% | 40% | 48% |

Ability to consider perspectives of others

| 13% | 40% | 48% |

■ Not Improved ■ Improved ▨ None Needed

TEACHER SURVEY OUTCOMES (N=6259; 63% RETURN RATE)

As one part of the evaluation process, classroom teachers rated individual students on their level of social, emotional, and behavioral development. Using grade-level expectations, teachers determine if each student either falls below, meets, or performs above expectations. They follow this with evaluating student improvement on the same set of skills.

The highest levels of improvement from fall to spring (42%) were reported in the items regarding students' perseverance with challenging tasks, developing and maintaining friendships, and handling
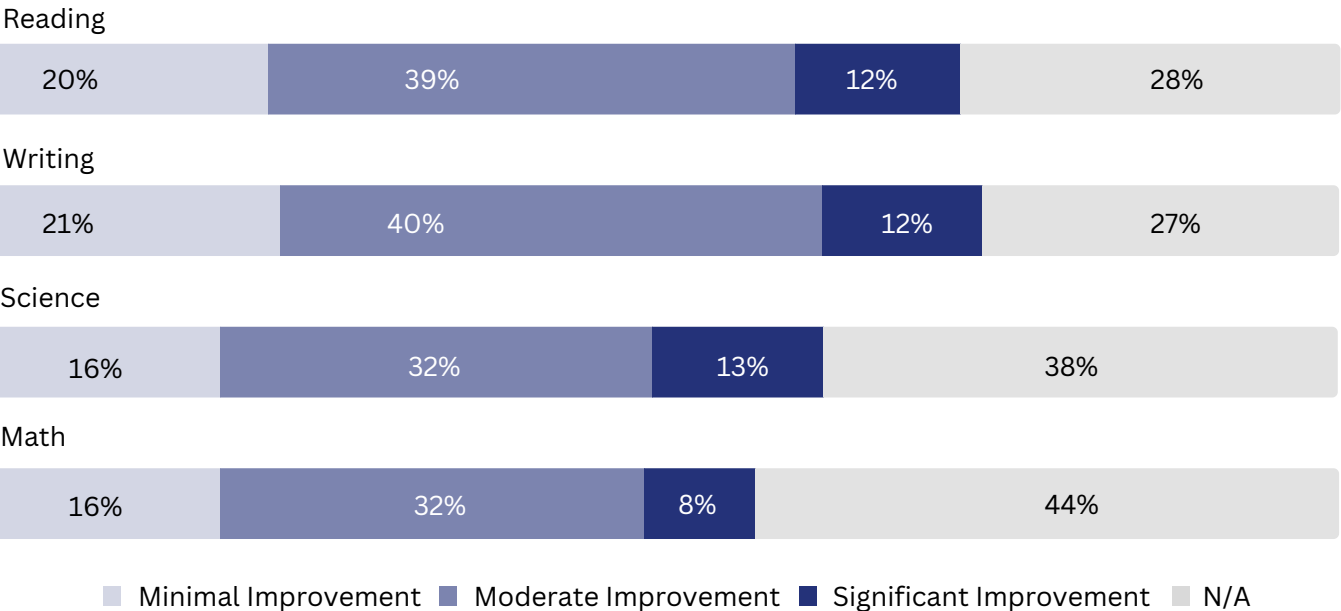
challenging situations. There was a 2% difference between items with the highest levels of improvement and those with the lowest. The items regarding persevering and handling challenging situations also had the highest percentages of students who did not improve from fall to spring (15%).

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).
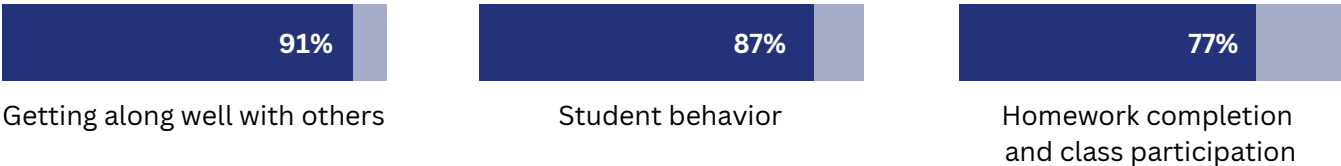
Teachers reported the highest level of improvement in writing, with 52% of students demonstrating moderate or significant improvement. The lowest level of improvement was reported for math 40%). As shown below, the majority of students met or exceeded grade-level expectations for the classroom behaviors at the time of the survey.

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS INDICATED THAT AT LEAST HALF OF STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED MODERATE OR SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN READING AND WRITING (N=445).

Reading
| 20% | 39% | 12% | 28% |

Writing
| 21% | 40% | 12% | 27% |

Science
| 16% | 32% | 13% | 38% |

Math
| 16% | 32% | 8% | 44% |

■ Minimal Improvement ■ Moderate Improvement ■ Significant Improvement ■ N/A

THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS MET OR EXCEEDED GRADE-LEVEL EXPECTATIONS FOR GETTING ALONG WITH PEERS IN SPRING 2024 (N=445)

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

| 91% | 87% | 77% |
| Getting along well with others | Student behavior | Homework completion and class participation |

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

K-2 (N=1844, 62% return rate)
Grades 3-5 (N=1878, 57% return rate)
Grades 6-12 (N = 1263, 35% 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 program staff and other participants. The majority of students said that they had friends at their programs, which could increase their desire to attend programs and engage with others during expanded learning activities. Most students reported that their ESSER programs helped them learn new things and that they enjoyed attending at least some of the time.

MOST K-2 STUDENTS REPORTED HAVING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS AND FRIENDSHIPS WITH PEERS IN THEIR PROGRAMS (N=1844)

I have friends in this program.

No	Sometimes	Yes
2%	10%	88%

Adults in this program treat kids with respect.

No	Sometimes	Yes
2%	10%	87%

I enjoy coming to this program most of the time.

No	Sometimes	Yes
4%	23%	74%

This program helps me learn new things.

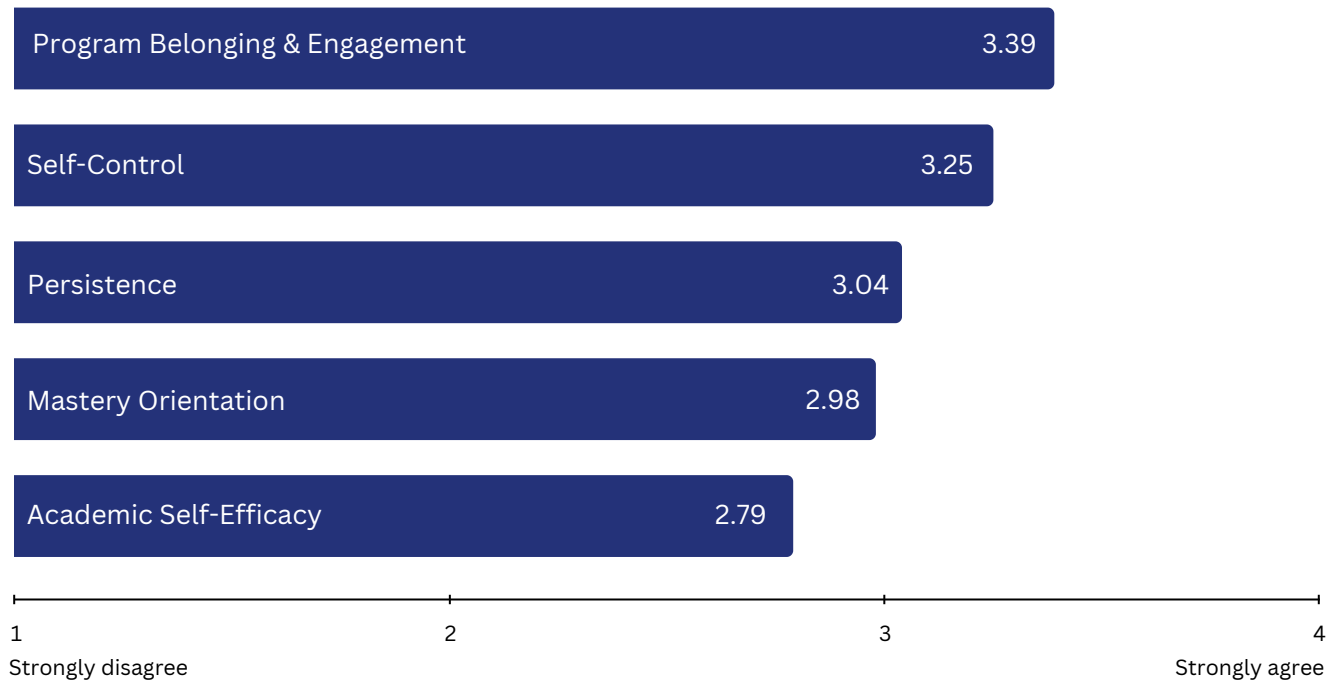| No	Sometimes	Yes
5%	20%	74%

☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐ Yes

STUDENTS IN GRADES 3-5 FELT CONNECTED TO OTHERS AT THEIR PROGRAMS (N=1878)

Students said they demonstrate self-control behaviors like waiting patiently and managing excitement

Domain	Score
Program Belonging & Engagement	3.39
Self-Control	3.25
Persistence	3.04
Mastery Orientation	2.98
Academic Self-Efficacy	2.79

1 — Strongly disagree   2   3   4 — Strongly agree

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=1878), the highest ratings were for Program Belonging and Engagement (M=3.39). Items under this domain ask about having friends (M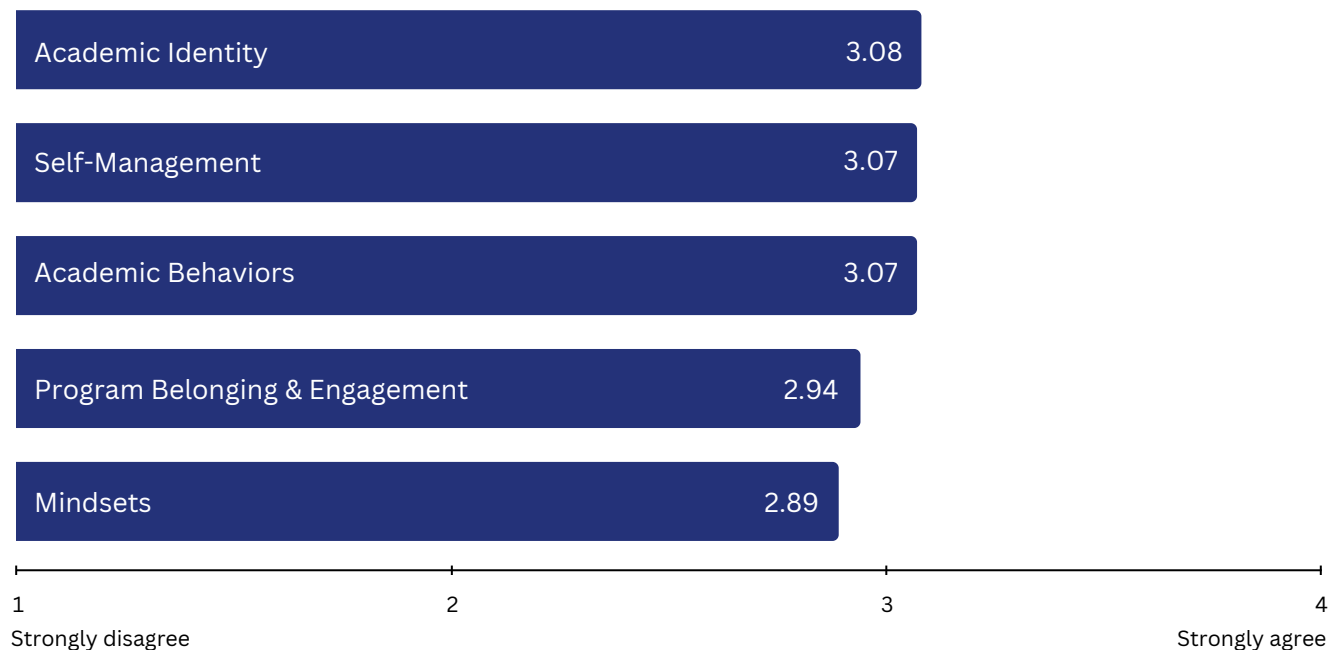=3.59) and adult respect toward students (M=3.56). Self-control was the second-highest-scoring domain. Items in this area ask about behaviors like waiting patiently in line (M=3.41) and sitting still when needed. The lowest level of agreement was reported for the item measuring students' persistence in working through problems until the answers are correct (M=2.54).

6TH-12TH GRADE STUDENTS PLACED HIGH IMPORTANCE ON EARNING GOOD GRADES (N=1263)

Students agreed that spending time at their afterschool programs helped them to better understand their own emotions and be more patient with peers.

Domain	Score
Academic Identity	3.08
Self-Management	3.07
Academic Behaviors	3.07
Program Belonging & Engagement	2.94
Mindsets	2.89

1 — Strongly disagree   2   3   4 — Strongly agree

For 6th-12th grade students (N=1263), Academic Identity had the highest average (M=3.08). Students reported that getting good grades is important to them (M=3.23), as is going to college (M=3.15). They also agreed that doing well in school was part of their identity. The highest item score (M=3.22) 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 afterschool programs helped them learn how emotions impact school achievement (M=3.10).

Lower-rated items were in the domains of Mindsets (e.g., "I stay focused on my work even when it's boring.") and Program Belonging and Engagement (e.g., "What we do in this program will help me succeed in life.").

AFTERSCHOOL STAFF SURVEY OUTCOMES

In 2023-2024, afterschool staff had the opportunity to complete an afterschool staff survey developed by the evaluation team. A total of 471 staff members, including site supervisors and program directors, completed the survey.
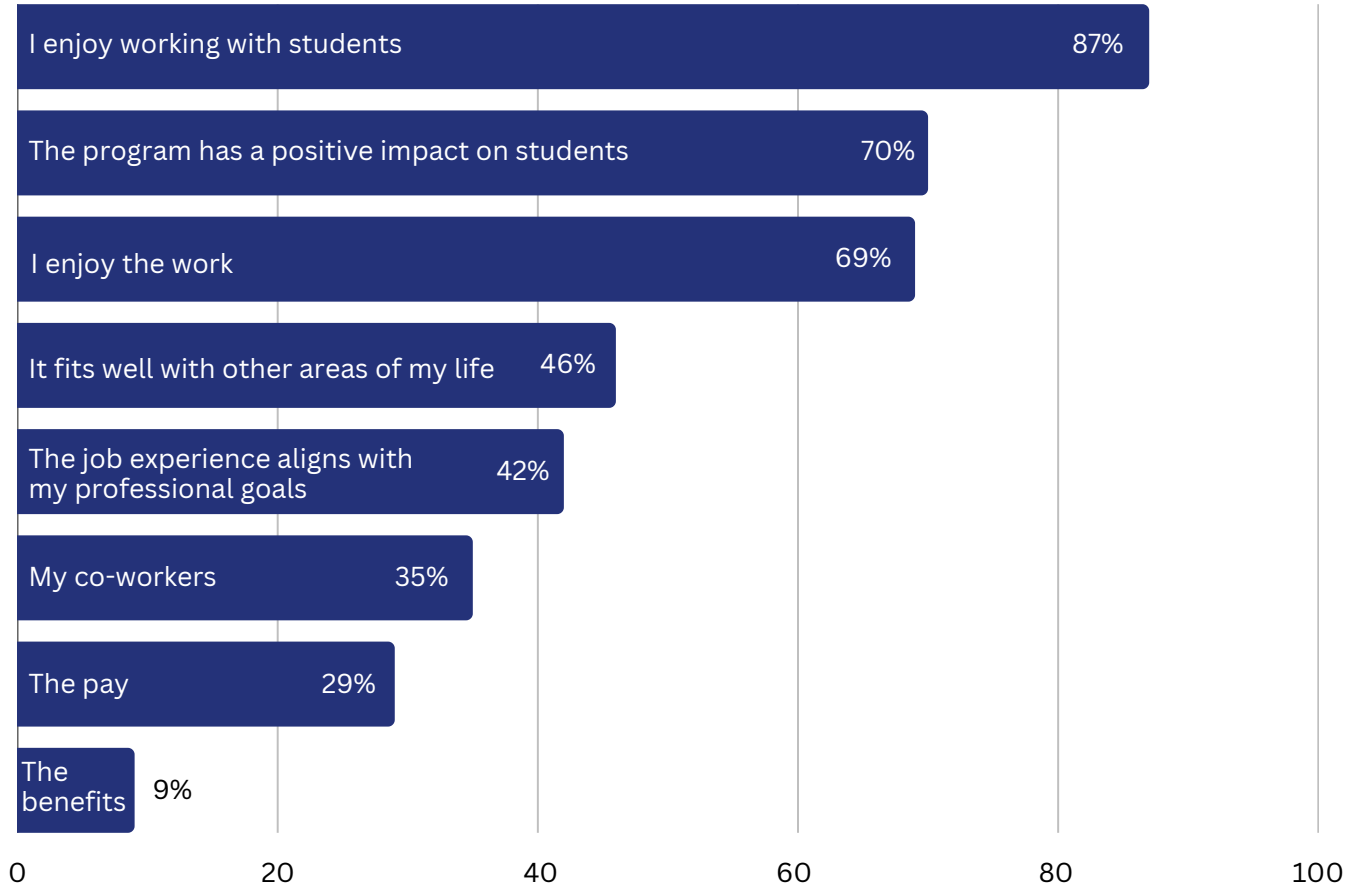
For program staff, 70% reported attending at least some postsecondary education, with 43% attaining a degree or certificate post-high school. Nineteen percent of the staff hold bachelor's degrees, and 15% have a master's degree or higher.

When asked why they work in afterschool, most program staff (87%) responded that they enjoy working with students. Staff commonly responded that they value the program's impact on students (70%) and enjoy the work (69%). It was least common for staff to indicate that they worked at programs because of the pay (29%) or the benefits (9%).

When asked how long they saw themselves remaining at their programs, more than half of staff said they would stay for two years or less (53%), followed by 3-to-6 years (31%), 7-to-10 years (8%) and 11 years or more (8%).

STAFF WORK IN AFTERSCHOOL BECAUSE OF STUDENTS AND THE POSITIVE IMPACT (N=474)

More than 40 percent said working in afterschool programs aligns with their future career goals.

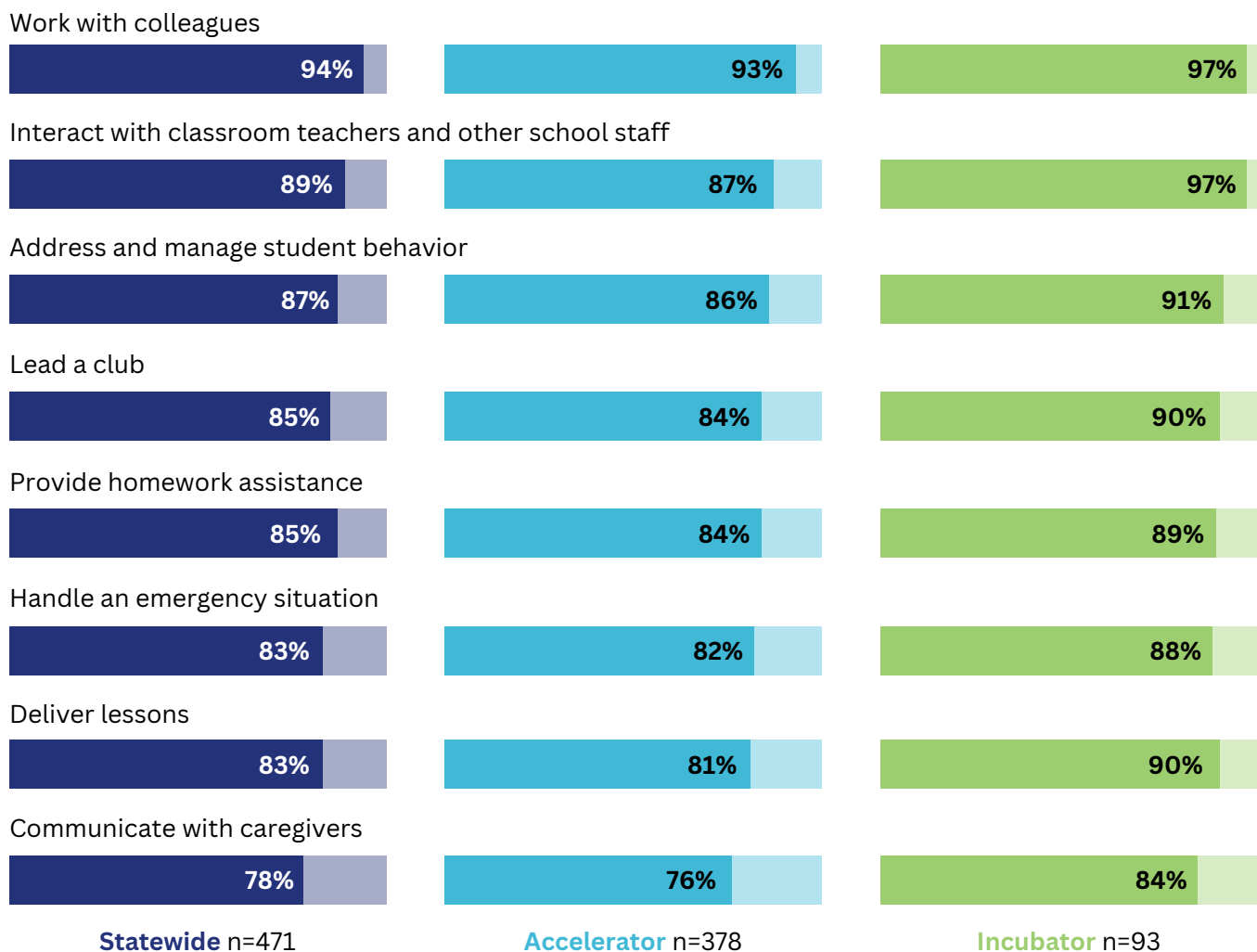| Reason	Percent
I enjoy working with students	87%
The program has a positive impact on students	70%
I enjoy the work	69%
It fits well with other areas of my life	46%
The job experience aligns with my professional goals	42%
My co-workers	35%
The pay	29%
The benefits	9%

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.

ESSER program staff typically felt prepared to implement and deliver required programming. Across all site types, staff felt most prepared to work with colleagues (94%), interact with school staff (88%), and address student behavior (87%). Staff at incubator sites tended to report higher levels of preparation. For example, 90% of Incubator program staff felt prepared to deliver lessons, compared to 81% of Accelerator program staff.

THE MAJORITY OF STAFF FELT PREPARED TO PERFORM JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Work with colleagues

Statewide	Accelerator	Incubator
94%	93%	97%

Interact with classroom teachers and other school staff

Statewide	Accelerator	Incubator
89%	87%	97%

Address and manage student behavior

Statewide	Accelerator	Incubator
87%	86%	91%

Lead a club

Statewide	Accelerator	Incubator
85%	84%	90%

Provide homework assistance

Statewide	Accelerator	Incubator
85%	84%	89%

Handle an emergency situation

Statewide	Accelerator	Incubator
83%	82%	88%

Deliver lessons

Statewide	Accelerator	Incubator
83%	81%	90%

Communicate with caregivers

Statewide	Accelerator	Incubator
78%	76%	84%

Statewide n=471   **Accelerator** n=378   **Incubator** n=93

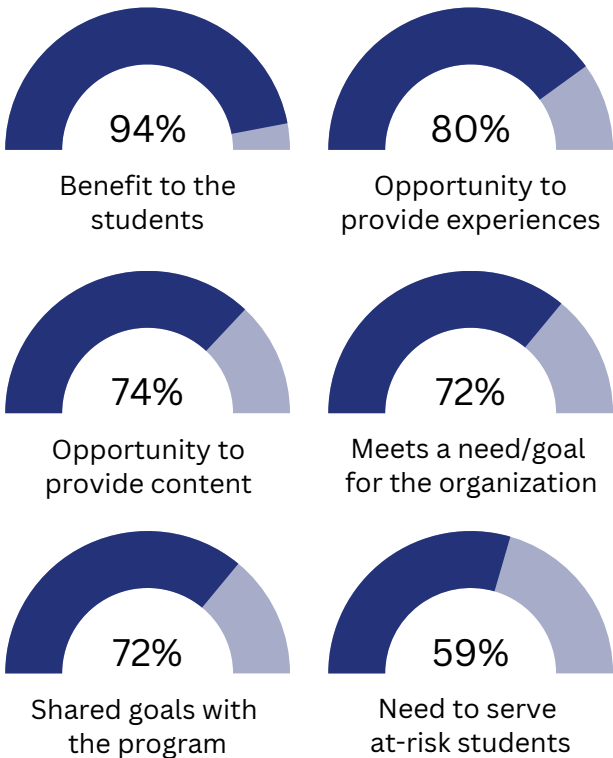% of staff who somewhat or strongly agreed that they felt prepared.

COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEY OUTCOMES

To better understand the collaboration with community partners, a partnership survey was disseminated to community partners designated by each site. The multi-item, online survey asked questions about communication, collaboration, relationships, training needs, and capacity for giving. Respondents (n=218) were also asked to provide open-ended feedback about partnership strengths and areas for growth.
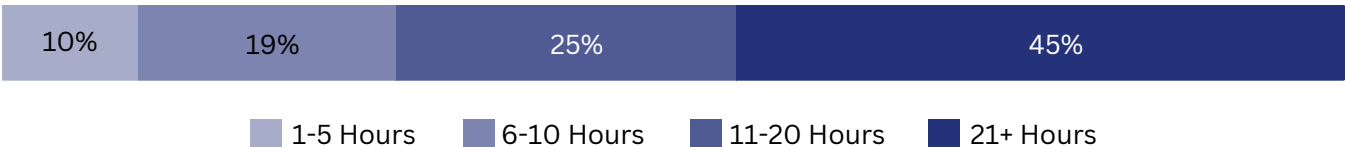
Partner organizations shared the ways that they supported their affiliated ESSER sites in 2023-2024. Partners typically provided programming opportunities for students (83%), and 64% of respondents reported that they solely provided programming to their afterschool sites. Organizations also provided funding and materials like food and gardening supplies (26%) and offered discounted services like transportation or reduced-price admissions (12%). Some organizations supported programs by providing professional development (14%) or serving as the lead agencies (7%).

REASONS WHY ORGANIZATIONS PARTNER WITH AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

94% Benefit to the students

80% Opportunity to provide experiences

74% Opportunity to provide content

72% Meets a need/goal for the organization

72% Shared goals with the program

59% Need to serve at-risk students

CONTACT HOURS REPORTED BY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS IN 2023-2024 (N-218)

10%	19%	25%	45%

■ 1-5 Hours   ■ 6-10 Hours   ■ 11-20 Hours   ■ 21+ Hours

Partners typically supported programs in a single way (e.g., providing programming or offering discounted services), with 25% of partners reporting that they provided multiple types of support in 2023-2024. Most partners that provided professional development reported at least 11 contact hours (93%).

Communication: Partners were asked to evaluate the frequency of communication from programs on a five-point scale (1=never, 5=always). Most respondents said that communication from programs is timely and responsive always or most of the time (94%) and that they receive adequate information about student needs always or most of the time (84%).

Alignment of Community Organization and ESSER site: Most (87%) of the partners believed their organization's work was aligned to the school's goals for students. On a scale of 0-100, partners (n=214) rated the strength of their relationship with the afterschool program, with the mean score being in the mid-high to high range (M=87.3, sd=15.7). A majority of the partners (58%) indicated they have had a lot or a great deal of opportunity to develop relationships with students/families. When asked to rate their capacity to provide additional services (1=no capacity, 100=high capacity), 17% of respondents rated their capacity at or above 80. The average rating was 53, indicating some capacity for providing additional services.

> *"I appreciate the director's commitment to finding new opportunities for students. She is also always around during club time if needs arise, and it has been enjoyable to brainstorm new ideas to partner on."*
>
> — Community Partner

On average, organizations rated the **strength of their relationship** with their partner program as **87.3** out of 100.

95% of responding organizations said their work with the afterschool program is **aligned with the school's goals** for students.

75% of responding organizations said they definitely **understand the mission** of their partner programs.

Program Strengths: When asked to share the strengths of the programs, partners identified many. Common strengths were student engagement and empowerment, positive relationships between staff and students, program organization and structure, diversity of programming options, effective behavior management, and programs' efforts to create safe, inclusive environments for students.

Areas for improvement: Many respondents offered suggestions for improvement. Some wanted better communication, citing unanswered emails or limited follow-through after conversations. Several respondents suggested that programs should hire additional staff members to support students and bring in more partners to expand programming opportunities. Some organizations wanted more opportunities to build relationships with staff, students, and families.

PROGRAM QUALITY

Program quality was assessed through the NAQCIS self-assessment. One hundred 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:

Administration with sound management and well-developed systems	Behavior management
Diverse, prepared staff including certificated teachers	Family engagement
Relationships and interactions	Community-School partnerships and resource sharing
Professional development	Ongoing assessment and improvement
Intentional programming aligned with school day and engaged learning	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

97%

Sites scoring Maturing or higher for Diverse and Prepared Staff

83%

Sites scoring Maturing or higher for Family Engagement

status of their program across the multiple categories. The Nebraska Afterschool Quality and Continuous 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.

Most sites met or exceeded the program goal of Maturing for Safety, Health, and Wellness (98%). Relationships and Interactions, Administration, and Staff were also noted as strengths statewide, with 97% of sites meeting or exceeding the program goal in each area. Family engagement was an area for growth at some programs, with 5% scoring in the Emerging range in 2023-2024.

Sites rated most aspects of their program as demonstrating at least **MATURING** levels of quality.

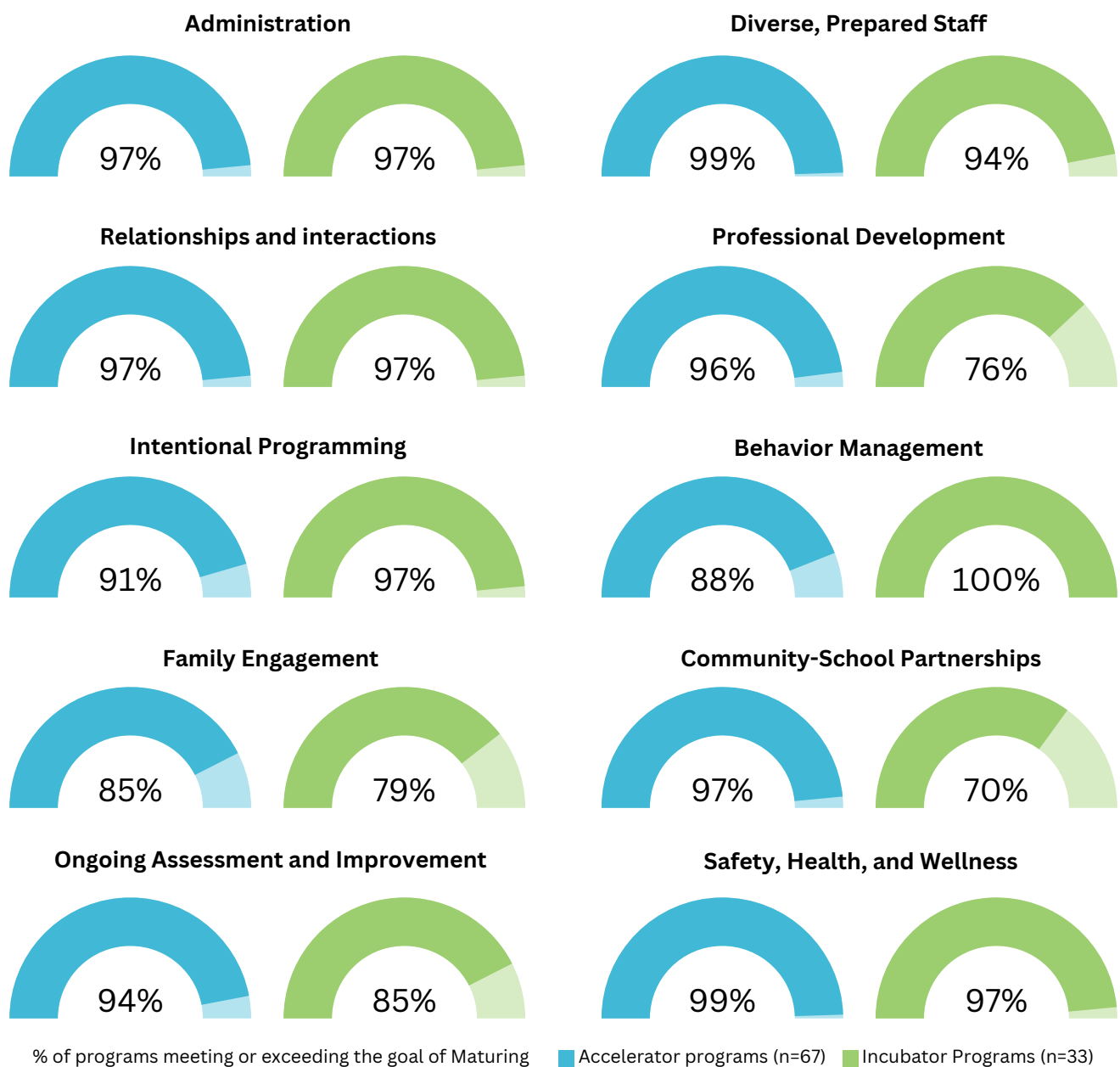# 2023-2024 Statewide ESSER Self-Assessment Results
(N=100)

DOMAIN	EMERGING	EMERGING PLUS	MATURING	MATURING PLUS	EXCELLING
Administration with Sound Management and Well-developed Systems	0%	3%	18%	20%	59%
Diverse, Prepared Staff including Certificated Educators	2%	1%	21%	31%	45%
Relationships and Interactions	1%	2%	18%	40%	39%
Professional Development	3%	8%	28%	33%	28%
Intentional Programming Aligned with School Day & Engaged Learning	0%	7%	16%	50%	27%
Behavior Management	0%	8%	18%	52%	22%
Family Engagement	5%	12%	37%	27%	19%
Community-School Partnerships and Resource Sharing	1%	11%	27%	25%	36%
Ongoing Assessment and Improvement	4%	5%	25%	16%	50%
Safety, Health, and Wellness	1%	1%	13%	27%	58%

SELF-ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR ACCELERATOR AND INCUBATOR PROGRAMS

Accelerator programs have been operating for an average of 14 years within the structure of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program. Through 21st CCLC, these programs 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 in early stages of program development. Differences between Accelerator and Incubator programs illustrate the potential for growth at new sites when they receive continuous, tailored support for program improvement.

Administration and Health, Safety, and Wellness were areas of 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 program types, supporting the need for continued initiatives that target family engagement in afterschool programming.

Administration
97%   97%

Diverse, Prepared Staff
99%   94%

Relationships and interactions
97%   97%

Professional Development
96%   76%

Intentional Programming
91%   97%

Behavior Management
88%   100%

Family Engagement
85%   79%

Community-School Partnerships
97%   70%

Ongoing Assessment and Improvement
94%   85%

Safety, Health, and Wellness
99%   97%

% of programs meeting or exceeding the goal of Maturing   ■ Accelerator programs (n=67)   ■ Incubator Programs (n=33)
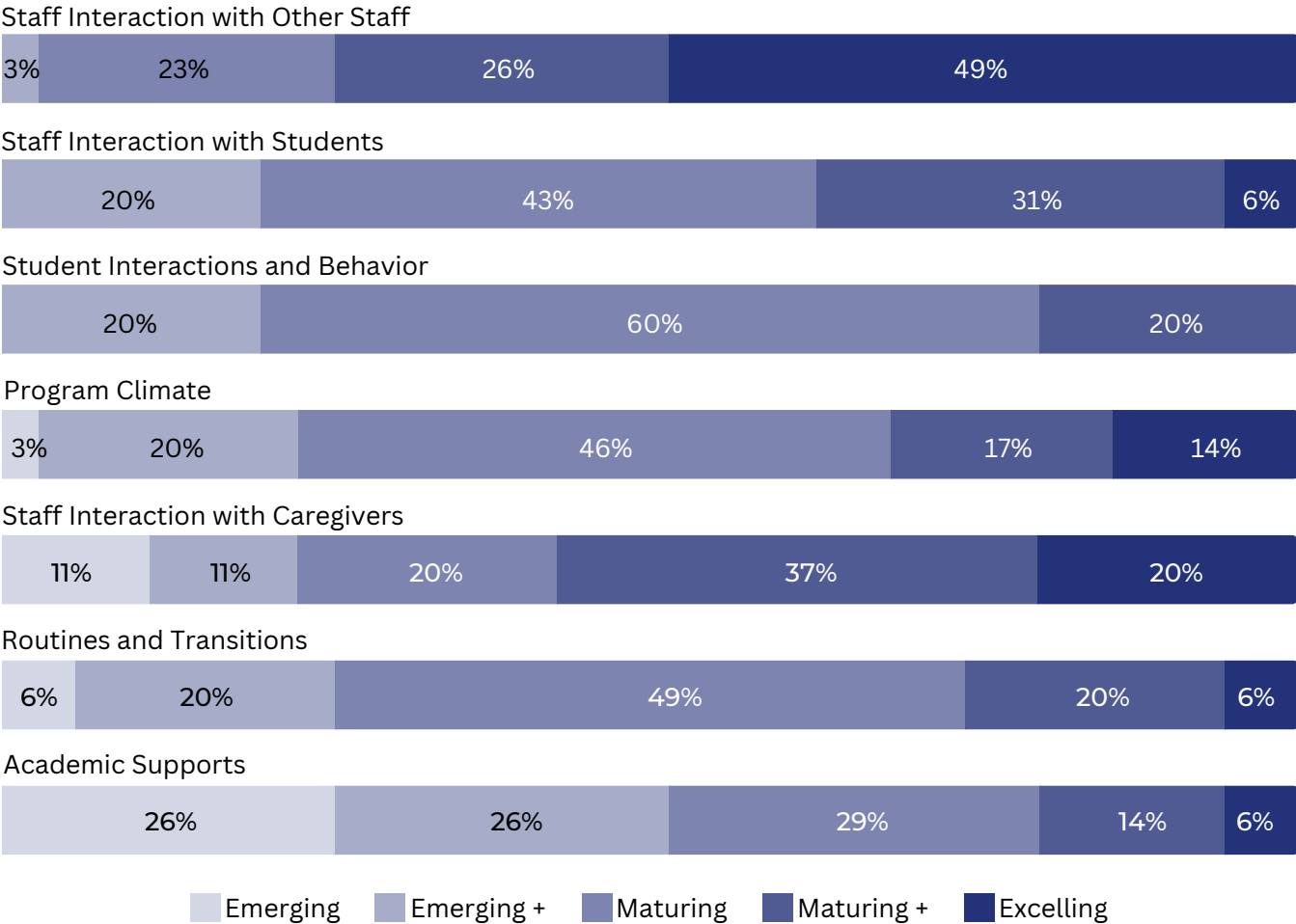
NAQCIS EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS

Site observations: Thirty-five ESSER sites were observed during the 2023-2024 observation period. The site section of the Nebraska Afterschool Quality and Continuous Improvement System (NAQCIS) external observation considers interactions (e.g., among peers), routines, behavior management strategies, academic support and/or tutoring, and evidence of community-building and student belonging. After each observation, staff receive scores and feedback for continual program improvement. Interactions were a strength for many programs. Almost half of the observed programs were rated as Excelling overall for Staff Interaction with Other Staff (49%). Eighty percent of programs met or exceeded the program goal of Maturing for overall Staff Interaction with Students and overall Student Interactions and Behavior. Academic Supports, which considers the time, adult support, and resources available for tutoring and homework help, was an area to strengthen, as more than half of programs scored below the goal.

STAFF INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS AND EACH OTHER WERE STRENGTHS IN 2023-2024 (N=35)

Academic Supports and Staff Interaction with Caregivers were areas to target for growth

Staff Interaction with Other Staff
| 3% | 23% | 26% | 49% |

Staff Interaction with Students
| 20% | 43% | 31% | 6% |

Student Interactions and Behavior
| 20% | 60% | 20% |

Program Climate
| 3% | 20% | 46% | 17% | 14% |

Staff Interaction with Caregivers
| 11% | 11% | 20% | 37% | 20% |

Routines and Transitions
| 6% | 20% | 49% | 20% | 6% |

Academic Supports
| 26% | 26% | 29% | 14% | 6% |

Emerging Emerging + Maturing Maturing + Excelling

92% OF ACTIVITIES OBSERVED IN 2023-2024 MET THE PROGRAM GOAL FOR THE EVIDENCE OF PREPARATION DOMAIN (N=65)

Over a third of the clubs or activities were rated as Maturing+ or higher for the overall domain score.

Overall Rating: Evidence of Preparation

8%	55%	18%	18%

Emerging ▪ Emerging + ▪ Maturing ▪ Maturing + ▪ Excelling

Programing observations: Sixty-five ESSER programs or clubs were observed in 2023-2024. Each observation considers 3 domains: Evidence of Preparation, Student Response, and Instructional and Engagement Practices.
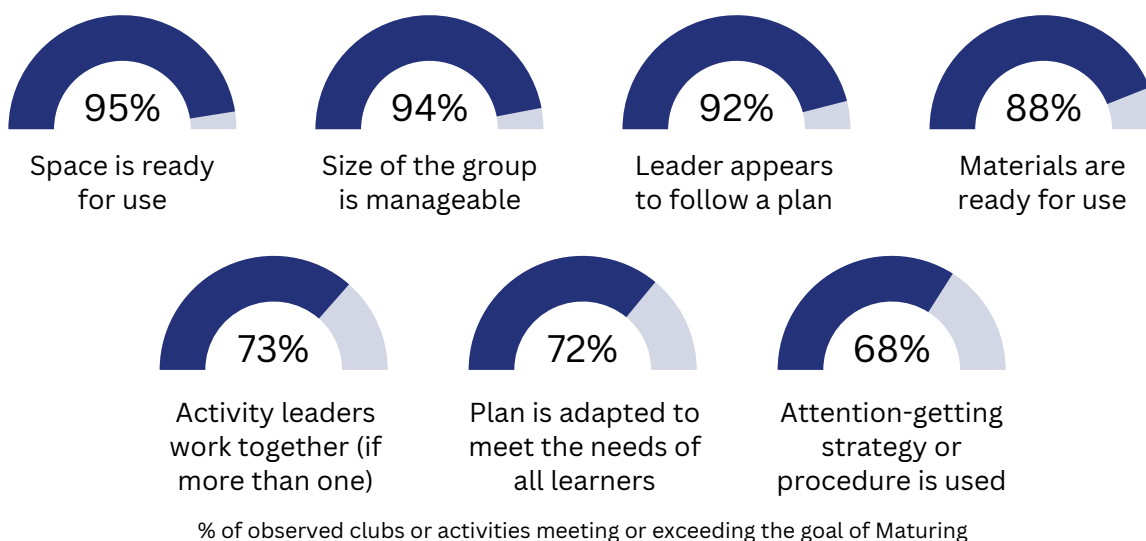
Most observed clubs and activities (92%) met or exceeded the program goal of Maturing for the overall score in **Evidence of Preparation**. This domain considers how afterschool staff maximize productivity and minimize wait times by planning ahead for activities and ensuring materials and spaces are ready for student use.

Clubs and activities usually met or exceeded the program goal for preparing materials (95%) and spaces (88%) for student use. Most group sizes were appropriate for activities (e.g., large enough that activities could occur and small enough that all students could participate as intended). One area for growth was attention-getting procedures during activities (68%).

EVIDENCE OF PREPARATION DIMENSIONS

Most activities met or exceeded the program goal for space preparation and group size.

95%	94%	92%	88%
Space is ready for use	Size of the group is manageable	Leader appears to follow a plan	Materials are ready for use

73%	72%	68%
Activity leaders work together (if more than one)	Plan is adapted to meet the needs of all learners	Attention-getting strategy or procedure is used

% of observed clubs or activities meeting or exceeding the goal of Maturing

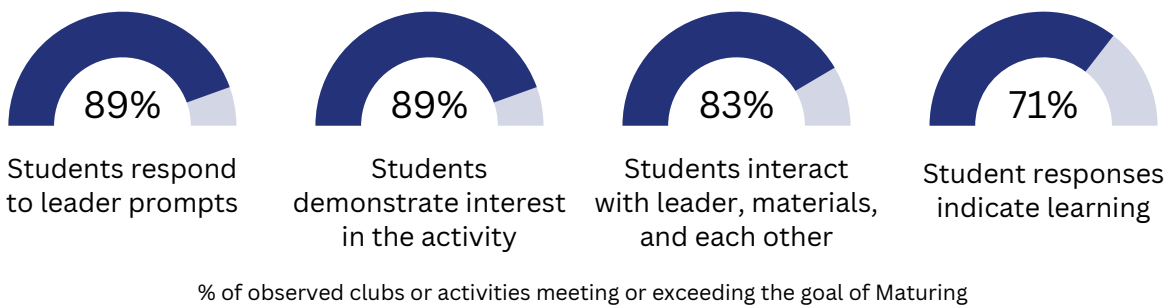# MOST OBSERVED ACTIVITIES MET THE PROGRAM GOAL FOR STUDENT RESPONSE (N=65)

Half of the activities exceeded the program goal with scores of Maturing Plus or Excelling.

Overall Rating: Student Response

15%	34%	38%	12%

Emerging Emerging + Maturing Maturing + Excelling

STUDENT RESPONSE DIMENSIONS

Activities most often met the program goal for student interest and responses to leader prompts.

89%	**89%**	**83%**	**71%**
Students respond to leader prompts	Students demonstrate interest in the activity	Students interact with leader, materials, and each other	Student responses indicate learning

% of observed clubs or activities meeting or exceeding the goal of Maturing

The **Student Response** domain considers how students' responses (verbal, non-verbal, and finished products) demonstrate interest and learning. Eighty-five percent of clubs and activities met or exceeded the goal of Maturing for the overall score in Student Response.

Most activities met or exceeded the program goal for student response to leader prompts (89%) and student interest activities (89%). Forty-three percent of clubs scored in the Excelling range for the student interest dimension. At Excelling, students demonstrate visible and/or audible excitement for the activities (e.g., asking additional questions or offering suggestions without leader prompting, asking to do the activity again in the future).


The Student Response dimension regarding student learning (71%) was an area for growth. This dimension measures if students' questions, comments, and work demonstrate that they are learning new concepts and skills relevant to their everyday lives.

74% OF ACTIVITIES OBSERVED IN 2023-2024 MET THE PROGRAM GOAL FOR THE INSTRUCTIONAL AND ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES DOMAIN (N=65)

About a quarter of clubs and activities exceeded the goal with scores of Maturing+ or Excelling.

Overall Rating: Instructional and Engagement Practices

3%	23%	51%	20%	3%

- Emerging
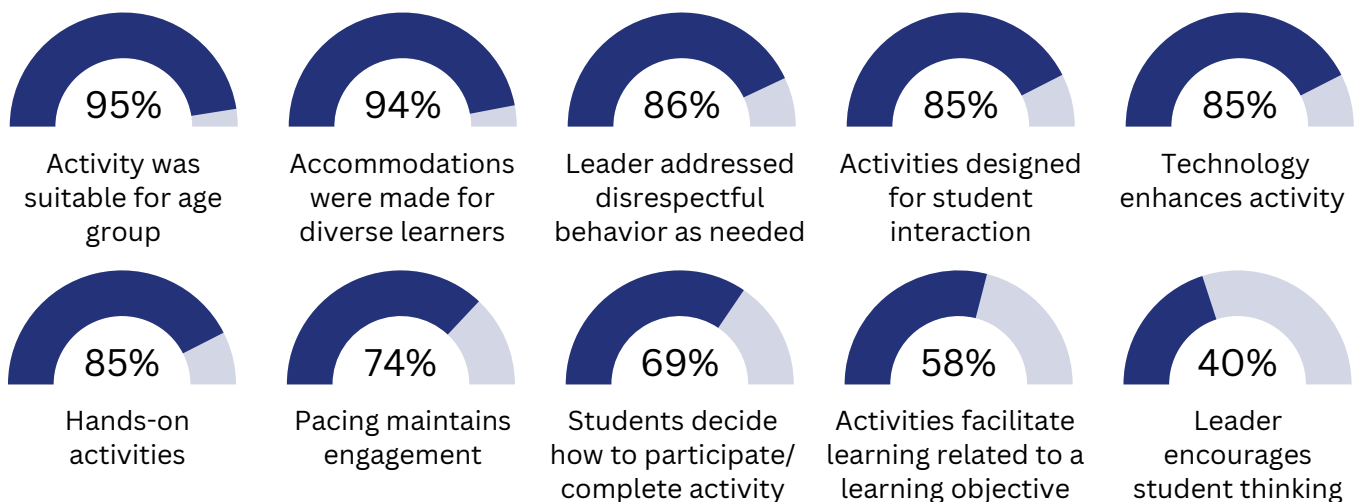- Emerging +
- Maturing
- Maturing +
- Excelling
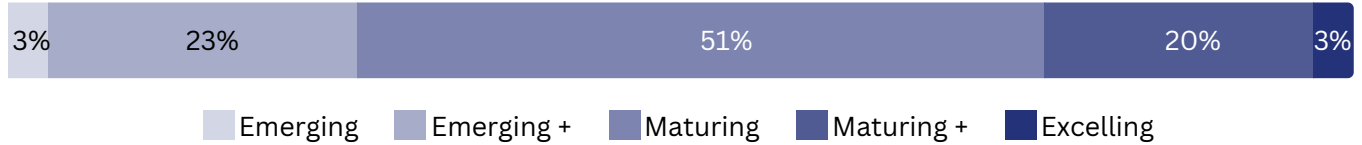
The **Instructional and Engagement Practices** domain considers how leaders maintain student engagement, encourage problem-solving and critical thinking, and help students make connections between the activities and what they are learning at school or through other extracurriculars.

Seventy-four percent of observed clubs and activities met program goals for overall Instructional and Engagement practices. About half of activities scored in the maturing range.

Programs typically met or exceeded the goal of Maturing for age-appropriate activities (e.g., achievable activities that invite productive struggle and new skill development). Leaders often addressed disrespectful behavior as needed to maintain student focus and engagement (86%). Areas to strengthen included connecting activities to a learning objective (58%) and encouraging student thinking (40%) (e.g., asking purposeful questions that invite students to brainstorm or make connections).

INSTRUCTIONAL AND ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES DIMENSIONS

Most observed clubs met or exceeded the goal for age-appropriate activities and accommodations

95%	94%	86%	85%	85%
Activity was suitable for age group	Accommodations were made for diverse learners	Leader addressed disrespectful behavior as needed	Activities designed for student interaction	Technology enhances activity

85%	74%	69%	58%	40%
Hands-on activities	Pacing maintains engagement	Students decide how to participate/ complete activity	Activities facilitate learning related to a learning objective	Leader encourages student thinking

% of observed clubs or activities meeting or exceeding the goal of Maturing

KEY FINDINGS

- ESSER-funded sites served 9,881 students across 106 sites and provided over 18,000 hours of programming in 2023-2024. Healthy and active lifestyle, academic enrichment, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programming were offered by most sites.

- Community partnerships served both Incubator and Accelerator sites, providing vital programming, funding and materials, discounted services, and professional development. Nonprofit organizations and educational institutions accounted for more than half of all partners reported by Accelerator sites.

- Caregivers shared that supervision, academic support, and homework help were the most important reasons for enrolling their children in programs.

- Teachers reported the biggest improvement in skills related to persevering, handling challenges, and developing and maintaining friendships.

- K-12 students rated positive relationships with adults, feeling connected to others, and their academic identity were important aspects of the programming.

- Most afterschool staff enjoyed working with students, valued the program's impact on students, and enjoyed the work. Staff felt prepared for their job responsibilities, specifically in working with colleagues, interacting with classroom teachers and other school staff, and addressing and managing student behavior. Incubator programs employed higher proportions of school-day teachers and staff than Accelerator programs (50.7% vs 14%). Staff at Incubator sites, on average, felt more prepared for their job responsibilities.

- Most sites that completed the NAQCIS Self-Assessment met or exceeded the program goal of Maturing for Safety, Health, and Wellness. Most aspects of sites' programs were rated as at least Maturing levels of quality.

- In NAQCIS external observations, Staff Interaction with Other Staff and Staff Interaction with Caregivers received the most Excelling ratings. Most activities observed met the program goal for Evidence of Preparation, Student Response, and Instructional and Engagement Practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

▶ Community-School Partnerships, Professional Development, and Family Engagement were the topics with highest discrepancy in scores between Incubators and Accelerators. These areas may take the longest to develop in programs, as they rely on topic-focused training and relationship-building. Developing technical assistance and identifying exemplar programs to serve as models could support Incubator sites while they establish and build on the foundations for these program areas.

▶ The item considering opportunities for family engagement scored lowest on the caregiver survey for the second year, indicating family engagement as an area for continued program support and training.

▶ More than half of sites receiving NAQCIS external observations scored below the program goal for Academic Support, with 26% of sites falling in the Emerging range. Targeted assistance to strengthen this area could include strategies for creating effective academic support spaces, differentiating support, and developing systems to communicate with school-day staff about homework and academic concerns.

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