LINK Club - Out of School Time Program Update

School Board Meeting March 7, 2024

Essential Questions

1. How is ACPS continuing to provide students and families with comprehensive out of school time programming?

2. What have we learned about the out of school time needs within our Alexandria community?

3. What steps are we taking to sustainably plan for future out of school time programming?

LINK Club @ ACPS

ACPS' afterschool program, **LINK Club**, provides free, high quality after school services with an emphasis on academic, social emotional, health and wellness and family support to the division's most vulnerable students and families.

- Supports in classroom learning through aligned **academic tutoring** in partnership with school administrators and data coach at each site.

- Provides a **safe space** during the critical hours of 3:00pm to 6:00pm, Monday through Friday, when many parents are at work.

In SY 23-24, we serve **624** students across **12** sites.

AMERICAN INDIAN/NATIVE ALASKAN	2%
MULTIRACIAL	3%
ASIAN	3%
WHITE	6%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	37%
LATINO/A	49%

EL students: 59% SPED students:12%

LINK Club Alignment to Strategic Plan

- ❏ **Improve impact of out-of-school learning opportunities**

- ❏ Student growth as measured by formative assessments at school and division levels

- ❏ % of students chronically absent by school and student group

- ❏ % of students who feel safe, valued and engaged in their learning

- ❏ Disproportionality rate of suspensions by school and student group

- ❏ % of students agreeing that they feel supported socially, emotionally and academically

- ❏ % of families feeling welcomed, valued and empowered as partners in their children's success

LINK Club Funding Overview

- **Free of charge** to eligible students and families.

- Made possible through **federal, state and local grants** and in collaboration with internal ACPS departments and community partners.

  - 9 sites are predominantly funded through the VDOE 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants.

  - 3 sites are partly funded through ESSER grants

NOTE: School-based budget, Extended Learning Opportunity funds are also used to support additional out of school time programming.

2023-24 Locations, Co-applicants and Students

Location	Grant Co-applicant	# of students who applied	# of accepted students
Leonard C. Armstrong Rec. Center	RPCA	70	59
George Washington MS	RPCA	73	55
Ferdinand T. Day ES	RPCA	160	106
Francis C. Hammond MS	RPCA	222	93
John Adams ES	RPCA	62	41
Patrick Henry Recreation Center	RPCA	40	32
Brent Place Apartments	Homes for America*	36	29
Jefferson-Houston K-8	ARHA	155	98
Ruby Tucker Center	ARHA		
Fifer Family Center	Community Lodgings, Inc.	128	111
New Brookside Apartments	Community Lodgings, Inc.		
Beverly Hills Church	Community Lodgings, Inc.		
TOTAL		946	624

SY 2022-23 Impact*

493

Elementary, Middle School, and High School students participated in VDOE LINK Club Sites.

2205

Hours of academics support

of students who attended 90 hours or more of programming

94%

showed increased engagement in learning, as reported by their teachers.

77% of students attended 90 hours or more of programming throughout the year.

68%

demonstrated improved attendance during the school day.

*VDOE funded sites

LINK Club Comprehensive Programming

Students played "Food Group Bingo" and learned about the five food groups.

Healthy Plates Enrichment in partnership with INOVA Community Health

ACPS high school students lead monthly leadership discussions and activities for LINK Club middle schoolers.

Keep it 360 Peer Advocates work at Jefferson Houston LINK Club through a partnership with Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS)

GW LINK students working together to program a robot for a LEGO Robotics tournament. In this activity, children were introduced to coding and used teamwork to program their robots.

In partnership with Campagna Center

The team supporting LINK Club is lean yet mighty

The Office of Community Partnerships + Engagement

Division-Wide Roles

OST Program Manager

Operations & Data Coordinator

OST Curriculum + Data Specialist

LINK Club Casual Family Engagement Support Staff (3)

LINK Club Site Roles

ACPS Site Coordinators (1)

Co-Applicant Leads + Staff
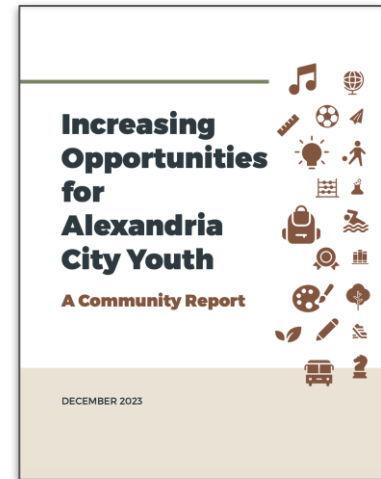
(ARHA / CLI / RPCA)

Key Responsibilities

- Develop OSTP budgets, allocate funds, and manage grant requirements

- Hire, train and support division-wide and site-specific staff

- Establish and maintain core partner relationships

- Drive site-specific programming, setting quality standards and delivery expectations

- Negotiate competing demands across sites (e.g. partnerships, physical space)

Thank you to the all of the teams and partners who support our out of school time programs.

Understanding Alexandria Community Needs

In December, the Youth Support Network finalized an out-of-school time landscape study, **Increasing Opportunities for Alexandria Youth: A Community Report**, to document and map current K-12 out-of-school time programming in the City and identify the hopes, needs, and barriers experienced by youth, families, and providers related to OST activities, with a focus on MS and HS students.
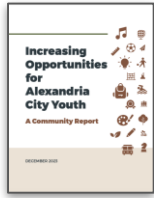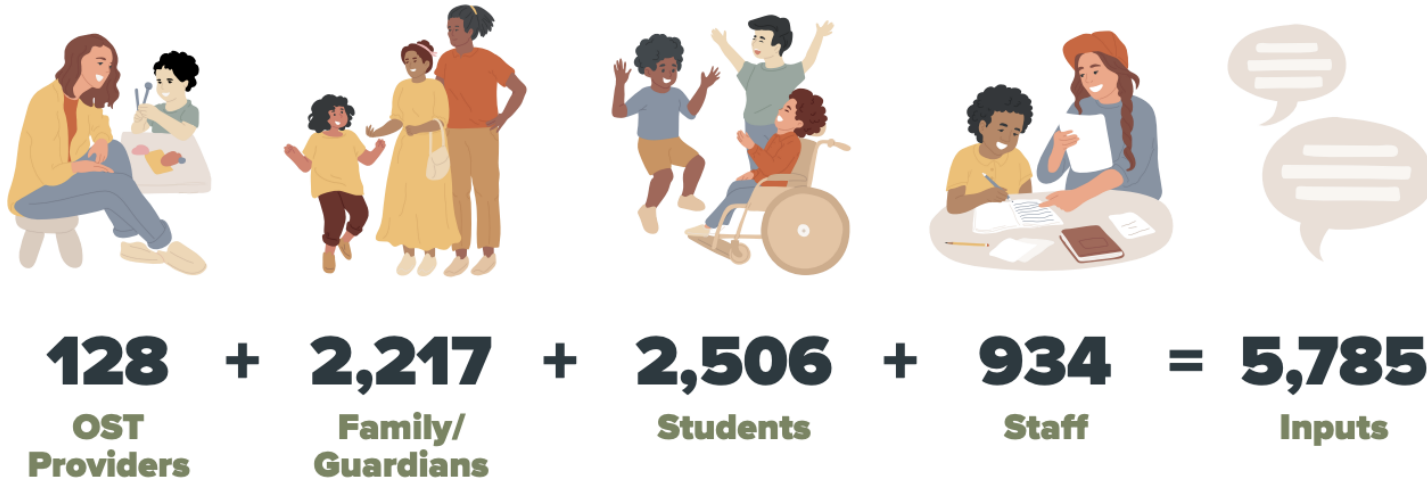
Report Link

Learning from our Community

Figure 4   Input Totals

128 OST Providers **+** **2,217** Family/Guardians **+** **2,506** Students **+** **934** Staff **=** **5,785** Inputs
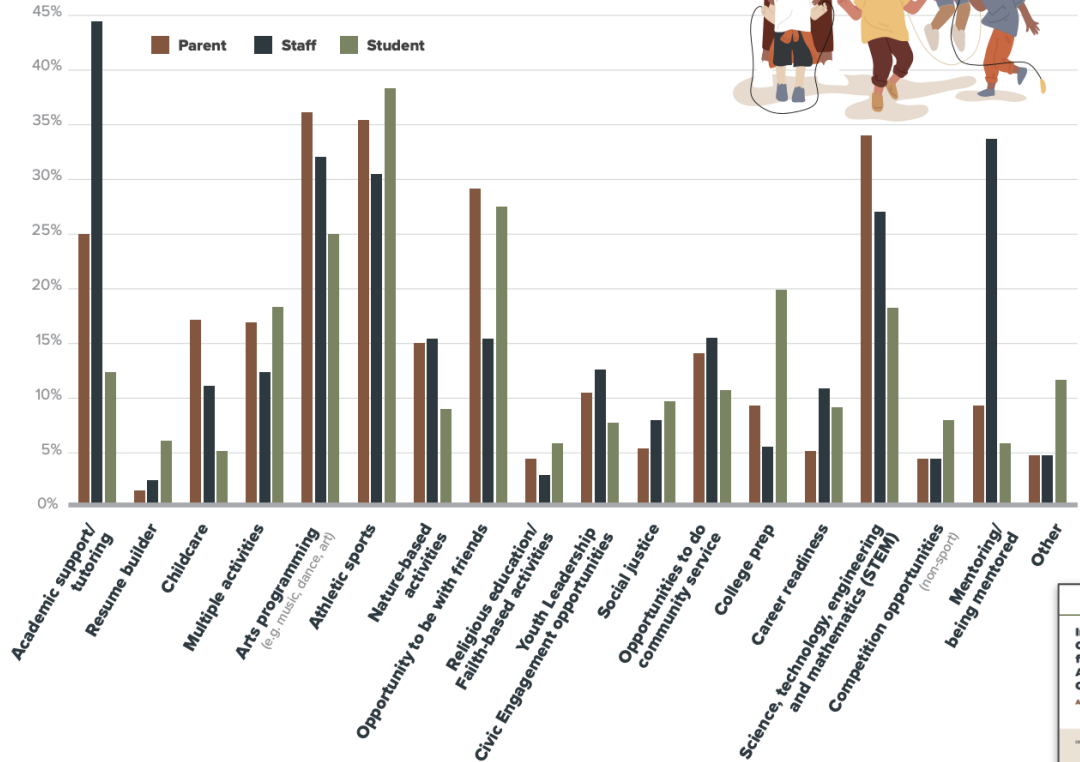
A series of OST questions were included in the 2023 ACPS Equity Climate Survey.
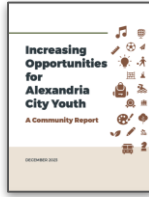
Parents, staff and students have different perspectives of needs and wants for programming

Figure 5 Top Three Activities Wanted in OST Programs

OST Participation Rates

- Over **177 programs** are offered at 200 locations across the city.

- About **1/3 of youth** across all of Alexandria participate in OST activities. Participation is highest in elementary students (46%) and starts declining in middle school (30%) and is lowest in high school (26%).

- Top barriers and challenges to participation include **transportation, cost**, and not knowing about program offerings.

Implications for ACPS

- **We are a major provider of OST programs:** Ensuring our programs continue (and even grow) is essential to the landscape in Alexandria.

- **Supportive partner in this work:** YSN is proposing to take on some of the persistent challenges we have faced (e.g. staff training, cross-program quality and consistency measures).

- **Forum for Collaboration:** As an organizing body, YSN can continue to grow the strong foundation of OST partnerships.

Our Work Ahead

There is a lot of work still to be done to ensure that all ACPS students have access to high quality OST programs.

- We believe that OST success leads to ACPS success and directly supports our focus areas in the Strategic Plan.

- We want more students to benefit from our effective programs, increasing our social, emotional and academic learning impact.

- We can create a sustainable model that relies on a diversified, blended and braided variety of funding streams.

Creating a Sustainability Model

Part I

Research OST programs post-COVID, highlighting leading practices, operational models, and programming opportunities.

Review current ACPS programs to identify strengths to expand and areas for future growth.

Fall 2023

Part II

Discuss the needs of Alexandria students and families, as illuminated through the YSN Landscape Report.

Build out planning scenarios that provide optionality and considerations for future program designs to meet the needs of Alexandria students and families.

Winter 2024

Part III

Prepare OST Program options for ACPS Leadership to consider, including operational and financial implications.

Spring 2024

Our OST Priorities

Availability of no cost options for students and families with demonstrated needs

Convenience of programming at prime locations (enrolled school, community center)

Maximize partnerships to leverage outside providers' capacity and enhance offerings

Relevance of all academic and learning components of programming

Consistent, high quality, culturally competent and engaging content

Appropriate qualifications and training for staff to support the range of student needs

Scenarios for Exploration

1   **Rightsizing LINK Club**

- *Updating delivery and oversight model (will increase expenses)*
- *Continue to run 21CCLC funded programs as currently designed*

2   **Expanding division-wide LINK Club OST program**

- *Maximize 21CCLC grant to cover additional sites (in 2025 renewal), and seek additional funding sources*
- *Expand LINK Club and align programming across all sites*

3   **Redesigning LINK Club for wider participation through fee structure**

- *Explore wider participation with sliding scale (some fee for service)*
- *Create standard qualification criteria across all sites*

Components of Effective Programming

Division Operations

- Coordinated decision making with TLL and School Leadership (e.g. curriculum alignment)

- Consistent data capture, analysis and reporting across sites

- Standardizing administrative processes (e.g. database applications)

- Consistent transportation during OST programming

Site Delivery Model

- Site-based coordinators and trained staff with standard ratios

- Opening up family engagement events for community building

- Leveraging community partnerships

- Consistent Power Hour academic opportunities for students

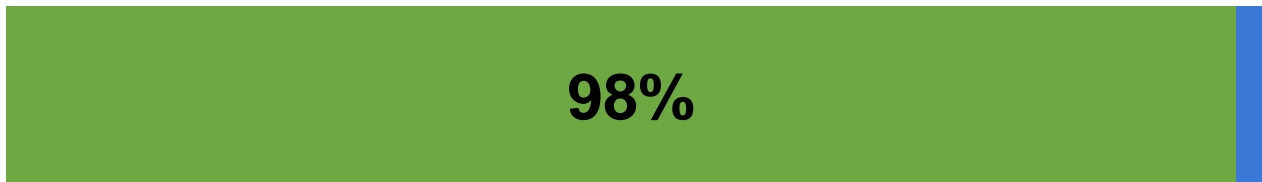- Field trips to enhance college interest and STEM exploration

Current Blend of Funding Sources

Fed Grants (ESSER) + VDOE Grants (21CCLC)   *ACPS Op Budget*

Current SY 23 - 24

98%

TOTAL
$2,117,000

12 Sites

Proposed SY 24 - 25

78%*

TOTAL
$1,353,000

9 Sites

* includes approx. $65k of ESSER III funds

21CCLC Grant Requirements

Administrative Tasks:

Unique data collection and reporting mandates, monitoring visit requirements, and restrictions/ limitations on acceptable uses for grant dollars.

Increased team productivity and ability to maintain standard processes and safety protocols without administrative hurdles.

Family Engagement:

Mandates events be solely for LINK families, hindering participation as families are engaged at the school level for other mandated family engagement activities (such as Title 1 grants).

Collaboration across programming for family participation, removing ongoing competition.

Student Participation:

Students are required to participate for at least 90 hours annually, with an average of 50 students attending weekly throughout the year to avoid grant funding penalties.

Create flexibility for families and programming implementation beyond annual requirements.

Next Steps

- Continued engagement in conversations on OST programming across ACPS as well as the city.

- Develop a robust set of scenarios and financial models to guide future budget decisions.

- Design a long range plan to ensure OST program continuation.

Questions?

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