

Teen REACH
Annual Evaluation Report

October 2004



Funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
A Brief Review of the Benefits of After School Programming.....	1
An Overview of the Teen REACH Program	1
An Overview of the Evaluation.....	2
Methodology	3
Selection of Sites to Participate in the Statewide Evaluation	4
Exploring Youth Outcomes	5
Youth Surveys.....	5
Parent Surveys	6
Teacher Surveys.....	6
Data Collected by DHS	7
Data Analysis Approach.....	7
Results.....	8
Sample Size.....	8
An Overview of Survey Respondents	9
Program Dosage.....	12
Youth & Parent Views of Teen REACH	14
Parent Involvement.....	19
Academic Outcomes in Teen REACH Participants.....	23
Youth Development Outcomes in Teen REACH Participants	27
Relationship Between Program Quality & Youth Outcomes.....	29
Summary of Major Findings.....	35
References	39
Appendices.....	42
Appendix A. An Overview of Benefits of After School Programming	
Appendix B. Youth Survey	
Appendix C. Consent Forms	
Appendix D. Parent Survey	
Appendix E. Teacher Survey	
Appendix F. Program Dosage Calculation	
Appendix G. ANOVA Analyses Predicting Academic Outcomes	
Appendix H. ANOVA Analyses Predicting Youth Development Outcomes	

LISTING OF TABLES AND CHARTS

- Table 1.** Number of Youth Surveys Collected at Time 1 and Time 2
- Table 2.** Summary of Youth Demographic Characteristics
- Table 3.** Unsupervised Time After School
- Table 4.** Reasons for Teen REACH Enrollment
- Chart 1.** Number of Years in the Teen REACH Program
- Chart 2.** Average Weekly Attendance
- Table 5.** Teen REACH Program Dosage
- Chart 3.** Parent Satisfaction with Teen REACH
- Table 6.** Parent Satisfaction with Characteristics of the Teen REACH Program
- Table 7.** Youth Connections with Teen REACH Staff
- Table 8.** Parent Perceptions of Teach REACH Program Staff
- Table 9.** Participant Perceptions of Teen REACH Benefits
- Table 10.** Exposure to New Opportunities & Experiences Through Teen REACH
- Table 11.** Parent Reports of Teen REACH Benefits for Their Child
- Chart 4.** Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Their Child's Education
- Table 12.** Parent Involvement in Teen REACH Programming
- Table 13.** Parent Reports of Teen REACH Impacts on Parents
- Table 14.** Factor Analysis of Teen REACH Program Impacts on Parents
- Table 15.** Relationship Between Involvement in Parent Programming & Program Impacts on Parents
- Table 16.** Teacher Reports of Youth Improvements in Classroom Performance & Behavior
- Chart 5.** Number of Areas in Which Teachers Report Improvements in Youth Classroom Performance & Behavior
- Table 17.** Change in Academic Outcome Areas from Time 1 to Time 2
- Table 18.** Description of ANOVA Effects for the Teen REACH Evaluation
- Table 19.** Summary of Effects on Academic Outcomes
- Table 20.** Change in Youth Development Outcome Areas from Time 1 to Time 2
- Table 21.** Summary of Effects on Youth Development Outcomes

Table 22. DHS Information on Teen REACH Program Characteristics

Table 23. Variability of Program Characteristics Across Teen REACH Program Sites

Table 24. Types of Provider Agencies

Table 25. Types of Program Facilities

INTRODUCTION

A Brief Review of the Benefits of After School Programming

In recent years, economic demands and changes in the family structure in our society, combined with increasing pressure to address achievement gaps among our nation's youth has resulted in an unprecedented focus on after-school programs.

More parents than ever are working outside the home. Across the nation, more than 28 million school-aged youth have working parents. In 69% of all married couple households with children ages 6 – 17, both parents work outside the home (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2002). In 79% of households headed by single mothers with children ages 6 – 17, the mother is employed (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2002). With so many parents working outside the home, many children lack adult supervision during late afternoon and early evening hours on school days. Unsupervised children may be exposed to and engage in a myriad of high-risk behaviors. According to a Fight Crime: Invest in Kids report (2000), the hours after school are peak hours for teens to commit crimes, youth to become victims of a crime, 16 and 17 year olds to be in or cause an auto accident, teen sex and youth use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

After-school programs have also become the center of attention because of the increased emphasis on bolstering the academic achievement of youth as well as providing them with enrichment opportunities to build life skills. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the pressure placed on schools to achieve such outcomes is at an all time high.

Many communities have identified after-school programming as a key strategy for both ensuring that youth are supervised during the after school hours and as a resource to improve academic achievement and development of youth beyond the regular school day. The popularity of after school programming as a strategy for achieving these outcomes has great merit. A growing body of literature suggests that after-school programs are beneficial. Most notably parents support these programs, in part because a basic need is being addressed by after school programs – that is, the need for safe environments for their children during the otherwise unsupervised after school hours. In addition, the findings from more formalized research studies suggest that after-school programs can make a difference in areas such as academic achievement, social-emotional development, and avoidance of delinquent / high risk behavior. A table in Appendix A provides an overview of recent findings related to the positive impacts of after school programs in these areas.

Research exists which suggests that after school programs can have positive impacts on youth participants in the areas of academic achievement, youth development, and avoidance of negative / high risk behavior. However, because after school programs can be used as a vehicle for the delivery of a broad array of program elements and because programs can differ so widely in terms of their goals and focus, it remains essential to continue to explore the specific benefits of various after school programs. In this way, both the Teen REACH Initiative as well as the after school field more generally can continue to move forward.

An Overview of the Teen REACH Program

In 1998, the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) created the Teen REACH (Responsibility, Education, Achievement, Caring, and Hope) Program in an effort to address the ever-increasing need for positive youth activities during non-school hours. The first RFP, issued in February 1998, funded 37 programs with 73 program sites across 68 different communities in Illinois (Teen REACH Policy and Procedures Manual, DHS, 2001). In FY05, DHS is funding 111 organizations, which oversee the Teen REACH programs at 257 program sites across Illinois. Teen REACH annually serves more than 30,000 young people in settings such as schools, park districts, faith-based organizations, YMCAs, and community agencies (correspondence with Karrie Rueter, 8/24/04).

Through prevention-focused out-of-school time activities, Teen REACH programs seek to expand the range of choices and opportunities that enable, empower, and encourage youth from age 6 through 17 to achieve positive growth and development, improve expectations and capacities for future success, and avoid and/or reduce negative risk taking behavior. Teen REACH is intended to be a holistic, comprehensive program that promotes the social, creative, physical, and cognitive development of youth.

Goals of Teen REACH

- ❖ To improve participants' academic performance
- ❖ To provide opportunities for learning positive social skills, demonstrating positive social interactions, and building positive social relationships
- ❖ To provide opportunities for demonstrating positive social behaviors
- ❖ Adoption of positive decision-making skills that discourage harmful risk-taking behaviors
- ❖ To strengthen parent-child bonds and community involvement

Given these goals, Teen REACH programs are required to provide the following core services:

- ❖ **Improving academic performance**, which encompasses time to do homework, tutoring in basic skills and enrichment programs that encourage creativity;
- ❖ **Life skills education** that provides abstinence education for a range of risky behaviors, such as substance use, criminal involvement, violence and sexual activity;
- ❖ **Parental involvement** that provides parents and guardians opportunities to meet with staff to discuss their children's activities and to enable parents and guardians to participate in events that strengthen parent/child bonds and community involvement;
- ❖ **Recreation, sports, and cultural and artistic activities** that provide safe outlets for the participants to try new skills and interests, build friendships, find their place in a group and gain developmentally relevant experiences; and
- ❖ **Positive adult mentors** who allow opportunities for participants to develop and maintain positive, sustained relationships with adults through mentoring and other programs that emphasize one-on-one interactions.

While not one of the five core service elements, youth involvement in community service and project learning are also an important component of Teen REACH. DHS suggests that youth participating in Teen REACH Programs should be given the opportunity to participate in at least one community service activity each year.

An Overview of the Evaluation

In November 2000, DHS' Bureau of Community and Youth Services contracted with the Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois to conduct an outcome evaluation of youth who participate in the Teen REACH Program. The initial year of the evaluation (FY01) was considered the pilot phase in which the evaluation plan was finalized, data collection strategies were refined, and the youth survey instrument was developed and tested at five sites. During the second year of the evaluation (FY02), in addition to the five sites that had participated in the pilot phase of the evaluation, another 25 Teen REACH program sites were added to the evaluation sample. Also added during the second year of the evaluation was the development and implementation of the

program staff survey. During FY03, the evaluation again consisted of beginning and end of year youth surveys and staff surveys. In addition in FY03, work began on the development of program benchmarks which ultimately will be used to assess the quality of Teen REACH Programs. In FY04, the evaluation was further expanded to include parent and teacher surveys. This report summarizes the data collected from the 30 Teen REACH providers who participated in the evaluation during FY04.

The major goals of the Teen REACH evaluation include the following:

- ❖ To develop local understanding and capacity for Teen REACH sites to effectively participate in program evaluation;
- ❖ To assess the overall relationship between participation in Teen REACH programs and activities and educational and socio-behavioral outcomes in children and youth;
- ❖ To explore the relationship between indicators of Teen REACH program quality and youth outcomes;
- ❖ To provide opportunities for Teen REACH grantees to understand, utilize and continuously improve their Teen REACH programs through data-based decision making.

Research questions addressed by the evaluation include the following:

- ❖ Do Teen REACH participants demonstrate improvement in various dimensions of academic functioning and youth development? Do some youth participants demonstrate more improvement than others?
- ❖ Is there a relationship between Teen REACH program dosage and youth functioning / outcomes in these same areas?
- ❖ In what ways do parents benefit from Teen REACH programming?
- ❖ Are program characteristics / indicators of program quality related to youth outcomes?

An essential element of CPRD's evaluation of the Teen REACH Program is to share evaluation findings with local providers for self-study and program improvement. Providers can gain tremendous insight into their programs by learning what youth participants, their parents, and their teachers are reporting about the Teen REACH Program. In addition, this process is a key element in motivating sites to participate in the evaluation. For this reason, in addition to the aggregate statewide analyses, individual data summaries for each of the Teen REACH providers participating in the evaluation are also prepared. Reports summarizing the youth, parent, and teacher survey data for FY04 were distributed to participating sites in July 2004 as part of an evaluation workshop which focused on the utilization of survey results for program development and improvement. The provider reports and the workshop were extremely well received by Teen REACH providers.

This report summarizes the data collected during FY04 as part of the statewide Teen REACH evaluation, including the youth, parent, and teacher surveys. In the following section, the procedures employed to collect and analyze the data are described.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the Teen REACH Program is based on a quantitative approach that includes youth, parent, and teacher surveys, and provider level data from DHS. This section begins with a description of how sites were selected to participate in the statewide evaluation, and then each of the methods for data collection is described in greater detail. Finally, the data analysis approach is described.

Selection of Sites to Participate in the Statewide Evaluation

Thirty program providers were selected by DHS for participation in the FY04 statewide evaluation of Teen REACH. Each provider was asked to survey at least 50 youth participants, their parents, and their teachers. If a provider had more than one Teen REACH program site, youth could be selected for participation from multiple sites. The providers were selected based upon the following criteria:

- ❖ geographic representation from all regions in the state
- ❖ representation from both rural and urban communities
- ❖ judged by DHS staff to be functioning fairly well
- ❖ judged by DHS staff to have a high likelihood of cooperation with the evaluation process
- ❖ included a range of types of provider agencies (e.g. Boys & Girls Club, health department, community-based organization)
- ❖ included newly funded programs as well as older, more established Teen REACH programs

The 30 providers that participated in the FY04 statewide evaluation are listed below:

- Region 1: Chicago Area Project (Chicago)
 - Albany Park Community Center (Chicago)
 - Metropolitan Family Services (Chicago)
 - Erie Neighborhood House (Chicago)
 - Chinese American Service League (Chicago)
 - Carole Robertson Center (Chicago)
 - Chicago Commons Association (Chicago)
 - Chicago Youth Centers (Chicago)
 - Community and Economic Development (Maywood)
 - Louis Valentine Boys & Girls Club (Chicago)
 - Union League Boys & Girls Club of Chicago (Chicago)
 - Youth Outreach Services (Bellwood)

- Region 2: DuPage Youth Services Coalition (Wheaton)
 - Iroquois-Kankakee Regional Office of Education (Kankakee)
 - Boys & Girls Club Association of Rockford (Rockford)
 - Housing Authority of Joliet (Joliet)

- Region 3: Children's Home Association (Peoria)
 - Tazewell County Health Department (Tremont)
 - Boys & Girls Club of Livingston County (Pontiac)
 - Center for Children's Services (Danville)
 - Urbana School District #116 (Urbana)

- Region 4: Adams County Health Department (Quincy)
 - Boys & Girls Club of Springfield (Springfield)
 - Macon County Mental Health Board (Decatur)
 - Springfield Community Federation (Springfield)

- Region 5: Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House (East St. Louis)
 - Southeastern Illinois Counseling Centers (Olney)
 - Boys & Girls Club of Bethalto (Bethalto)
 - Madison Community Unified School District #12 (Madison)
 - Hamilton-Jefferson Regional Office of Education #25 (Mount Vernon)

Exploring Youth Participant Outcomes

Assessing the impact of Teen REACH programming on youth outcomes presents a number of challenges. These challenges include the lack of a comparison group, the relatively small sample of Teen REACH programs involved in the evaluation, and issues related to the timing of the survey administration. Despite these limitations, by investigating program outcomes in a variety of ways and gathering data from a variety of sources, it is possible to advance our understanding of the impact of Teen REACH on youth participants. Using youth, parent, and teacher surveys as well as DHS provider level data, the statewide evaluation explores Teen REACH outcomes by employing the following strategies:

- ❖ Asking youth and parents directly about the ways in which the program has helped them
- ❖ Asking teachers for their impressions of the academic behavior and performance of Teen REACH youth
- ❖ Assessing change in key outcome areas over time
- ❖ Exploring the relationships among program dosage, youth characteristics, and outcomes
- ❖ Looking at the differences in youth outcomes based on the particular focus areas of the local Teen REACH Program

Youth Surveys

Youth in grades 4 and above at the selected Teen REACH programs were surveyed at two points in time. Time 1 surveys were administered between October 2003 and November 2003, and Time 2 surveys were administered in April through June 2004. The survey instrument included items and scales to assess the following: (1) youth background / demographic information; (2) Teen REACH program exposure / dosage; (3) perceived connections with Teen REACH staff; (4) perceived program impacts; and (5) youth outcomes. Critical youth outcome areas were identified based on a review of the Teen REACH Request for Proposals (RFP), the Teen REACH Policy and Procedures Manual, and input from DHS. Youth outcome areas assessed on the survey included the following:

- ❖ Homework completion
- ❖ School attendance
- ❖ Self-reported academic performance
- ❖ Academic aspirations
- ❖ Perceptions of the school environment
- ❖ Engagement in negative / delinquent behaviors
- ❖ Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use
- ❖ Leadership
- ❖ Self-concept
- ❖ Adult connections
- ❖ Peer group cohesion
- ❖ Problem-solving skills
- ❖ Parent involvement (in child's education and in Teen REACH)

A copy of the youth survey can be found in Appendix B. Scale reliabilities were tested during the pilot year of the evaluation and found to be high. These results were reported in the FY01 evaluation report.

Active parental consent was required before a youth could be asked to complete the survey. Spanish and Chinese language versions of the consent form were developed for those parents for whom English was not the primary language. (See Appendix C for a copy of the consent form.) Even with parental consent, youth could still choose not to complete the survey.

Program staff administering the youth survey were provided with training in survey administration in October 2003 at a half day workshop at which attendance was required. Further, detailed instructions and materials were developed to assist program staff in survey administration. During survey administration, survey questions were read aloud to youth to minimize the effects of differences in reading

skills and to pace the completion of the survey. The surveys required approximately 30 to 40 minutes of time to complete. Small incentives for survey completion were determined by the local Teen REACH programs and at the provider's discretion could be provided to youth for their participation in the evaluation, though very few providers used the money allocated for this purpose for youth incentives.

Parent Surveys

Up to this point, all youth outcomes data had been based on youth self-report. As a way of validating what youth participants were reporting and also in order to assess the views of parents and their impressions of Teen REACH, in FY04 for the first time a parent survey was developed and administered.

The survey was developed by extracting all parent-focused outcomes from the DHS RFP for Teen REACH and from other DHS documents. The evaluation team then identified reliable scales and sets of items to assess each key area. After the initial draft of the survey was developed, it was presented to the Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG) for review and comment. EAG members expressed some concerns about the length and reading level of the survey. Based on this feedback, all item redundancies were eliminated, and attempts were made to simplify the items and make the survey easier to understand and complete.

The final version of the parent survey assessed the following dimensions: family background / demographic information, need for after school care, reasons for enrollment in Teen REACH, levels of youth program participation in Teen REACH (dosage), parent / family participation in Teen REACH, parent involvement in their child's education, perceived program impacts on youth and on parents, impressions of program staff, and overall satisfaction with Teen REACH. A copy of the parent survey can be found in Appendix D.

In addition to requiring parent consent for youth to participate in the survey process, through a new requirement of the University of Illinois' Institutional Review Board, it was also required that youth provide consent allowing their parents to be surveyed.

The parent survey was administered at one time point, in the Spring, allowing time for parents to gain an impression of the program and time to observe potential positive impacts in their children. Each parent survey had the youth ID number of their child marked on the survey so that parent survey responses could be linked to youth survey responses. Those parents with more than one child in the program were only asked to complete one survey.

Local program staff were asked to determine what they thought would be the most effective method of survey distribution, collection, and incentives. Generally, survey administration was accomplished in one of three ways: 1) through sending surveys home to parents, and then parents returned their survey when completed; 2) the program brought all parents together at the program site for a special event, and survey completion was included as part of the special event; or 3) through home visits in which program staff waited while parents completed the survey. As much as \$350 was given to each provider participating in the evaluation to be used for data collection expenses related to youth and parent surveying. The specific manner in which this funding was used was left up to the provider.

Teacher Surveys

Like the parent survey, FY04 was the first year in which teacher surveys were administered. The teacher survey was seen as a way of validating what youth participants were reporting and also in order to include teacher assessments of youth academic performance.

The survey, originally developed by the U.S. Department of Education for the evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, was modified based on Teen REACH outcomes referenced in the RFP and other DHS documents, and input from the Evaluation Advisory Group. The brief one page teacher surveys were completed by the teachers of youth participants during Spring 2004. The survey was used

to gather information from the teacher's perspective about youth participant's classroom behavior and performance. Specifically, the survey asked teachers to rate youth participants in the following areas:

- ❖ homework completion
- ❖ class participation
- ❖ attendance
- ❖ class behavior
- ❖ getting along with peers
- ❖ levels of parent involvement

A copy of the teacher survey can be found in Appendix E.

As noted above, both parent and youth consent were required in order to survey the teachers. The youth ID number appeared on each teacher survey so that teacher responses could also be linked to data from the youth and parent surveys. Teacher surveys were delivered to the school or classroom by Teen REACH program staff, along with a pre-addressed survey return envelope. Completed teacher surveys were shipped directly to CPRD for data entry and processing in order to protect youth and teacher confidentiality. All teachers were paid \$3 for each survey completed, though many of the teachers who completed the survey chose not to be reimbursed.

Data Collected by DHS on Teen REACH Providers

Teen REACH program providers are required to submit various reports to DHS for program monitoring purposes. These reports include program plans, quarterly reports, and annual summary reports. The Teen REACH program administrator at DHS then extracts various pieces of information from these reports and enters them into a Teen REACH provider database. As a way of exploring the relationship between program characteristics and youth outcomes, the evaluation team was given access to this database. Variables extracted from the database for the outcome evaluation include:

- ❖ Provider agency type
- ❖ Program site type
- ❖ Community type
- ❖ Number of years funded
- ❖ Amount of funding
- ❖ Number of subcontractors
- ❖ % of program time devoted to core areas
- ❖ Number of program sites
- ❖ Total enrollment
- ❖ Average daily attendance
- ❖ Number of full- and part-time staff

Data Analysis Approach

Understanding the impact of Teen REACH on youth outcomes is a complex matter. Not only does the program seek to impact youth in multiple domains of functioning, both academic and youth development, but adding to the complexity are youth developmental issues, effects of the school and family environments, program involvement history, as well as very real differences across the local programs implementing Teen REACH. The evaluation is designed in ways that attempt to capture some of these complexities. Youth outcomes in both academic and youth development areas are assessed; differences in functioning in youth in various grade levels are assessed; and the views of parents and teachers as well as youth are taken into account. Program dosage is a key predictor variable in all outcome analyses. Furthermore, findings from previous years suggested that there may be differences in program impacts for youth in the Teen REACH Program for the first time versus youth continuing in the program from the prior year. Therefore, many of the analyses were conducted separately for these two groups of youth. Finally, DHS data are used to assess differences across local Teen REACH Programs.

To assess youth outcomes in the academic and youth development areas, an analysis of variance strategy was employed. The analysis of variance approach permits testing for mean differences on dependent measures or outcomes. Using this approach, four sets of analyses were conducted: 1) prediction of academic outcomes for new participants, 2) prediction of academic outcomes for continuing participants, 3) prediction of youth development outcomes for new participants, and 4) prediction of youth development outcomes for continuing participants.

Across all analyses, the sample of youth who completed both the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys was used. For descriptive types of analyses, all parent surveys were used in order to obtain the broadest possible view of parent perceptions of the program. For outcome analyses, only the parent surveys of youth in the matched Time1-Time 2 sample were used. In terms of teacher surveys, only the teacher surveys of youth in the matched sample were analyzed.

RESULTS

Findings from the Teen REACH surveys and from the program level data maintained by DHS are described in this section of the report. First, the survey sample size and an overview of survey respondents is presented. Second, data on perceptions of the Teen REACH Program and the ways in which youth and parents believe they have benefited from Teen REACH is presented. Although such perceptions are not as definitive as behavioral change over time, clearly these constituent beliefs about Teen REACH effectiveness can serve as important program feedback. Third, parent involvement in various aspects of Teen REACH programming and its relationship to outcomes is explored. Next, youth outcomes in the academic and youth development areas are discussed. Because youth outcomes play such a key role in our conclusions about the effectiveness of Teen REACH, outcomes are explored using a number of strategies. And finally, a preliminary exploration of the relationship between *program* characteristics and youth outcomes is conducted, using DHS' data on program characteristics.

Sample Size

A total of 1387 Time 1 surveys and 1071 Time 2 surveys were completed by Teen REACH participants across the 30 programs that participated in the statewide evaluation. As can be seen in Table 1, 950 of the participants (68%) who completed the Time 1 survey also completed the Time 2 survey. The findings presented in this report are based on the matched youth sample, that is, those youth who completed both a Time 1 and a Time 2 survey. The FY04 evaluation effort resulted in the largest matched sample of youth survey data ever available to the Teen REACH evaluation.

Table 1. Number of Youth Surveys Collected at Time 1 and Time 2

Survey Time Point	Matched	Not Matched	Total Surveys
Time 1	N=950	N=437	N=1387
Time 2		N=121	N=1071

As noted earlier in this report, FY04 was the first year in which parent survey data was collected. The parent surveys were completed at a single point in time. A total of 464 parent surveys were completed across 29 of the 30 Teen REACH programs participating in the statewide evaluation. Of these 464 completed parent surveys, 393 could be matched to youth who completed surveys at both Time 1 and at Time 2. Parents were asked to complete the survey only once, even if they have more than one child in the Teen REACH Program. By using parents answers to the question "how many children do you have enrolled in the Teen REACH Program?", it can be estimated that parent surveys were completed by parents of 740 youth in the program. Thus, approximately 78% of youth who completed both surveys also had a parent complete a survey. Teen REACH providers were very successful in the collection of parent survey data, and having the parent's perspective helps to make dramatic inroads into our understanding of youth outcomes and the effects of Teen REACH.

In order to maximize the sample size on which analyses were based, the full unmatched sample of parent surveys (n=464) was used for the descriptive types of analyses. For those analyses focusing on program impacts and youth outcomes, the matched sample of parent surveys (n=393) was used. The sample used in each analysis is specified in the titles of each table and chart in the report.

This was also the first year in which teacher survey data were collected. In all, 809 youth participants and their parents consented to have the youth's teacher complete a survey for this evaluation project. Of these, 450 teachers, representing 24 different Teen REACH Programs, completed and returned the teacher survey, for an overall teacher response rate of 56%. Of the 450 completed teacher surveys, 334 could be linked to a youth who completed both a Time 1 and a Time 2 youth survey. Two items on the teacher survey were used to further refine the teacher survey sample. First, teachers were asked to indicate which subject they taught the youth being assessed in the survey. Only the surveys from those teachers who taught the youth at least one core subject (language arts, math, science, social studies) area were included in the analysis. In the final sample, nearly half of the teacher surveys (46%) were completed by teachers who taught both language arts and math to the youth. (An additional 29% taught language arts only, and 18% taught math only.) A second item used to refine the survey sample asked teachers for how long they had been teaching this particular youth. Only those cases in which the teacher had been teaching the youth since December 2003 or earlier were included in the sample. Those cases in which teachers indicated that the youth had entered their classroom in January 2004 or later were eliminated from the sample. (In all, 97% of teachers indicated that the youth in question had been in their class since September or the beginning of the school year.) With these two refinements, the teacher survey sample went from 334 to 325 cases. It is these 325 teacher surveys which are summarized in this evaluation report.

An Overview of Survey Respondents

The information presented in this section of the report describes the Teen REACH youth participants who completed surveys as part of the statewide evaluation. First, basic demographic and family background characteristics of the survey sample are described. Next, we consider the family need for after school care and reasons for enrollment in Teen REACH.

Table 2. Summary of Youth Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Mean / Percent
Age at Time 1 ¹	12.23
Grade In School ¹	
4-6	53%
7-8	31%
9-12	16%
Gender ¹	
Male	47%
Female	53%
Race Ethnicity ¹	
African American	51%
White	22%
Latino	12%
Asian American	4%
Other	11%
Participation in Free / Reduced Lunch ²	77%
Household Composition at Time 1 ¹	
2 parent (at least one biological)	48%
single parent	32%
foster / adopted / other relatives	20%

¹ based on n=950 youth surveys; ² based on n=464 parent surveys

That 77% of the sample participates in the free or reduced lunch program and that nearly a third of the youth respondents are from single parent families suggests that the Teen REACH Program is serving the youth that the program is intended to serve.

A reduction in unsupervised after school time is a primary goal of Teen REACH. The youth survey asked respondents how many days each week they might be left unsupervised if they were not in the Teen REACH Program. Based on youth responses, it appears that the Teen REACH Program serves many youth who might otherwise be left unsupervised during the critical after school hours. This finding further substantiates that the program is indeed serving those youth DHS intended to serve.

Table 3. Unsupervised Time After School (n=880 Time 2 youth surveys)

If you weren't in Teen REACH, how many days per week would you be unsupervised after school?				
# days / week	Overall	By Grade Level		
		4th-6th grade	7th-8th grade	9th-12th grade
0	25%	28%	23%	18%
1-2 days	13%	15%	12%	8%
3-4 days	16%	15%	18%	16%
5 days	47%	42%	47%	58%
Mean	3.1 days	2.8 days	3.2 days	3.6 days

Overall, nearly half of the youth indicated that were it not for Teen REACH, they would be left unsupervised after school for five days each week. The survey also asked for the approximate number of hours each day without adult supervision. On average, youth indicated that if they were not in the Teen REACH Program, they would be spending 1.8 hours per day after school without adult supervision. The average number of hours increased by grade level, with 1.6 hours per day for the youngest youth, 1.8 hours for 7th-8th graders, and 2.3 hours per day for the oldest youth.

The increase in unsupervised after school time for the older youth to some extent reflects a normal pattern of development, with youth gaining additional responsibilities and privileges as they get older. At the same time, however, it should be noted that research suggests that the number of hours youth spend home alone is the most critical factor relative to high-risk problem behaviors and missed opportunities. Based on prior work conducted by CPRD and other groups, there is evidence that the emergence of youth problem behaviors is less a result of coming into an empty house than it is a result of remaining at home alone for extended periods of time (Richardson, Radziszewska, Dent, & Flay, 1993; Mulhall, Stone, & Stone, 1996; Mertens & Flowers, 1998). The research has identified a time “threshold” for high-risk behaviors, which seems to appear when a child is alone at home for approximately 10 or more hours in a week.

With this threshold in mind, we find that overall, 36% of Teen REACH youth survey respondents indicated that they would be spending 10 or more hours per week without any adult supervision if they were not in Teen REACH. This amount of time increased with grade level: 32% of 4th-6th graders, 36% of 7th-8th graders, and 52% of 9th-12th graders.

From Parents of Teen REACH Participants:

“I think Teen REACH is a great after school program. It keeps the kids off the streets, and it gives them something positive to do.”

“They have a lot of things, crafts, and activities for the kids to do. It keeps them out of trouble.”

“It provides a safe, supervised environment for children after school.”

When asked what they would do after school if they did not participate in the Teen REACH Program, only 30% of youth survey respondents indicated that they would go to another after school program. This suggests that either there are no other after school programs available (or at least that there are none which are affordable and/or are of acceptable quality) or that other programs are not as appealing to the youth and their families as Teen REACH. In either case, Teen REACH appears to be meeting a clear need of youth and families in the communities in which it is implemented.

To further understand the need for Teen REACH after school programming, a series of questions on the parent survey focused on the need for after school services, potential alternatives to the Teen REACH Program, and reasons for enrollment in Teen REACH.

Overall, 65% of the parents surveyed indicated that after school care was a necessity for their family. Parents were also asked if their child was not in Teen REACH, would they have other options for after school care. Over half of the parents (59%) indicated that there were not alternative after school care options available to them and their families. Clearly, the after school programming provided by the Teen REACH Program is meeting a need of many families in Illinois for after school care.

From a Parent of a Teen REACH Participant:

“Teen REACH is such a plus in my life ... I don’t know what my family would have done without Teen REACH.”

Next, parents were asked about their reasons for initially enrolling their child in the Teen REACH Program. The table below summarizes these responses.

Table 4. Reasons for Teen REACH Enrollment (n=464 parent surveys)

Reason for Enrollment	% of Parents
I wanted my child to take part in the recreational activities.	90%
I wanted my child to get help with homework.	89%
My child wanted to be in the program.	89%
The program would help my child do better in school.	88%
I wanted my child to have an opportunity to interact with other children.	87%
I like the program staff.	86%
I wanted my child to have a chance to take part in cultural activities.	84%
My child would get help with reading and math.	82%
My child would have a chance to be with friends after school.	74%
I was concerned about my child’s safety and supervision after school.	57%
I needed child care for my child.	40%
The teacher referred my child to the program.	30%

Parents give a full spectrum of reasons for enrolling their child in Teen REACH. Ninety percent of parents focused on the opportunity for their child to engage in recreational activities, and 89% said they enrolled their child in Teen REACH because their child wanted to be in the program. The academically-focused components of Teen REACH were also endorsed as a reason for enrolling their child in Teen REACH by an overwhelming majority of parents: 89% of parents enrolled their child to get help with homework, 88% of parents said improved school performance was a reason for enrolling their child in Teen REACH, and 82% of parents said assistance with reading and math was a reason for their child’s Teen REACH enrollment.

Though as noted above, 65% of parents say that after school care is a necessity for their family, relatively few parents (40%) indicated the need for child care as a reason for their child’s enrollment in Teen

REACH. This finding suggests that parents view Teen REACH in a more comprehensive way, providing more for their child than child care alone – even though this is a critical need for them.

Program Dosage

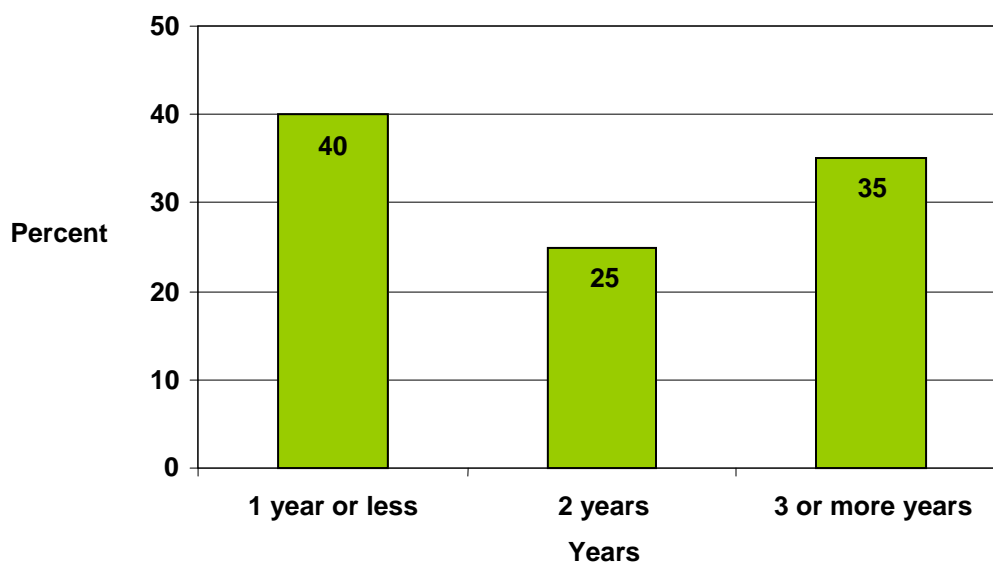
A key strategy used in the Teen REACH evaluation for exploring participant outcomes is to look at the relationships between program dosage and youth outcomes. (These relationships will be described later in the outcomes sections of this report.) In this section of the report, we take a closer look at youth levels of participation in the program.

Program dosage refers to the amount of programming received by each participating youth, or the total number of days the youth has attended the program. In program evaluation research, looking at the effects of program dosage is a key strategy for understanding program impacts on participants. It is hypothesized that higher levels of program attendance would be associated with more positive changes over time. By collecting outcomes data from youth with varying levels of dosage, comparisons of youth with varying levels of program dosage, from minimal to high, can be made.

Individual level daily program attendance records were not available to the evaluators for the statewide evaluation of Teen REACH. To create an estimate of program dosage, youth were asked to answer the following questions: “what grade are you in?” ; “what grade were you in when you started attending this program?” ; “if you first started attending the program this past year, in what month did you start?” ; and “about how many days each week do you attend this program?” Using the responses to these four questions, an indicator of Teen REACH program dosage was created. It is important to keep in mind that this indicator of program dosage is an approximation rather than an exact measure of dosage based on individual level program attendance records. (Appendix F provides a detailed description of how program dosage was calculated.)

The following chart summarizes the data on the number of years youth have been involved in the Teen REACH Program.

Chart 1. Number of Years in the Teen REACH Program
(n = 950)

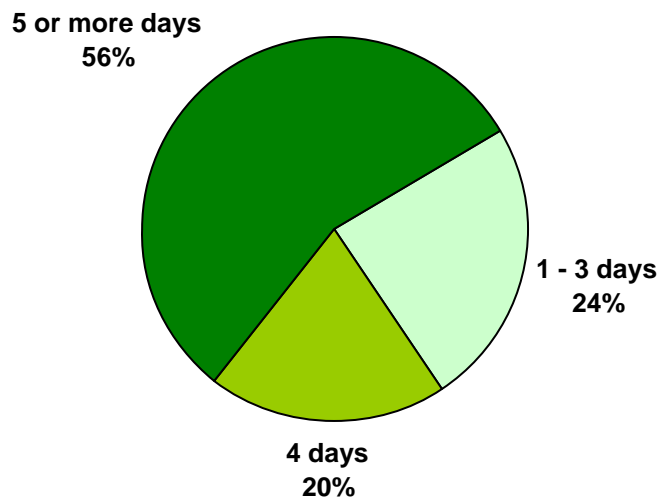


As can be seen in the chart, for 40% of the youth completing the survey, the 03-04 school year was their first year in Teen REACH. The remaining 60% had been in Teen REACH for two or more years. The average number of years youth reported having been in the program is 2.2 years. Based on these

findings, it appears that most youth who enter the Teen REACH Program stay in the program from one year to the next. This finding speaks well of the program both because youth do not stay in programs that they do not like and because having a meaningful impact on the lives of high risk youth requires long-term programming.

In addition to the number of years in the program, another variable used to calculate program dosage was the number of days per week spent in the program. In the chart below, the typical number of days per week of program attendance is described. As can be seen in the chart, 76% of youth report that they attend Teen REACH 4 or more days a week, on average.

Chart 2. About how many days each week do you attend Teen REACH?
(n = 950)



Again, the number of years in the program and the typical number of days per week of program attendance were used to create an estimate of total Teen REACH program dosage. Note that this dosage is not just for the current program year, but represents dosage since the youth first started attending Teen REACH.

Table 5. Teen REACH Program Dosage

Dosage Characteristic	N	Mean	Range
Average Years In The Program	869	2.2 years	0-6 years
Weekly Attendance In The Program	928	4.1 days	1-7 days
Average Program Dosage	858	324 days	16-1020 days

As can be seen in the table, using the variables described above to calculate approximate program dosage, the average Teen REACH dosage is 324 days, or roughly 16 months of program participation.

Youth and Parent Views of Teen REACH

An initial step in creating a program that has positive impacts on its participants is creating a program that youth and parents like and believe to be beneficial. If this general sense of satisfaction with a program is not attained, then program enrollment may be low, program attendance will be sporadic at best, and positive outcomes will most likely not be attained. For these reasons, participant and parent views of the Teen REACH Program are seen as a key component of a program's success and therefore were assessed as part of the statewide evaluation.

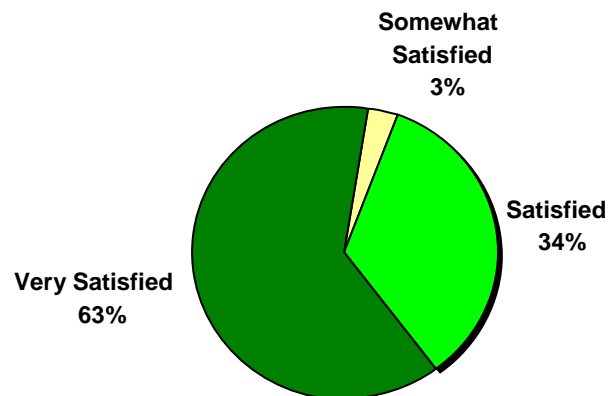
From a Teen REACH Participant:

"Teen REACH is a great program. It keeps you out of trouble and it's fun, educational, and cool to be in the program."

This section of the results focuses on the views youth and parents have about Teen REACH. First, we look at overall levels of satisfaction with the program. Next, we consider the views youth and their parents have of Teen REACH program staff – a key component of program satisfaction. Finally, we explore the reports of youth and their parents on the ways in which their involvement in Teen REACH has benefited them.

The parent survey included several items assessing parent satisfaction with the Teen REACH Program. The parents were not only asked for a global, overall rating of their satisfaction with the Teen REACH Program, but they were also asked to rate several specific elements or characteristics of the Teen REACH Program.

Chart 3. Parent Satisfaction with Teen REACH
(n = 464 unmatched parent surveys)*



*How satisfied are you with the services you and your child/children have received at the Teen REACH Program?

Overall, 97% of parents surveyed indicated that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the Teen REACH Program in terms of both the services they and their children had received. Not a single parent reported that they were not satisfied with the Teen REACH Program! Ratings of the more specific elements of the program are presented in the following table.

Table 6. Parent Satisfaction with Characteristics of the Teen REACH Program (n=464 unmatched parent surveys)

Program Characteristic	% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”
Affordability	98%
Flexibility / fits with family & work schedules	98%
Accessibility / easy to get into	98%
Ease of enrollment	98%
High quality	96%

As can be seen in the table above, nearly all of the parents rated the Teen REACH Program favorably across all of the elements assessed, from affordability to ease of enrollment to overall quality of programming. Clearly, parents are very satisfied with Teen REACH in all dimensions assessed.

In addition to the program characteristics listed in Table 6, another program characteristic of central importance is the quality of program staff. Research on risk and protective factors has shown that caring adult-child relationships are the strongest protective factor known for prevention of negative outcomes. In a recent report, the Illinois After-School Initiative summarized the key elements of strong out-of-school programs (Illinois Department of Human Services & Illinois State Board of Education, 2002), and the importance of program staff was highlighted as a key ingredient of the most effective programs. Without program staff who are qualified and committed, who have appropriate experience and realistic expectations, and who are trained to work with the youth being served, after school programs cannot expect to fully achieve their intended results.

Because of the key importance of program staff to the success of the Teen REACH Program, both the youth survey and the parent survey included a number of items which focused on relationships with and perceptions of Teen REACH program staff. The youth survey asked participants to describe their relationships with Teen REACH program staff on a number of dimensions. Youth responses are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Youth Connections with Teen REACH Staff (n=950)

Perceptions of Program Staff	% of Participants Responding “Most of the Time” or “Always”*
Whenever I come to Teen REACH, at least one staff member greets me.	70%
Staff members at Teen REACH ask me how I am doing.	68%
If I do not come to Teen REACH, there is at least one staff member who will notice I am not there.	68%
There is an adult at the Teen REACH Program who I can talk to about problems or issues.	67%
It is easy for me to talk with Teen REACH staff.	64%
There is a staff member at Teen REACH who has helped me set higher goals for myself.	64%
There is a staff member at Teen REACH that gets excited when I do something good.	61%
Teen REACH staff enjoy hearing about what I am thinking about.	60%
There is a staff member at Teen REACH who has helped me plan my future.	55%

Perceptions of Program Staff	% of Participants Responding “Most of the Time” or “Always”*
There is a staff member at Teen REACH who is someone I would like to be like when I grow up.	54%
Being at Teen REACH feels like being part of a family.	50%

* Responses could range from 1=Never to 4=Always

Across all dimensions assessed, the majority of Teen REACH youth participants appear to feel strongly connected to program staff, and half of the participants report that overall, Teen REACH feels like being part of a family – perhaps the highest praise a youth can give to an after school program. A third of youth participants (33%) say they first had a caring adult to talk to through Teen REACH.

From Teen REACH Youth Participants:

“The staff members are really nice.”

“They help with problems you need help with...I feel comfortable talking to the staff if I have a problem.”

“The staff are good people and are good helpers to the kids.”

Parents were also asked for their views of Teen REACH program staff, and these responses are summarized in the following table.

Table 8. Parent Perceptions of Teen REACH Program Staff (n=464 unmatched parent surveys)

The Teen REACH program staff ...	% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”
tell me about activities, schedules, and program changes.	94%
make parents feel welcomed and appreciated.	94%
get to know youth participants as individuals.	94%
have warm, caring relationships with youth participants.	94%
are available to meet with me on a one-to-one basis.	93%
keep me informed about how my child is doing in the program.	90%
use a variety of methods to keep parents informed.	90%
listen to parents’ ideas and suggestions.	90%
provide a variety of ways for parents to participate.	86%
tell me about programs, services, or resources in the community that may benefit my family.	84%
ask me for input about the program.	80%
inform me of various ways I can get involved in the program.	80%

Like the youth participants themselves, the parents have very positive views of the program staff across all dimensions assessed. The two items in which the largest number of parents did not agree were both focused on staff efforts to directly involve the parents in the program. This may represent a potential area for program improvement. Alternatively, not asking parents to get involved in the program might also reflect program staff having realistic expectations for already overburdened working parents. Both possibilities seem worthy of further exploration.

From Parents of Teen REACH Participants:

“Staff were more than happy to listen to my problems and make suggestions on how to get through them. They really treat my family like their family.”

“My child has grown tremendously because of Teen REACH staff.”

“The program is wonderful. My kids love it, I love it, and the staff is exceptional.”

In addition to asking parents about their satisfaction with the program and asking both youth and parents about their connections to program staff, youth and parents were also asked directly about the perceived benefits of Teen REACH. An item on the youth survey asked youth how much they had learned about a variety of areas through their involvement in Teen REACH. Youth responses are summarized in the table below:

Table 9. Participant Perceptions of Teen REACH Benefits (n=950)

Topic Area	% of Participants Who “Learned a Lot” ^a
Learning about the dangers of drugs	68%
Learning the skills needed to avoid drugs	67%
Setting goals for the future	58%
Solving problems & making good decisions	58%
Completing homework	57%
Getting along with others	56%
Preparing for a future job or career	54%
How to be a better leader	54%
Help with certain subjects in school	52%
Importance of exercise and hygiene	52%
Studying for tests	48%
Dealing with conflicts with others	48%
Learning about other cultures	37%

^a Response options were “learned nothing,” “learned a few things,” or “learned a lot.”

As can be seen in the table above, the largest number of youth (68%) reported learning about the dangers of drugs was a major way in which they had benefited from Teen REACH, and 67% said learning the skills needed to avoid drugs was an area in which they had “learned a lot.” Indeed, a number of youth development outcome areas were highlighted by the youth respondents: setting goals and preparing for the future, problem solving / decision making, getting along with others, and leadership. Academic-focused benefits were highlighted as well though to a lesser extent, with 57% indicating they had benefited from Teen REACH by completing homework more often, and 52% benefiting by getting help with school subjects.

As stated in the Teen REACH Benchmarks, after school programs should provide developmentally and personally meaningful activities that require its young participants to use and practice life and social skills. Programming which exposes youth to a multitude of new experiences and different environmental settings give youth the valuable opportunity not only to engage in something new, but also to practice and reinforce those life skills being taught in the program. These experiences reinforce social and emotional competencies in areas such as self-awareness, impulse control, cooperation, and caring and teach youth to manage important tasks such as learning, forming relationships, and handling everyday problems. Such programming also provides youth with opportunities to explore and develop interests and express themselves through exposure to artistic and cultural activities.

Because of the importance of exposure to new activities and experiences, the youth survey includes an item which assesses youth involvement in a variety of activities and whether youth were first exposed to the activity through Teen REACH.

Table 10. Exposure to New Opportunities & Experiences Through Teen REACH (n=851-899 T2 youth surveys)

Experience	% Youth First Exposed through Teen REACH
Help with homework	42%
Community service	38%
Caring adult to talk to	33%
Computers	32%
Arts & crafts	30%
Individual sports & recreation	28%
Organized team sports	27%
Job / career clubs	26%
Music / dance classes	25%
Movies	25%
Travel out of neighborhood	25%
Summer camp	25%
Museums, plays, art exhibits	24%
Girl or boy focused groups	24%
Library	20%
Scouts or other youth groups	19%

Through the Teen REACH Program, youth are exposed to numerous opportunities they might not otherwise have experienced. A full 42% of youth indicated they first received homework assistance through Teen REACH. Beyond the academic focused program components, youth were first exposed to a wide variety of experiences and opportunities through Teen REACH. These new experiences offered by Teen REACH range from involvement in community service efforts (38%) to working on computers for the first time (32%). A quarter of the youth participants said they attended movies for the first time through Teen REACH. These experiences serve as opportunities for youth to not only develop new interests but also to practice the new skills being learned in the program.

From Teen REACH Youth Participants:

“I like coming here to play and learn how to do new things.”

“My experiences were fun and I got to see other parts of the city and beyond.”

Finally, parents were asked directly for their impressions of the ways in which their child or children had benefited from participation in Teen REACH. These findings are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Parent Reports of Teen REACH Benefits for Their Child (n=393 matched parent surveys)

My child ...	% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”
is part of a caring environment in the after school program.	97%
looks up to program staff.	96%
is receiving positive feedback from program staff.	95%
completes homework more often.	92%
has a more positive self-concept.	92%
is better at making and keeping friends.	91%
is learning about the harmful effects of drugs.	91%
is learning to make better decisions.	90%
is better at solving problems.	87%
knows how to study better.	86%
is more likely to prepare for school projects and tests.	86%
is receiving positive feedback from teachers at school.	86%
is learning about the harmful effects of early sexual activity.	85%
is more interested in school.	82%
is making better grades.	82%
has learned to set goals.	82%
is a better reader.	81%
shows more interest in reading.	79%

Similar to youth reports, nearly all parents see Teen REACH as a positive environment with caring staff. The overwhelming majority of parents report benefits to their child ranging from completing homework more often and making better grades, to more positive self-concept and better decision-making skills. From the parent's perspective, it appears Teen REACH is having a wide range of positive effects on youth participants.

In an earlier section of this report which focused on youth perceptions of Teen REACH, the findings suggested that in all but three areas (study skills, conflict resolution, and learning about other cultures), the majority of youth reported learning “a lot” through Teen REACH in areas ranging from learning the dangers of drugs to homework completion to leadership skills. As seen in Table 11, parents were even more favorable in their assessments of the positive impacts of Teen REACH on their children. Across all areas assessed, 79% or more of parents believed that the Teen REACH Program had benefited their child. Certainly youth and parent reports of Teen REACH program benefits are a strong indicator that the program is having positive effects on the lives of youth and families served. At the same time, however, a thorough exploration of Teen REACH impacts requires that additional strategies for assessing outcomes also be employed. (Findings from these analyses are presented later in the Academic Outcomes and Youth Development Outcomes sections of this report.)

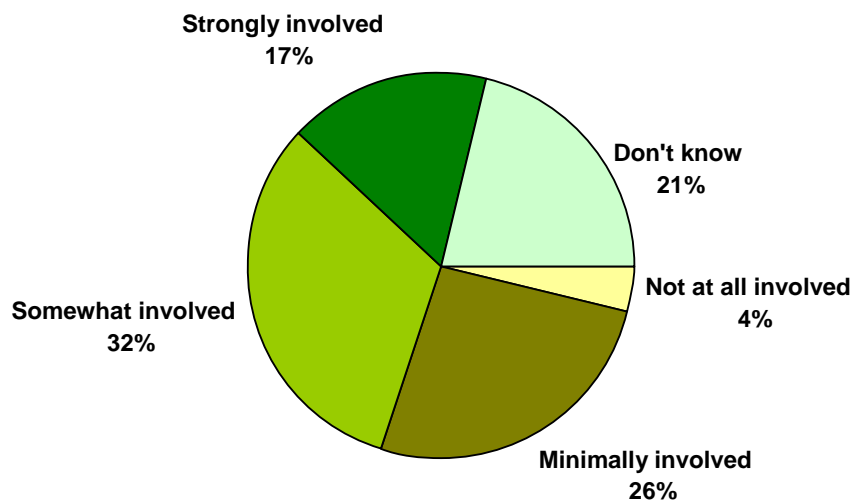
Parent Involvement

In this section of the results, we look at two aspects of parent involvement: parent involvement in their child's education, and parent involvement in Teen REACH programming. We also consider the benefits parents say they derive from the Teen REACH Program, and finally, we look at the relationship between parent involvement in Teen REACH programming and program benefits to parents.

The level of parent involvement is an important predictor of youth outcomes in both the academic and youth development domains. At the same time, however, many Teen REACH families are single parent families and most often in both single parent and two parent homes, parents are working outside the home. These facts must be taken into consideration when exploring levels of parental involvement.

Parent involvement was assessed in both the teacher and parent surveys. Teachers of Teen REACH program participants were asked to globally rate the level of parental involvement for each of their students.

Chart 4. Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Their Child's Education
(n = 325 teacher surveys)



A large portion of teachers indicated they did not know how involved parents were in their child's education, which is somewhat surprising given that nearly half the teachers surveyed taught their students both language arts and math. The largest proportion of parents (32%) were rated by teachers as "somewhat involved" in their child's education. A smaller but still substantial number of parents (17%) were rated by teachers as "strongly involved."

As noted earlier, in addition to parental involvement in their child's education, another reflection of parent involvement is their level of participation in Teen REACH programming. On the parent survey, parents were asked how often, if ever, they participated in Teen REACH in a variety of ways. This is important because we know parent involvement is key to the youth's success – when parents are involved, youth are more likely to show gains in functioning. Furthermore, to the extent parents participate in parent-focused Teen REACH programming, the more likely the program is to have direct, positive effects on the parents themselves. The following table summarizes parent reports of their participation in Teen REACH programming in a variety of areas.

Table 12. Parent Involvement in Teen REACH Programming (n=464 unmatched parent surveys)

Type of Parent Programming	Frequency of Parent Involvement			
	Activity / Service Not Offered	Never / Hardly Ever	Sometimes	A Lot / Often
Family events & activities	7%	17%	48%	28%
One-on-one meetings with program staff	9%	27%	40%	24%
Parent meetings or events focused on meeting other parents & providing	9%	28%	42%	21%

Type of Parent Programming	Frequency of Parent Involvement			
	Activity / Service Not Offered	Never / Hardly Ever	Sometimes	A Lot / Often
support				
Community events & celebrations	8%	21%	51%	20%
Volunteer in the program	10%	41%	34%	15%
Cultural celebrations	11%	33%	42%	14%
Training & education for parents	14%	42%	32%	12%
Serve on advisory board	17%	48%	25%	10%

There are two major sets of interpretations to be made based on the information presented in Table 12. First, by looking at the percentage of parents reporting that a particular program element “is not offered” by Teen REACH and comparing this information to DHS requirements related to parent programming and involvement, areas may be identified in which local programs appear to need additional resources. For example, DHS requires that all Teen REACH Programs have an advisory council that meets quarterly and that has parent membership. That 17% (or nearly one fifth) of parents say there is not an advisory board may suggest the need to further explore this discrepancy. Perhaps the advisory board does not exist at many Teen REACH Programs. An alternative explanation might be that there is an advisory board but that parents are not aware of it or do not perceive an opportunity to serve on the advisory board. Similarly, DHS requires that at least once per year, Teen REACH programs implement a family-focused activity or event. Yet, 7% of parents surveyed indicated that such events were not offered by their Teen REACH Program. Again, it is necessary to find out either why such events are not being offered or why these parents are not aware of these events. Either way, the findings have important program improvement implications.

A second way in which to view the information presented in the table above is to look at the types of programming parents are most and least likely to be involved in. The largest percentage of parents are involved in Teen REACH through family events and activities sponsored by the program, one-on-one meetings with program staff, and parent support meetings. The majority of parents did not participate in parent training and education, did not serve on the program’s advisory board, and did not volunteer in the program. Each of these types of involvement requires an ongoing commitment of time, perhaps more time than these working parents can afford to give.

Presumably, parent involvement in Teen REACH programming will have positive impacts on the parent. The ways in which parents say Teen REACH has benefited them are summarized in the following table.

Table 13. Parent Reports of Teen REACH Impacts on Parents (n=464 unmatched parent surveys)

Program Impacts on Parents	% Agree or Strongly Agree
I play a more active role in my child’s education.	90%
I encourage my children more often.	90%
I have clear rules for my child about not using alcohol or other drugs.	90%
I have clear rules for my child about not smoking.	89%
I talk to my child about the dangers of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.	89%
I understand how I can work with my child’s school to improve my child’s education.	87%
My attitudes toward school and parent-school partnerships have improved.	86%
I know how to talk to my child about boy-girl relationships.	84%
I talk to my child about the value of sexual abstinence.	83%
I spend more time playing with / talking to me child.	82%
I participate in more family-focused activities with my child.	81%
I know more about existing community services.	78%
I understand more about how my child grows and develops.	77%

Program Impacts on Parents	% Agree or Strongly Agree
I have met more parents.	73%
I am learning new ideas about raising children.	69%

As can be seen in the table above, the overwhelming majority of parents believe that Teen REACH has had a positive impact on them, in areas ranging from encouraging their child more often and spending more time with them to improving attitudes toward school and parent-school partnerships to increasing their knowledge of community services. Thus, it appears that although parent involvement in Teen REACH programming is moderate at best, still the Teen REACH Program is having numerous positive impacts on the parents in a variety of areas. To more fully understand how minimal program participation by parents can yield such positive benefits for parents, it will be necessary to further explore local program practices related to parent involvement and parent-focused programming.

From Parents of Teen REACH Participants:

“This program has vastly improved our relationship with our kids.”

“Teen REACH helped me focus on where my teenagers’ minds were taking them and to be understanding and show unconditional love.”

To further explore the relationship between parent participation in adult or family focused Teen REACH programming and program impacts on parents, an additional set of analyses was run. First, the 15 areas of self-reported program impacts on parents were factor analyzed to see if the items could be reduced to a smaller set of core areas. The results of the factor analysis are presented below:

Table 14. Factor Analysis of Teen REACH Impacts on Parents

Program Impacts on Parents	Factor Loading	
	1	2
I am learning new ideas about raising children.		.81
I understand more about how my child grows and develops.		.80
I spend more time playing with / talking to me child.		.72
I participate in more family-focused activities with my child.		.69
I have clear rules for my child about not smoking.	.90	
I have clear rules for my child about not using alcohol or other drugs.	.89	
I encourage my children more often.	.67	
I understand how I can work with my child’s school to improve my child’s education.		.58
I talk to my child about the dangers of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.	.82	
My attitudes toward school and parent-school partnerships have improved.		.66
I play a more active role in my child’s education.	.59	.52
I know how to talk to my child about boy-girl relationships.	.73	
I talk to my child about the value of sexual abstinence.	.73	
I have met more parents.		.71
I know more about existing community services.		.68

* Based on factor analysis with varimax rotation.

The analysis yielded two meaningful factors, which account for 67% of the variance. Thus, this set of items seems to be tapping into two distinct constructs or factors related to program impacts on parents. The first factor can be labeled “positive communication regarding ATOD and sexual behavior” and the second factor reflects “knowledge of child / adolescent development.” Given that the 15 parent impact items appear to be made up of two distinct factors, the next step was to compute mean scores for each

factor based on the pattern of loading presented in the table above. In essence, these represent two distinct subscales of the full measure. Finally, to explore the relationship between parent levels of involvement in parent-focused programming and impacts of the program on the parents, correlations were computed between the mean frequency of participation in parent programming and the two parent impact subscale scores. These correlations are reported below:

Table 15. Relationship Between Involvement in Parent Programming and Program Impacts on Parents

Program Impacts	Correlation
positive communication regarding ATOD & sexual behavior	.51**
knowledge of child / adolescent development	.31**

** p < .01

Statistically significant correlations were found between amount of parent programming and parent impacts. These correlations suggest that there is a relationship between amount of parent programming and positive impacts on parents, particularly in the positive communication area. These results, however, must not be used to imply causality and should be interpreted with caution given that the data were collected at one point in time and are based solely on parent self-report.

Academic Outcomes in Teen REACH Participants

Earlier in this report, youth and parent views of program impacts were described. Briefly, it was found that the majority of youth believe Teen REACH has taught them “a lot” about completing homework and getting help with certain subjects. Nearly half of the participants also noted that Teen REACH has improved their study skills. Parent views of program impacts were even more positive, with the overwhelming majority of parents indicating that because of Teen REACH, their child completes homework more often, has improved their study skills, is better prepared for school projects and tests, is more interested in school, is a better reader, and is making better grades. While these youth and parent reports of positive program impacts are quite impressive and speak extremely well of the Teen REACH Program, to more systematically assess Teen REACH Program outcomes requires that additional evaluation strategies be employed. Two such strategies are to assess teacher views of youth improvement and to explore changes in functioning over time.

Teacher views of youth academic performance are a critical component of assessing academic outcomes. On a daily basis, teachers observe and evaluate youth academic performance. In addition, teachers may be more likely to provide a valid assessment of academic performance because they are not as directly affected by the results of the Teen REACH evaluation. That is, parents and youth may feel some need to report positive program impacts to help ensure the sustainability of the program, while teachers may be less likely to experience this view.

On the teacher survey, teachers were asked to rate youth improvement over the course of the school year in a variety of areas pertaining to classroom behavior and performance. For each area, teachers were asked to indicate if “yes” the youth had shown improvement over the course of the school year, “no” the youth had not shown improvement, or if there was “no room for improvement” indicating that the youth was doing well at the beginning of the school year and continued to do well. A summary of teacher ratings is provided in the table below.

Table 16. Teacher Reports of Youth Improvements in Classroom Performance & Behavior (n=325)

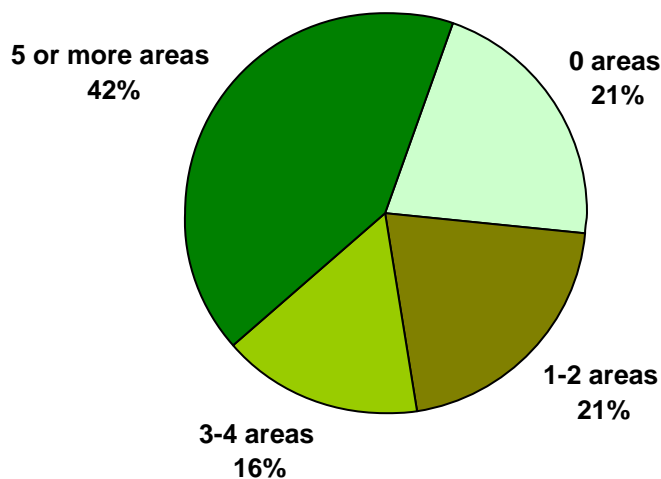
Since the beginning of the school year, has the youth improved in these areas:	Improved	No Room for Improvement	Did Not Improve
Class participation	55%	23%	22%
Satisfactory completion of homework	52%	23%	25%
Turning in homework on time	49%	30%	21%
Attentiveness in class	44%	31%	25%

Since the beginning of the school year, has the youth improved in these areas:	Improved	No Room for Improvement	Did Not Improve
Coming to school "ready to learn"	43%	36%	21%
Volunteering in class	40%	23%	37%
Classroom behavior	38%	41%	21%
Getting along well with other students	36%	46%	18%
Class attendance	25%	67%	8%

Teachers reported improvement over time in a substantial number of their students who were Teen REACH participants. Approximately half of the teachers rated youth as having improved in the following areas over the course of the school year: classroom participation, satisfactory completion of homework, and timely completion of homework. (It should be noted, however, that improvement as reported by teachers does not appear to be related to youth program dosage. See Appendix G for further details on the results of these analyses.) The area in which improvement was least likely to be reported was class attendance.

In addition to looking at specific areas in which youth demonstrated improvement over time, it is also important to look at the breadth of improvements among Teen REACH youth. The chart below summarizes teacher reports of the total number of areas in which youth demonstrated improvements over time. Based on teacher reports, over half of the Teen REACH youth improved in three or more areas over the course of the school year.

Chart 5. Number of Areas in Which Teachers Reported Improvements in Youth Classroom Performance & Behavior (n = 325 teacher surveys)



A second strategy for exploring academic outcomes was to assess whether levels of academic functioning (as measured by various indicators) changed over time. When looking at mean change across all youth who completed the survey, individual changes that may occur are not always detected. It is possible, for example, that one group of youth is improving from Time 1 to Time 2 while another group is declining from Time 1 to Time 2, thereby canceling out any effects at the aggregate level. Because minimal change from Time 1 to Time 2 at the aggregate level was found, change over time at the individual level was explored. Indeed, it does appear that a large subgroup of youth participants is

showing improvement from Time 1 to Time 2, particularly in the areas of problem solving, peer group cohesion, and adult connections. This is shown in the “% of Youth – Improve” column in Table 17.

As stated in the Teen REACH Policy and Procedure Manual and the Request for Proposals document, the goal of Teen REACH is to improve *or maintain* levels of youth functioning in the various core areas. And in fact, because so many youth are already at high levels of functioning in various areas at the Time 1 assessment, there is often not a great deal of room for further improvements to occur. So, in understanding the positive ways in which Teen REACH influences youth, it may be important to not only consider improvement per se as a positive outcome, but to also consider staying the same over time (and preventing negative outcomes) as a positive outcome. As can be seen in the table below, in all outcome areas at least 50% of youth participants are staying the same or improving over time.

Table 17. Change in Academic Outcome Areas from Time 1 to Time 2

Outcome Variable	N	% of Youth		
		Decline	Stay same	Improve
Self-reported grades	877	30%	45%	25%
Academic aspirations	907	21%	62%	17%
Quality of school life	900	46%	29%	25%

Decline was defined as a decrease of -.2 or more; stayed the same was defined as a difference between Time 1 and Time 2 scores not exceeding .2 in either direction (-.2 or +.2); improve was defined as an increase of +.2 or greater.

From Teen REACH Youth Participants:

“It helped me get good grades because it taught me to do my homework and get it done.”

“I get my homework done, and I make better grades when I was in Teen REACH.”

From Parents of Teen REACH Participants:

“Since my child has been in Teen REACH her grades went from a B,C,D average to A,B. She feels more confident about herself and is not so afraid to make her own choices.”

“They have helped give my child the tools and methods in doing homework...”

“I worked closely with Teen REACH faculty and teachers, and now my child is doing better and has been improving his grades. I am so glad that Teen REACH was there to assist not only my child but me and the teachers.”

In a final set of analyses exploring program impacts on academic outcomes, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) approach was used. ANOVA is a collection of statistical methods that look at differences in the means of a variable across groups of observations. For each indicator of youth academic functioning, predictor variables included time (if the indicator was assessed at both points in time), grade in school (to reflect developmental differences in youth of different ages), and program dosage. As noted earlier in the report, the analyses were run separately for new versus continuing participants.

Key Research Questions

1. Do Teen REACH participants show improvement in academic functioning from Time 1 to Time 2?
2. Which students appear to benefit the most in terms of academic functioning? Are there any

differences in functioning based on age?

3. Is there a relationship between program dosage and youth academic functioning?

In the ANOVA approach using time, grade in school, and program dosage as predictors, there are several types of effects being studied. These effects, and their interpretations, are outlined below.

Table 18. Description of ANOVA Effects for the Teen REACH Evaluation

Effect	Interpretation
Time	the difference in scores between Time 1 & Time 2
Grade	the difference in scores of youth in different grade levels
Dosage	the difference in scores of youth attending the program at various levels of dosage
Time X Grade	an interaction effect showing a different rate of change over time for youth in different grade levels
Time X Dosage	an interaction effect showing a different rate of change over time for youth attending the program at various levels of dosage
Grade X Dosage	an interaction effect that shows how program dosage impacts outcomes differently at different grade levels
Time X Grade X Dosage	a 3-way interaction, a complex effect showing differential change over time for youth at different grade levels & with varying levels of program dosage

Table 19 summarizes the results of the ANOVAs performed to look at the academic outcomes of Teen REACH youth.

Table 19. Summary of Effects on Academic Outcomes

Outcome Variable	Data Source	Significant Effects, by Group	
		New Participants	Continuing Participants
School absences (due to skipping or cutting class)	Youth survey	Grade (older children have more absences than younger children) Time X Grade (youngest children have more absences over time, while oldest youth have fewer absences over time)	Time (increased absences over the course of the school year) Grade (older youth have more absences than younger children) Time X Dosage (higher program dosage levels are associated with decreases over time in absences)
Homework completion	Youth survey		Time X Dosage (higher dosage is associated with decreases over time in completion of homework)
Homework completion	Parent survey		Dosage (as dosage increases, parents report higher rates of homework completion)
Study skills	Parent Survey		Dosage (as dosage increases, parents report better study skills in youth)
How much have you learned about studying for tests?	Youth Survey		Dosage (as dosage increases, so do reports of learning in this area)

Outcome Variable	Data Source	Significant Effects, by Group	
		New Participants	Continuing Participants
Prepares for projects & tests	Parent survey		Dosage (as dosage increases, parents report better youth preparation)
Feelings about school	Youth survey		Dosage (higher dosage is associated with improvements over time in feelings about school)
Academic aspirations	Youth survey		Dosage (higher dosage is associated with improvements over time in academic aspirations)
Reading skills & interest	Parent survey		Dosage (as dosage increases, youth are better readers)
Grades	Youth survey	Time X Grade X Dosage (dosage effects change differently for youth at different grade levels; 4 th -6 th graders show improvement over time as dosage increases; 7 th -8 th graders remain the same over time regardless of dosage; 9 th -12 th graders show declines over time as dosage increases)	

For additional details on the ANOVA findings, including group means and F values, please see Appendix G.

As can be seen in the table, a large number of statistically significant effects were found for continuing participants, while only three significant effects were found for new program participants. This suggests that during their first year of Teen REACH program participation, change in many of the academic outcome variables under study does not tend to occur. However, among those youth who remain in the Teen REACH Program, change over time does appear to occur, and program dosage definitely appears to matter in all the ways predicted.

There were a few exceptions to this overall pattern, however. First, it was the new participants and not the continuing participants who showed change over time in grades which was related to program dosage. Self-reported grades of continuing participants did not appear to be influenced by program dosage level. A second exception was that for one variable, youth self reports of homework completion, higher dosage was predictive of lower rates of homework completion over time.

In sum, the overall pattern of results suggests that change over time in the academic outcome areas does occur, particularly for continuing participants and particularly for those youth attending the program at higher levels of dosage.

Youth Development Outcomes in Teen REACH Participants

In looking at youth development outcomes, first the overall number of youth demonstrating improvement in each outcome area assessed was determined. Then, the ANOVA approach with the same set of predictor variables (time, grade level, program dosage) was used to investigate the impact of Teen REACH on youth development outcomes.

Key Research Questions

1. Do Teen REACH participants show improvement in academic functioning from Time 1 to Time 2?
2. Which students appear to benefit the most in terms of academic functioning? Are there any differences in functioning based on age?
3. Is there a relationship between program dosage and youth academic functioning?

Because minimal change from Time 1 to Time 2 at the aggregate level was found, change over time at the individual level was explored. As seen in Table 20, it appears that a large subgroup of youth participants is showing improvement from Time 1 to Time 2, particularly in the areas of problem solving, peer group cohesion, and adult connections. This is shown in the “% of Youth – Improve” column in Table 20.

Table 20. Change in Youth Development Outcome Areas from Time 1 to Time 2

Outcome Variable	N	% of Youth*		
		Decline	Stay same	Improve
Self-concept	892	36%	37%	27%
Leadership	870	40%	27%	33%
Problem solving	892	38%	27%	35%
Peer group cohesion	870	43%	23%	34%
Adult connections	880	43%	22%	35%

*Decline was defined as a decrease of -.2 or more; stayed the same was defined as a difference between Time 1 and Time 2 scores not exceeding .2 in either direction (-.2 or +.2); improve was defined as an increase of +.2 or greater.

From Teen REACH Youth Participants:

“I enjoyed being with kids I have never been with and encouraging them. It has been a great experience. I have learned about other cultures and learned to appreciate them. I have made many new friends.”

“It is a place to make friends and have fun.”

From Parents of Teen REACH Participants:

“They have given my child the skills in working with others and making more friends.”

“Teen REACH had allowed my child to focus on a lot of positive things for herself in life.”

“If it weren’t for this program my child would not understand how to handle bullies, and it has given him a lot of self-esteem.”

“Great opportunity for my child to participate in community service and learn the value of helping others. Empowering children to become leaders and strong focus on academic success.”

A similar ANOVA approach was used for the prediction of youth development outcomes. Table 21 summarizes the results of the ANOVAs performed to look at the youth development outcomes among Teen REACH participants.

Table 21. Summary of Effects on Youth Development Outcomes

Outcome Variable	Data Source	Significant Effects, by Group	
		New Participants	Continuing Participants
Problem solving	Youth survey		Grade (7 th -8 th graders have lower skills in this area compared to other grade level groups)
Leadership skills	Youth survey		Grade (7 th -8 th graders have lower skills in this area compared to other grade level groups)
Adult connections	Youth survey		
Peer group cohesion	Youth survey		Grade (highest for the oldest group)
Self-concept	Youth survey		Time X Grade (7 th -8 th graders show a slight decline over time; 4 th -6 th and 9 th -12 th graders show more decline over time) Time X Grade X Dosage (7 th -8 th graders show decline over time regardless of dosage level; 4 th -6 th and 9 th -12 th graders show small improvements over time as dosage levels increase)

Please refer to Appendix H for more details on the ANOVA findings (e.g. overall and group means, F-values, etc.) related to the prediction of youth development outcomes.

Interestingly, in the youth development domain, no significant predictor variable effects were found for new Teen REACH participants. Further, among continuing Teen REACH youth participants, only a single dosage effect was found. Specifically, a significant 3-way interaction between time, grade, and dosage was found in the prediction of youth self-concept. Self-concept tends to decline over time, across youth in all grade levels. However, when program dosage is taken into account, it is found that self-concept still declines for 7th-8th graders, but for 4th-6th and 9th-12th graders, there are slight improvements over time as dosage levels increase.

The primary effect found on youth development outcomes was grade level. Specifically, across multiple youth development outcome areas (problem-solving, leadership, self-concept), the 7th-8th graders reported the lowest levels of functioning and the largest declines over time. These findings are supported by a large body of research describing the challenges faced by middle school youth. In addition, these findings may have implications for Teen REACH programming – specifically, how best to serve this high risk group of youth.

Though it is disappointing that more significant dosage effects were not found in the youth development domain, these findings are extremely informative and have important implications for Teen REACH programming and the tailoring of the program for youth in different grade levels. In nearly every youth development area assessed, it was the 7th-8th graders who demonstrated the lowest levels of functioning and the greatest declines in functioning over time.

Relationship Between Program Quality and Youth Outcomes

In what ways is the quality of Teen REACH programming related to youth outcomes? Are certain program characteristics associated with more positive youth outcomes?

Quality after school programs can offer safe, engaging environments that motivate healthy development and inspire learning outside the regular school day. However, research on after school programs is just beginning to explore the connection between organizational and program elements and outcomes for youth. Questions such as “What are the indicators of after school quality?” and “Do specific aspects of program quality impact youth outcomes?” are a major focus of the latest research in the after school field.

Although Teen REACH is still in the process of developing a system for measuring program quality, some data on structural or program characteristics are collected annually from all programs. The Department routinely gathers this information from Teen REACH programs for a variety of programmatic and administrative purposes. These data include such information as age of the program, type of provider agency, type of program facility and percent of time devoted to specific program areas. While these data were not originally collected with the intent of examining their relationship to youth outcomes, the availability of this information provided an opportunity to perform some initial analyses prior to instituting a more formalized Teen REACH quality assessment process.

The following table contains the specific Teen REACH program variables selected for this analysis. These variables or program characteristics were available for all 30 Teen REACH Programs in the evaluation sample representing 92 program sites.

Table 22. DHS Information on Teen REACH Program Characteristics

Selected Program Characteristics
Number of sites administered by the provider agency
Estimated total enrollment (total number of youth enrolled but not necessarily attending the program)
Daily program capacity (number of youth program can serve at one time)
Average daily program attendance (average number of youth served daily within the program)
Number of paid full time staff
Type of agency of the program provider (e.g. Boys & Girls Club, health dept.)
Type of facility in which the program is held (e.g. school based, community based)
Percent of program time devoted to each of the 5 Teen REACH core areas (academics, life skills, recreation, adult mentoring, parent involvement)

The number of sites administered by each of the 30 Teen REACH providers ranged from 1 to 6. Program characteristics across the 92 program sites sometimes varied greatly. For example, the range for average daily attendance at a site was 14 to 175. The table below shows Teen REACH program characteristics and the range of mean responses at the site level.

Table 23. Variability of Program Characteristics Across Teen REACH Program Sites

Program Characteristics	Range by Site/Average
Estimated total enrollment (number of youth expected to be enrolled)	17-230
Daily program capacity (number of youth that can be served on a daily basis)	28-300
Average daily program attendance (average number of youth served daily)	14-175
Number of paid full time staff	0-6

Two of the program characteristics, provider agency type and program facility type, consisted of multiple categories provided by the Department. Each funded program fell into a specific provider agency category. The table below lists these categories as well as the number and percent of providers falling into each category.

Table 24. Types of Provider Agencies

Provider Agency Type	Frequency	Percent
Community based umbrella organization	11	37%
Boys & Girls Club	6	20%
School district	4	13%
Youth focused organization (e.g. youth center)	3	10%
Local health department	3	10%
A coalition of organizations	2	7%
Municipal agency (e.g. housing authority)	1	3%

Of the 30 programs, the most common type of provider agency identified was community based umbrella organizations. Only one Teen REACH program identified their provider agency type as a housing authority.

In addition, each agency indicated how many program sites they operated and the type of program facilities in which these sites were located. Provider agencies did not indicate the facility type for each site but identified the types of facilities used for their sites overall. For example, a Boys & Girls Club provider agency may be running three sites, one in a Boys & Girls Club and two in a school. In this instance, the provider agency would list both types of facilities but not specify the number of sites included in each facility type. Therefore, the percentages shown in the table below total more than 100%.

Table 25. Types of Program Facilities

Program Facility Type	Frequency	Percent of Provider Agencies Operating Programs in This Type of Facility
School based	22	73%
Community based	15	50%
Boys & Girls Club	7	23%
Church/faith based	6	20%
YMCA	2	7%
Park district	1	3%
Other	4	13%

* Respondent can select more than one category

Fourteen of the 30 providers indicated they had program sites in two or more types of facilities. The majority of facility types listed by provider agencies were located in school facilities including elementary, middle and high schools. Only one provider agency reported using a park district as a location for Teen REACH programming.

It seems likely that multiple program and youth characteristics interact to influence the probability of youth within any Teen REACH Program achieving positive academic and developmental outcomes. Therefore, multiple regression analyses were performed in an attempt to learn more about these interrelated factors. Multiple regression is a statistical technique used to determine which factors (in this case program characteristics) are likely to predict outcome variables such as homework completion or change in grades. As in prior analyses, youth outcomes are reported separately for Teen REACH youth in their first year of the program and youth who have participated for one or more years.

As this was the initial attempt to determine whether relationships existed between program characteristics and youth outcomes, much of the analysis was exploratory in nature. While research has demonstrated after school program impacts on youth, there has been little examination of how specific program characteristics may influence particular outcomes. However, it was hypothesized that certain program

characteristics such as percent of time devoted to academics may influence particular youth outcomes such as homework completion or self-reported grades. The particular youth outcomes selected as part of the multiple regression analyses were self-reported grades, homework completion, connection to adults, intent to use ATOD, intent to engage in negative behavior (other than ATOD use) and leadership skills. Below is a summary of findings related to relationships between program characteristics and youth outcomes.

Percent of Time Program Staff Report Providing Adult Mentoring to Participants

For first year Teen REACH participants:

- ❖ The percent of program time devoted to adult mentoring was related to positive changes in homework completion. The more time a Teen REACH program spent on adult mentoring, the more likely youth were to report increases in the amount of homework completed.

For continuing Teen REACH participants:

- ❖ The percent of program time devoted to adult mentoring was related to positive changes in grades as reported by youth.

For both participant groups:

- ❖ There were no clear, systematic effects of percent of time devoted to the other core areas (including academics, life skills or parent involvement) and youth outcomes.

Program Size (Number of Sites, Average Daily Program Attendance, Estimated Total Enrollment and Daily Program Capacity)

For first year Teen REACH participants:

- ❖ Daily program capacity was related to positive changes in grades as reported by youth. The greater the program capacity, the more likely youth reported increases in their grades.

For continuing participants:

- ❖ Estimated total enrollment was positively related to positive changes in grades as reported by youth.
- ❖ Daily program capacity was positively related to youth reports of greater homework completion.
- ❖ Average daily program attendance was negatively related to youth reports of their intention to engage in negative behaviors including stealing, fighting and cheating in school. The larger the average daily program attendance, the less likely youth reported intentions to engage in negative behaviors.

For both participant groups:

- ❖ Beyond those program characteristics and youth outcomes listed above, there were no other effects of program characteristics related to size for youth outcomes.

Total Number of Paid, Full-Time Employees

For first year Teen REACH participants:

- ❖ Total number of paid, full-time employees was negatively related to youth reports of their connections with adults. The greater the number of paid full-time employees, the less likely youth were to report feeling connected with adults.

For both participant groups:

- ❖ Beyond the finding listed above, there were no other clear systematic effects of the number of paid FTEs on youth outcomes.

Type of Program Facility

For first year and continuing Teen REACH participants:

- ❖ Compared with other types of program facilities, Boys & Girls Clubs sites were negatively related to youth reports of their intentions to use ATOD. In Teen REACH programs held in Boys & Girls Club facilities, youth were less likely to report intent to use ATOD.

For continuing Teen REACH participants:

- ❖ Community based organization sites were positively related to youth reports of their connections with adults. In Teen REACH programs held in community based organizations, youth were more likely to report feeling connected with adults.

For both participant groups:

- ❖ Beyond the findings listed above, there were no other clear systematic effects of type of program facility on youth outcomes.

Type of Provider Agency

The three groupings of provider agencies used in the analysis were community based umbrella organizations, school affiliated organizations and other organization types including health departments, faith based organizations, Boys & Girls Clubs, coalitions, youth focused organizations and municipal organizations.

For first year Teen REACH participants:

- ❖ Compared with other types of provider agencies, Teen REACH programs funded through community based umbrella organizations were positively related to youth leadership skills. That is, youth attending programs funded through community based umbrella organizations were more likely to report an increase in their leadership skills.

For continuing participants:

- ❖ Compared with other types of provider agencies, youth attending Teen REACH programs funded through community based umbrella organizations were less likely to report increases in self reported grades.

For both participant groups:

- ❖ Beyond the findings listed above, there were no other clear systematic effects of type of provider agency on youth outcomes.

It is important to note that these 30 sites are a small sample of all Teen REACH programs and were not selected as a representative sample. In addition, the program characteristics used in this analysis were based on available DHS data not specifically collected for this purpose. Therefore, it is not surprising that the analysis did not demonstrate strong relationships between many of the program characteristics and the youth outcomes measured in the evaluation.

A relationship between a program characteristic and a youth outcome does not mean the program characteristic caused the outcome to occur. The true value of examining these relationships lies in the ability to identify trends and further explore possible underlying contributors to those relationships. For example, several of the characteristics associated with greater program size were related to positive youth outcomes. It would be shortsighted to assume that larger programs were “better” for youth without a greater analysis of the relationship between these size characteristics and factors such as age of the program or the amount of funding. In this case, further analysis determined that, within this 30 program sample, the amount of funding was highly related to both the number of program sites and the average daily program attendance. Given this information, it is possible that program funding may be the more relevant characteristic in the relationship to youth outcomes. Additionally, there may be other factors associated with program size that are not currently part of the analysis. It may also be the case that some

combination of program size and certain youth characteristics work in combination to enhance the possibility of achieving positive outcomes.

In multi-faceted programs like Teen REACH who serve youth in a variety of developmental stages, there are many issues contributing to changes in youth outcomes. Program characteristics are but one piece of a larger puzzle. That there does appear to be some relationship between certain characteristics and program outcomes, even in this small sample, highlights the need for further study. These efforts might include all Teen REACH programs, determining additional data on program characteristics that should be collected from programs and developing clearer definitions and a greater understanding of each type of program characteristic.

The Teen REACH Benchmark Assessment system will provide a valuable source of information on a number of quality indicators within Teen REACH programs. In the future, this information linked with youth outcomes data will provide a rich resource as the Department develops a greater understanding of the relationship between program quality and the impacts on the youth served by Teen REACH.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

First and foremost, the Teen REACH Program is providing youth with a safe, supervised environment during the critical after school hours – a time that is considered “high risk” for those youth who might otherwise be left unsupervised.

- ❖ Nearly a third of the youth surveyed are from single parent homes, and 77% are from low-income families (based on free/reduced lunch participation). After school opportunities are critical for this group of youth, and alternatives are probably limited for them.
- ❖ Overall, 65% of the parents surveyed indicated that after school care was a necessity for their family, and over half of the parents (59%) indicated that there were not alternative after school care options available to them and their families. Clearly, the after school programming provided by the Teen REACH Program is meeting a need of many families in Illinois for after school care.
- ❖ When asked what they would do after school if they did not participate in the Teen REACH Program, only 30% of youth survey respondents indicated that they would go to another after school program. In other words, *70% of youth participants would not be in an after school program if not for Teen REACH.* This finding suggests that either there are no other after school programs available or other programs are not as appealing to the youth and their families as Teen REACH. In either case, *Teen REACH appears to be meeting a clear need of youth and families in the communities in which it is implemented.*
- ❖ Overall, 36% of Teen REACH youth survey respondents indicated that they would be spending 10 or more hours per week without any adult supervision if they were not in Teen REACH. Prior research has identified 10 hours or more per week to be the “threshold” for high-risk behavior.

Parents of Teen REACH participants express the highest levels of satisfaction with the Teen REACH Program.

- ❖ Overall, 97% of parents surveyed indicated that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the Teen REACH Program in terms of both the services they and their children had received. Not a single parent reported that they were not satisfied with the Teen REACH Program!
- ❖ Nearly all parents rated the Teen REACH Program favorably across all of the elements assessed, from affordability to ease of enrollment to overall quality of programming.
- ❖ Across all areas assessed, the overwhelming majority of parents (79%) believed that the Teen REACH Program had benefited their child. Benefits ranged from completing homework more often and making better grades, to more positive self-concept and better decision-making skills. From the parent’s perspective, it appears Teen REACH is having a wide range of positive effects on youth participants.

The provision of homework assistance is a basic building block of Teen REACH. Many of the parents of the youth participants work outside the home and often do not have the time, energy, or educational background to help their children with sometimes complex homework assignments. For many of these youth, if homework was not completed at Teen REACH, it would simply not get done.

- ❖ Academic assistance is a primary reason why parents enroll their child in Teen REACH: 89% of parents enrolled their child to get help with homework, 88% of parents said improved school performance was a reason for enrolling their child in Teen REACH, and 82% of parents said assistance with reading and math was a reason for their child’s Teen REACH enrollment.
- ❖ Teen REACH is helping youth with homework who would otherwise not receive such assistance, at home or from other sources: *42% of youth surveyed said they received homework assistance*

for the first time through Teen REACH. Assistance would not be available to these youth were it not for Teen REACH.

- ❖ A primary benefit of Teen REACH, according to over half of the youth participants (57%), is assistance with homework completion. Other academic-focused benefits were highlighted as well, with 52% of youth indicating they had received help with specific school subjects and 48% saying they had learned about studying for tests.
- ❖ Over 90% of parents indicate their child is completing homework more often as a result of Teen REACH, and over 80% of parents say their child is more likely to prepare for school projects and tests, is more interested in school, is making better grades, and is a better reader as a result of Teen REACH.
- ❖ Teachers reported improvements over time in a substantial number of their students who were Teen REACH participants. Approximately half of the teachers rated youth as having improved in the areas of classroom participation, satisfactory completion of homework, and timely completion of homework.
- ❖ The findings suggest that during their first year of Teen REACH program participation, change in many of the academic outcome variables under study does not tend to occur. However, change over time in the academic outcome areas does occur for youth continuing in the program from the previous year, and particularly for those youth attending the program at higher levels of dosage.

In addition to the positive academic-focused outcomes, there are a number of other areas in which Teen REACH is having a positive impact on youth participants.

- ❖ Overall, 35% of youth participants report increases in problem-solving skills, 34% report increases in peer group cohesion, and 33% of youth participants report increases in leadership skills over time.
- ❖ Parents also report youth improvements in these areas. Specifically, 92% of parents say their child has a more positive self-concept, 91% of parents say their child is better at making and keeping friends, 90% of parents say their child is learning to make better decisions, and 87% of parents say their child is better at solving problems.
- ❖ Another area of Teen REACH impact in which the majority of youth reported benefits was learning about the dangers of drugs (68%) and the skills needed to avoid drugs (67%). Indeed, these two areas were those for which the largest percentage of youth reported benefits in FY04. The percentage of youth who report improvements in these areas is much larger in FY04 than has been found in the previous years' evaluations.
- ❖ Teen REACH provides youth with experiences and opportunities that many youth might rarely get to do outside of the program – experiences as wide ranging as community service to sports and recreation to visiting local museums. These experiences serve as important opportunities for youth to not only develop new interests but also to practice the new skills being learned in the program.

Important differences in youth development outcomes emerged for youth in different grade levels.

- ❖ The primary effect found on youth development outcomes was grade level. Across multiple youth development outcome areas (problem-solving, leadership, self-concept), the 7th-8th graders reported the lowest levels of functioning and the largest declines in functioning over time. These findings are supported by a large body of research describing the challenges faced by middle school youth and may have implications for Teen REACH programming – specifically, how best to serve this high risk age group.

Levels of parent involvement in Teen REACH programming are less than initially hoped for.

- ❖ While DHS requires that all Teen REACH Programs have an advisory council that meets quarterly and that has parent membership, 17% (or nearly one fifth) of parents say there is not an advisory board. Similarly, DHS requires that at least once per year, Teen REACH programs offer family-focused activities or events. Yet, 7% of parents surveyed indicated that such events were not offered by their Teen REACH Program. It is not clear if these required program elements are not being addressed by local programs or whether the parents simply are not aware of these opportunities within the Teen REACH Program.
- ❖ The largest percentage of parents is involved in Teen REACH through family events and activities sponsored by the program, one-on-one meetings with program staff, and parent support meetings. The majority of parents did not participate in parent training and education, did not serve on the program's advisory board, and did not volunteer in the program. Each of these latter types of involvement requires an ongoing commitment of time, perhaps more time than these working parents can afford to give.
- ❖ Despite minimal levels of participation in the Teen REACH program, the overwhelming majority of parents believe that Teen REACH has had a positive impact on them, in areas ranging from encouraging their child more often and spending more time with them to improving attitudes toward school and parent-school partnerships to increasing their knowledge of community services.
- ❖ A relationship exists between amount of parent programming and parent impacts. Correlations suggest that there is a relationship between amount of parent programming and positive impacts on parents, particularly in the positive communication area.

The positive caring relationships formed between Teen REACH program staff and youth participants play a key role in the success of the program, and both youth participants and their parents view these relationships as a primary strength of the program.

- ❖ Youth view program staff as individuals who genuinely care about them and encourage them. Youth also believe they can go to staff members with concerns and problems beyond the academic domain. The majority of youth indicate that their relationships with Teen REACH staff are very positive, reporting that staff are easy to talk to, listen to what youth have to say, help them plan for and set higher goals for the future, and serve as a mentor to youth.
- ❖ 33% of youth participants reported that “having an adult to talk to, someone who cares about me and my future” was something they first received through Teen REACH. For these youth, before coming to Teen REACH, they had no such adult in their lives.
- ❖ Half of the youth participants indicate that being at Teen REACH feels like being part of a family – perhaps the highest praise youth can give an after school program.
- ❖ Parents also have very positive views of the program staff across all dimensions assessed, including how well staff keep parents informed of program events, how welcoming and appreciative they are towards parents, how well they get to know the youth, and their availability to meet with parents on an individual basis.
- ❖ Nearly all parents (97%) see Teen REACH as a positive environment with caring staff.

Having a positive impact on youth from challenging environments where families often lack needed resources requires intensive, long-term programming. Teen REACH appears to be providing such programming for these youth and their families.

- ❖ That 77% of the sample participates in the free or reduced lunch program and that nearly a third of the youth respondents are from single parent families suggests that the Teen REACH Initiative is serving the youth that the program is intended to serve.
- ❖ Overall, 76% of youth report that they attend Teen REACH 4 or more days each week.
- ❖ The majority of youth who enter the Teen REACH Program stay in the program from one year to the next: 60% of the youth completing the survey had participated in Teen REACH for over a year – on average 2.2 years.

REFERENCES

- Barker, N.C. (1998). Can specialized after-school programs impact delinquent behavior among African-American youth? *Child welfare and juvenile justice*. In *Proceedings of the annual research conference, a system of care for children's mental health: Expanding the research base*, vol. 10, pp. 345-350, February 23-26, 1997, Tampa, FL.
- Baker, Dwayne & Peter Witt (1996). *Evaluation of the impact of two after-school recreation programs*. Journal of Parks and Recreation Administration, 14 (3), 23-44.
- Benson, P.L., Leffert, N., Scales, P.C., & Blyth, D. (1998). Beyond the "village" rhetoric: Creating healthy communities for children and youth. Applied Developmental Science, 2 (1), 138-159.
- Bissell, J.S., Mallory, J., Johnson, A., & Jones, P. (2002) Evaluation of California's after school learning and safe neighborhoods partnerships program: 1999-2001. Irvine, CA: Department of Education University of California at Irvine.
- Brooks, P.E., Mojica, C.M., & Land, R. (1995). *Final evaluation report: Longitudinal study of LA's BEST after-school education and enrichment program, 1992-1994*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation.
- Bureau of Labor Force Statistics (2002). *Employment characteristics of families in 2001*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Dryfoos, J. G. (1998). Safe passage: Making it through adolescence in a risky society: New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fashola, O.S. (1998). *Review of Extended-day and after-school programs and their effectiveness*. (Report No. 24). Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), John Hopkins University
- Fight Crime: Invest in Kids (2000). *America's after-school choice: The prime time for juvenile crime, or youth enrichment and achievement*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Garnezy, N. (1985). Stress resistant children: The search for protective factors. In J. E. Stevenson, ed., Recent research in developmental pathology, 220-227. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory. Chicago: Aldine.
- Huang, D., Gribbons, B., Kyung, S.K., Lee, C., & Baker, E.V. (2000). A decade of results: The impact of LA's BEST after-school enrichment program on subsequent student achievement and performance. Los Angeles: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation.
- Illinois Department of Human Services (2001). Teen REACH policy and procedures manual.
- Illinois Department of Human Services & Illinois State Board of Education (2002). The Illinois After-school Initiative 2002 Task Force Report.
- Jarvis, R. (2001). Minnesota alliance with youth: Bringing youth to the table. The Center, (pp.6-7). Minneapolis, MN: Center for 4-H Youth Development.
- Johnson, R.A., & Wichern, D.W. (1988). *Applied Multivariate Statistical Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kalafat, J., & Illback, R.J. (1998). A qualitative evaluation of school-based family resources and youth service centers. American Journal of Community Psychology, 26, 573-604.

- Krueger, R.,A. (1994). Focus groups: A Practical guide for applied research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lamare, J. (1997). *Sacramento START: An evaluation report*. Sacramento, CA: Neighborhoods Planning and Development Services Department.
- Lattimore, C.B., Mihalic, S.F., Grotpeter, J.K., & Taggart, R. (1998). *Blueprints for violence prevention, book four: The quantum opportunities program*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- Linclon, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- LoSciuto, L., Hilbert, S.M., Fox, M.M., Porcellini, L., & Lanphear, A. (1999). *A two-year evaluation of the Woodrock youth development project*. Journal of Early Adolescence, 19 (4), 488-507.
- Maslow, A. H. (1998). Toward a Psychology of Being, 3rd Ed. New York, NY: Wiley, John & Sons.
- Masten, A. S., and Coatsworth, J. D. (1998). The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons on research on successful children. American Psychologist, 53 (2), 205-220.
- Mertens, S., & Flowers, N.F. (1998, November). The effects of latchkey status on middle grades youth: New research findings. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Middle School Association, Portland, OR.
- Mulhall, P., Stone, D., & Stone, B. (1996). *Home Alone: Is it a risk factor for middle school youth drug use?* Journal of Drug Education, 26, 37-46.
- O'Donnell, J. & Michalak, E.A. (1997). *Inner city youths helping children: After-school programs to promote bonding and reduce risk*. Social Work in Education, 19 (4), 231-442.
- Phillips, R.S. (1999). *Intervention with siblings of children with developmental disabilities from economically disadvantaged families*. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 80 (6), 569-577.
- Policy Studies Associates, Incorporated (2002). *What have we learned from TASC's first three years?: Evaluation of the TASC after-school program*. New York, NY: Author.
- Posner, J. & Vandell, D.L. (1994). *Low-income children's after-school care: Are there beneficial effects of after-school programs?* Child Development, 65 (2), 440-456.
- Reisner, E.R., White, R.N., Brimingham, J., & Welsh, M. (2001). *Building quality and supporting expansion of after-school projects: Evaluation results from the TASC after-school program's second year*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Incorporated.
- Richardson, J. Radziszesska, B., Dent, C., & Flay, B.R. (1993). Relationship between after-school care of adolescents and substance abuse risk taking, depressed mood, and academic achievement. Pediatrics, 92 (1), 32-38.
- Rhodes, J. E. (2001). Youth mentoring in perspective. The Center, (pp.26-31). Minneapolis, MN: Center for 4-H Youth Development.
- Rhodes, J. E. (2001). Older and wiser: Risks and rewards of youth mentoring. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rodriguez, E., Hirschl, T.A., Mead, J.P., & Goggin, S.E. (1999). *Final report: Understanding the difference 4-H clubs make in the lives of New York youth: How 4-H contributes to positive youth development*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell University.

Rutter, M. J. (1987). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57, 57-72.

Rutter, M. J. (1995). *Psychosocial disturbances in young people: Challenges for prevention*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Scales, A.M., Morris, G.A., & George, A.W. (1998). *A church operated after-school tutorial and enrichment program*. *The Negro Educational Review*, 49 (3), 153-164.

Schinke, P, Orlandi, M, & Cole, K. (1992). *Boys and girls clubs in public housing developments: Prevention services for youth at risk*. *Journal of Community Psychology*, OSAP Special Issue.

Stake, R. (1994). Case studies. In N. Denzin (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.236-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Taylor, T.J., & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods*. New York: Wiley.

Tierney, J.P., Grossman, J.B., & Resch, N.L. (2000). *Making a difference: An impact study of big brothers big sisters*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

University of Nevada, Reno Cooperative Extension Service (1999). Reducing delinquent behavior and improving academic achievement in after-school programs. Retrieved March 2, 2001, from <http://www.cyfernet.org>.

Urban School Initiative (1999). *Urban School Initiative school age care project: 1998-1999 school year evaluation report*. Columbus, OH: Ohio Departments of Human Services and Education.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary (2003). When schools stay open late: The national evaluation of the 21st-century community learning centers program, first year findings. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, Incorporated.

U.S. Departments of Education and Justice (1998). *Safe and smart: Making after-school hours work for kids*. Washington, DC: Author.

Vandell, D.L. & Corasaniti, M.A. (1988). *The Relation between Third-Graders' After School Care and Social, Academic, and Emotional Functioning*. *Child Development*, 59 (4), 868-875.

Warren, C., Brown, P., & Freudenberg, N. (1999). *Evaluation of the New York City beacons: Summary of phase I findings*. New York: Academy for Educational Development.

Warren, C., Feist, M., & Nevarez, N. (2002). *A place to grow: Evaluation of the New York City beacons summary report*. New York: Academy for Educational Development.

Werner, E.E., and Smith, R. S. (1982). *Vulnerable but invincible: A study of resilient children*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

APPENDICES