On Track to Success:

The Second Year Evaluation of Congreso's Éxito Program

Prepared for
Congreso de Latinos Unidos

DECEMBER 2010

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization. We seek to use research as the basis for the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes for traditionally underserved students. Our work is designed to strengthen public schools and postsecondary institutions; provide research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners and the public at the local, state and national levels; and enrich the civic and community dialogue about public education. For more information, please visit our website at www.researchforaction.org.

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Description of the Evaluation

This report is the second of a multi-year evaluation of the Éxito program of Congreso de Latinos Unidos (Congreso). The purpose is not only to assess the program's effectiveness in achieving its intended outcomes in the 2009-10 school year, but also to examine the theory behind the program, and strengths and weaknesses of its implementation. To this end, the evaluation presented in this report sets out to address the following research topics:

- Evolution of the Éxito program's theory of action in year two
- Demographic characteristics and risk factors of Éxito students
- Strengths and challenges of program implementation
- Rates of student participation in the Éxito program
- Student outcomes
- Research methods

To address these topics, our team undertook a mixed method study with a quasi-experimental design. We gathered and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data from the sources outlined in Figure A below.

Figure A: Sources of Data

Staff & Administrator Interviews | 25 Total
1 Agency director
4 Neighborhood and Family Development (NFD) staff and administrators (initial interviews)
8 Children and Youth Services (CYS) staff and administrators (initial interviews)
3 NFD staff and administrators (follow-up)
2 CYS staff and administrators (follow-up)
7 After-school instructors (two focus groups)
Student Interviews | 26 Total
8 Students assigned to primary client managers (PCMs)
18 After-school participants (four focus groups)
Observations | 18 Total
7 After-school program and related activities
5 Education Workgroup Meetings
6 Multi-Disciplinary Service Team (MDST) meetings
Quantitative Data
Demographic data (Congreso's database UNIDAD and School District of Philadelphia)

After-school attendance (UNIDAD)

PCM client history (UNIDAD)

Youth Works participation (UNIDAD)

Attendance, course marks and passage, and behavior data (School District of Philadelphia)

Quantitative analysis included descriptive analyses of students' early warning indicators, demographic characteristics, and program participation; cross-tabulations comparing students assigned to a primary client manager (PCM) to non-PCM students; pre-post analyses of changes in students' grade, suspension, and attendance outcomes before and after participating in the program; and logistic regression, in which Éxito student outcomes were compared to those of other Edison students with similar risk factors and demographic characteristics to determine whether participating in the Éxito program was predictive of student improvement. See Chapter 8 for more detail on quantitative analysis.

In addition, qualitative analyses were performed to develop a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of program implementation, and the experiences of students. We read interview transcripts and observation notes, and identified common themes that emerged across the data. We then used these themes to code the data using qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti), and discussed the output in team analysis meetings. At several points throughout the year, we provided Éxito staff and administration with formative feedback based on our analysis. Findings in this report reflect our completion of the analysis for the 2009-10 school year.

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Executive Summary

Overview

The Éxito initiative of Congreso de Latinos Unidos entered its second full year of programming in the 2009-2010 school year. The program, funded by Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS) is designed to support students who are exhibiting a risk of dropping out of school and keep them on-track to graduation, and includes an after-school program at Edison high school, as well as case management services for a subset of participants.

Research for Action (RFA) is in its second year of a four year evaluation of the program, examining both student outcomes and program implementation. The evaluation follows two cohorts of youth from 9th grade through high school graduation. During the 2009-2010 school year, the first cohort was in 10th grade, while the second cohort of 9th grade students had just entered the program.

This study details the findings of the evaluation in the second year. It reports on the program's development, including its:

- Evolving theory of action;
- Efforts to recruit youth exhibiting early warning indicators (EWIs) for dropping out of school;
- Strengths and challenges encountered in implementing the two primary components of the program; and
- Student outcomes evidenced by both qualitative data, as well as academic and behavioral data, obtained from the School District of Philadelphia (SDP).

Research Methods

This mixed-methods study drew on interviews, focus groups and observations with 25 Éxito staff and 26 student participants. RFA also analyzed enrollment and participation data collected by Congreso staff, as well as data on student grades, attendance and behavior obtained from the SDP. Data was available for all 124 participants in Éxito, although exact sample sizes varied by outcome. Student outcome data was analyzed both descriptively and comparatively. Éxito students were matched with similar students at Edison High School for the comparative analysis. Students participating in focus groups were chosen because they attended the program on the day focus groups were scheduled. In addition, seven primary client management (PCM) students were selected by their client managers for individual interviews. PCM clients receive intensive case management services in addition to participating in the after-school program.

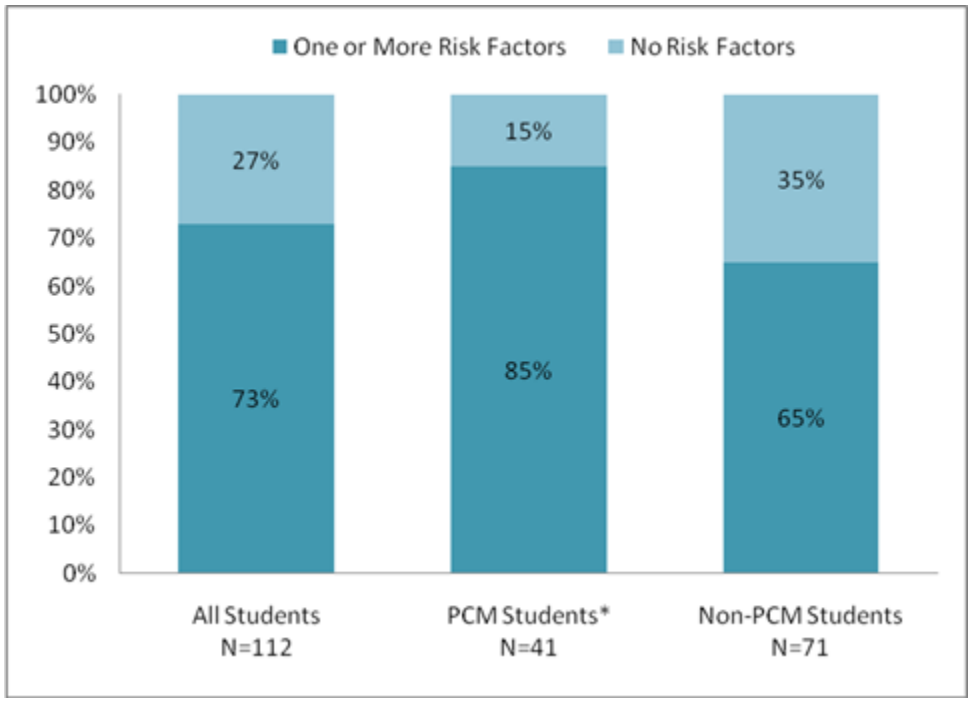
Findings

In Year Two, Éxito staff demonstrated an increased capacity from Year One to recruit students with EWI's for dropping out of school and engage them in the after-school program through project-based learning and significant adult support. For the second year in a row, RFA also observed

positive associations between program participation and a reduction of EWIs for dropping out of school. Specific findings are listed below:

- Figure 1 shows nearly three quarters of participants (73%) exhibited at least one of the four EWIs that were part of the program requirements.

Figure 1: Percentage of Students with Early Warning Indicators, 2009-10



Source: Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia.

*PCM students are participants receiving additional case management supports. Non-PCM students participate in the after-school program only.

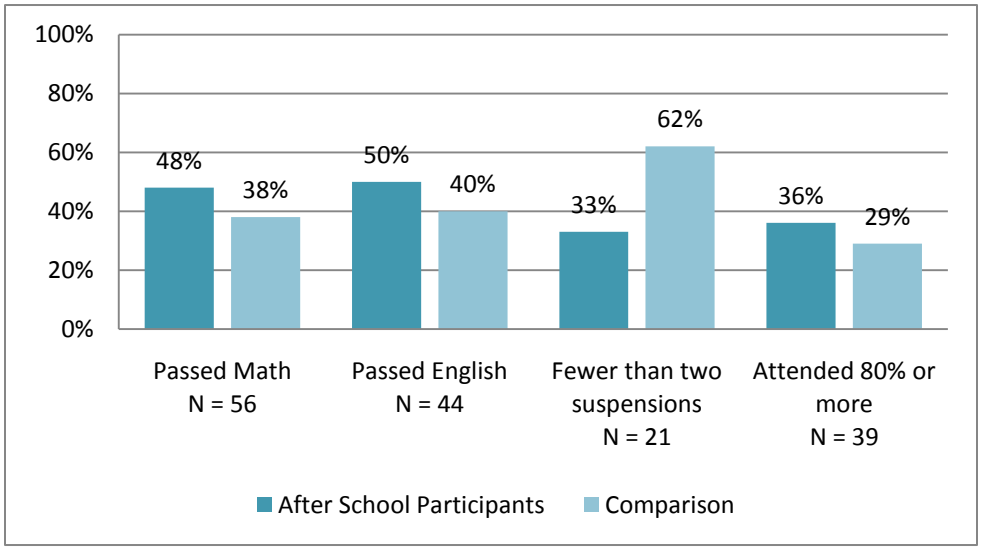
- Changes to the after-school program, including project-based learning, and increased opportunities for adult and peer support, were well received by students, and consequently, students' rates of participation were higher than in Year One. Table 1 shows that even students with a high-risk for EWIs participated, on average, two times per week during the period of their enrollment. In contrast, average participation rates were once per week in Year One.

Table 1: After-School Intensity and Duration, 2009-10

	Total N=110	High-Risk N=81	Lower-Risk N=29
Average months in program	4.1 months	3.9 months	4.8 months
Average percentage of sessions attended while enrolled	48%	46%	54%
Average sessions attended per month while enrolled in program	8 sessions	8 sessions	8 sessions

- Students experienced high levels of adult support in both the after-school program and PCM activities. In the context of caring relationships, students reported that adults "pushed," motivated and guided them, which helped students improve their school attendance, grades and behavior.
- Project-based learning appeared to offer opportunities for students to learn "persistence," develop self-confidence and receive positive feedback in school.
- Figure 2 shows that participation in the after-school program was associated with a decreased likelihood of failing math and English or having poor attendance. In addition, for the second year in a row, PCM supports were associated with improved attendance. A regression analysis confirmed that these findings were statistically significant.

Figure 2: Percentage of Students Improved at End of 2009-10 School Year, By Prior Risk Indicator: After School Participants v. Comparison Group



Source: Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia. Note: There we no significant differences in either the number of risk factors or type of risk factors display by the comparison group and the Exito group at baseline.

- However, Figure 2 also reveals that Exito participants were more likely to be suspended than the comparison group. This finding was driven by students receiving PCM services and disappeared when PCM students were removed from the analysis, while all other impacts remained significant. The reasons for this finding will be discussed below.

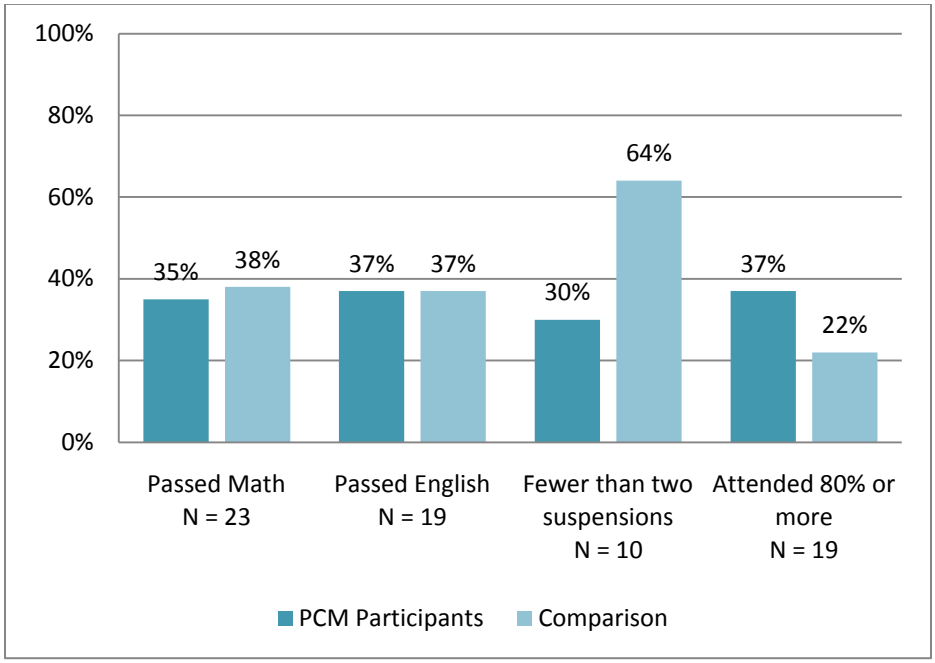
The program experienced several challenges in Year Two as it continued to refine the model and adapt to lessons learned from Year One.

- Unlike Year One, in Year Two the program experienced greater challenges with inter-departmental collaboration. More tensions emerged regarding the role of the PCM and degree of integration of their supports in the after-school program. In addition, there were challenges with the flow of information and client referrals from the after-school program to the PCMs.
- Client managers also reported greater obstacles with the clients they served. Slightly more than a third of the clients were dismissed for either refusal of services or loss of contact. In addition, client managers were unsure of appropriate dismissal points for clients who were cooperative. When clients achieved their original goals, other needs would emerge making it difficult to dismiss them.
- An on-going challenge continues to be the development of the academic support component of the program, as well as determining ways to both impact and measure impacts on student behavior.

Additional challenges were evident from student outcomes data:

- Éxito continues to struggle to document its impact on student behavior. While qualitative data points to ways in which the program could be altering student behavior, quantitative data has not observed positive impacts on behavior in either Year One or Year Two. In fact, as Figure 3 shows, PCM clients were found to have three times more suspensions than a comparison group. Rather than being a reflection on the PCM supports, however, this may be a limitation of our analysis. While PCM and comparison students look similar on paper, PCM students experienced additional risk factors not captured by the available data.
- Figure 3 also shows that PCM clients were three times more likely to have failed English. Again, this may be a limitation of our ability to identify a truly similar comparison group. At the same time, PCM students were less likely to sign up for homework help when they attended the after-school program. PCM students, some of whom are in the habit of cutting class, may come to the program unaware of homework assignments and not receive the support they need.

Figure 3: Percentage of After-School Students Improved at End of 2009-10 School Year, By Prior Risk Indicator: PCM Students v. Comparison Group



Source: Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia.

Note: There we no significant differences in either the number of risk factors or type of risk factors display by the comparison group and the Exito group at baseline.

Recommendations

As the Éxito program heads into its third year, the findings suggest several recommendations to further strengthen the program, including:

- Providing additional support to PCM in handling clients who are resistant to services, as well as determining appropriate termination points.
- Further developing the program's academic support component. Adding more adult tutors, as well as tutor training, could be beneficial, as could strengthening the connection with Edison teachers. In addition, the program should consider how to support students who are not attending class and are not seeking academic assistance.
- Integrating new staff members and clarifying roles and relationships early in the year so that the collaborative advantage of the program model can be realized.
- Continuing to utilize targeted, one-to-one recruitment strategies to attract students with the early warning indicators to their programs. Building strong relationships with the school are critical to this effort.
- Continuing to offer project-based learning in the after-school program, with more training for staff on how to incorporate student voices.
- Continuing to create opportunities for high levels of adult and peer support in the after-school program.

RFA's research will continue to follow the two cohorts that participated in the program this year, as well as the evolution of the program model. As the first cohort moves into 11th grade, future research can begin to examine Éxito's impact on both intermediate outcomes and the long-term outcome of high school graduation.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Éxito is the Spanish word for "success." The Éxito program, a dropout prevention program of Congreso de Latinos Unidos (Congreso), based at Edison High School in North Philadelphia, is aptly named. The program's long-term goal is to see all students—particularly those showing early warning signs of dropout—succeed in high school and beyond. In the fall of 2009, the Éxito program, funded by Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS), began its second full year with a number of significant changes in staffing and program design. While the transition created challenges and required several months for settling, the program overall made strides forward in clarifying its structure, developing strong adult-student relationships and increasing student engagement in program activities. As a result, program outcomes were even more encouraging than last year with positive associations observed between program participation, school attendance and course passage.

Education reformers, city officials, and citizens across the nation are raising the alarm about the "graduation rate crisis" in urban high schools. Philadelphia, where nearly half of students fail to graduate in four years, is no exception. A variety of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research has contributed to an understanding of high school dropout as having multiple and inter-related causes related to out-of-school challenges, inadequate in-school supports, and individual factors.[1] Given this research, it is important to learn from initiatives like the Éxito program, which works to keep students in school by addressing a number of factors, focusing particularly on students who are most likely to disengage before graduating according to risk indicators identified as predictive of dropout. These indicators are the following:[2]

- Course failure in Math
- Course failure in English
- Less than 80% attendance
- Two or more suspensions

The Éxito program aimed to increase students' likelihood of graduating from high school by providing them with social and academic supports, thereby improving student grades, attendance, and behavior, as gauged by these four risk indicators.

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[1] See, for example: Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio,J. J., & Balfanz, R. (2009). *On the Front Lines of Schools: Perspectives of Teachers and Principals on the High School Dropout Problem.* Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises; Brown, T. M., & Rodriguez, L. F. (2009). School and the Co-construction of Dropout. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 22*(2), 221-242; Neild, R. C. & Balfanz, R. (2006). *Unfulfilled Promise: The Dimensions and Characteristics of Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2000-2005.* Philadelphia: Philadelphia Youth Network.

[2] Adapted from: Neild & Balfanz, 2006

Éxito Program Model and Theory of Action

While the program model underwent changes in year two, the basic elements of the two-pronged approach stayed the same: after-school youth development activities coupled with individualized services provided by client managers for students who needed additional support. Like the previous year, this model required a thoughtful collaboration between Congreso's Neighborhood and Family Development (NFD), which delivered the case management services, and the Children and Youth Services (CYS) division, which delivered the after-school activities.

Modifications to the program model consisted of a new focus for the after-school program—a focus on project-based learning—and adjustments to the structure of the program so that more time was allotted for gathering after the school day and transitioning into the after-school program activities. Modifications to client management supports included removing the three month time limit services. In addition, the second year saw changes to the CYS staffing structure, and new hires in both divisions.

The year two evaluation sought to contribute to the development of the program model by documenting the evolution of the program's theory of action. Articulating a theory of action can help all those affiliated with a program develop shared understandings and shared language about its purpose and design—*what* the program hopes to achieve and *how* it hopes to achieve it.[3] Drawing on the perspectives shared in staff and student interviews, we developed the statement below to describe the theory of action underlying Éxito's program model. In addition, Figure 1 on page 4 diagrams the inputs, activities, and intended outcomes of the Éxito program, based on this theory of action statement.

THEORY OF ACTION

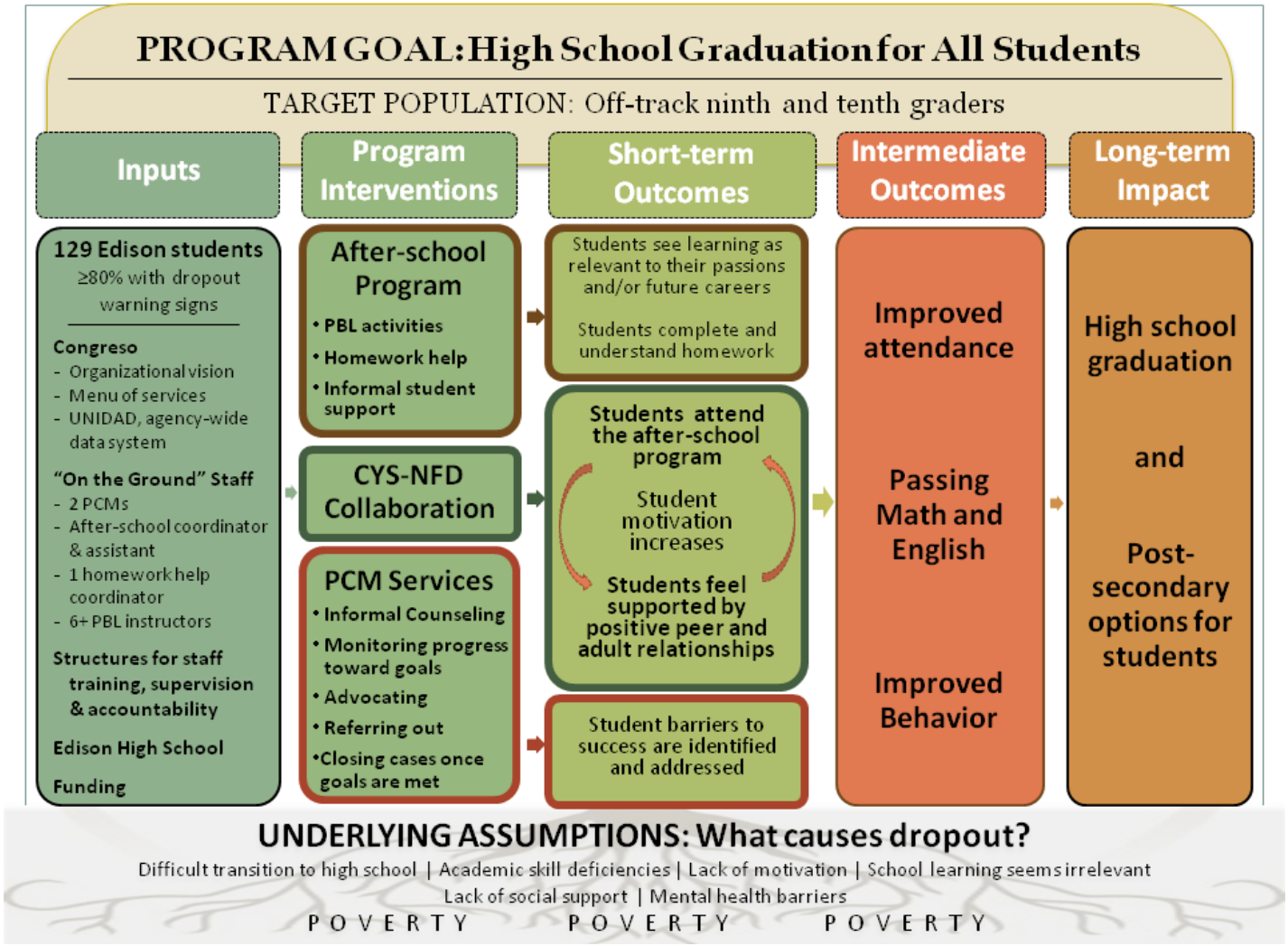
If 9th and 10th graders who are showing signs of discipline issues, truancy, or academic failure are connected to caring adults and peers, if learning is made relevant to their lives, and if out-of-school barriers to their success are addressed, then these students will attend school, improve their behavior, get better grades, and ultimately graduate from high school.

The theory of action diagram in Figure 1 provides the structure for the remainder of this report. We begin with a discussion of **PROGRAM INPUTS**, specifically highlighting the recruitment and enrollment of Edison students (Chapter 2). Other program inputs are described throughout the report. This is followed by chapters on the three **PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS:** the after-school program (Chapter 3), the primary client management (PCM) component (Chapter 4), and the NFD-CYS collaboration (Chapter 5). The second half of the report examines the program outcomes, with chapters on **SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES** including levels of program participation (Chapter 6) and

[3] Argyris, C. & Schon, D.A. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley; Monroe, M., Fleming, M., Bowman, R., Zimmer, J., Marcinkowski, T., Washburn, J., et al. (2005). Evaluators as educators: Articulating program theory and building evaluation capacity. *New Directions for Evaluation*, (108), 57-71.

supportive peer and adult relationships (Chapter 7), and a final chapter on **INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES**: grades, behavior, school attendance, and credit accumulation (Chapter 8).

Figure 1: Éxito's New Theory of Action



Chapter 2
Input: Recruitment and Enrollment

129 Edison students
≥80% with dropout warning signs

Introduction

The success of the Éxito program depended on a number of program "inputs," including the successful recruitment of student participants. At the beginning of Year Two, Éxito staff set out to recruit 9th and 10th graders at risk for dropping out of school using the risk factors below.

Éxito Early Warning Indicators (EWIs)

Éxito staff used student data from the prior quarter or school year to identify students who presented with at least one of the following early warning indicators, adapted from existing research on dropout[4]:

(1) Course Failure in Math

(2) Course Failure in English

(3) Less than 80% Attendance

(4) Two or More Suspensions

In addition, returning students were welcomed back. During the 2009-10 school year, Éxito attracted more than 100 students, a majority of whom exhibited one or more the Éxito Early Warning Indicators to entering the program. This chapter discusses two topics:

Recruitment provides an overview of the enrollment goals and the strategies that program staff used to attract students to Éxito.

Enrollment and Participant Characteristics details the results of efforts to enroll students who were most at-risk for dropping out of school.

Recruitment

Staff sought to enroll 129 students in the after-school program, a number based on a contractual agreement between Congreso and the Department of Human Services. For the primary client management (PCM) component, there were two client managers who each could take on 15 students maximum at one time. This suggested that nearly 25 percent of Éxito participants would receive PCM services at any given time. The program was not

[4] These four early warning indicators were adapted from Neild & Balfanz, 2006. While existing research has identified additional indicators, the Éxito model focused on these four, which we will refer to as the "Éxito Early Warning Indicators" or "Éxito EWIs" throughout the report.

closed to students who did not demonstrate Éxito EWIs at enrollment. However, to ensure that Éxito fulfilled its purpose, program staff set a goal that 80 percent of the participants would.

A fundamental challenge concerning recruitment was getting students who were already disengaged from school to commit to a program requiring them to stay after dismissal time. Program staff used targeted recruitment efforts to ensure these students enrolled in the program. Early on, the Program Coordinator obtained a list of more than 100 9th-grade students who failed math and/or English on the freshman placement exam. Placement exam results took the place of 8th grade data which was delayed in arriving at the school. In addition, staff were able to target particular students using recommendations from Edison teachers and counselors. As the school year wore on, staff also recruited students who were failing or demonstrating an Éxito EWI mid-year even if they had not demonstrated an early warning indicator at the end of the previous school year. The vice president of CYS stated that he wanted to involve these students to prevent failure as much as respond to failure.

Once students with early warning indicators were identified, Éxito staff used several strategies to recruit students and enroll them into the program. In addition to public announcements and flyers, the Program Coordinator and Assistant Program Coordinator spent a majority of their time in the school, dedicating much effort to one-on-one communication with potential recruits. In addition, staff-parent communication was reported as both a factor in getting students to try out the program and a factor in having them continue to attend. Finally, nearly 50 students came back to the program after its first year in 2008-09. Having experienced the program and its benefits, many of these returning participants recruited their friends and others to attend through "word-of-mouth" information among groups of peers.

Enrollment & Participant Characteristics

The Éxito staff managed to enroll a total of 124 students from the start of the program in early October 2009 through June 2010. Program staff defined the start date of enrollment as the point at which a student attended his or her first session. Forty of the after-school participants also received PCM services at some time during the school year, and two additional students (9th graders) received the services without participating in the after-school program. As shown in Table 2.1, the enrollment goal was reduced for the 2009-10 school year, and the number of participants was smaller than it was during 2008-09.

Table 2.1: Enrollment Summary, Year One and Year Two

	2008-09	2009-10
Enrollment Goal	140 students	129 students
All participants	183	124
After-school students	176	122
PCM students	49	42
PCM-only students	7	2

Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Table 2.2 shows that of the 124 participants, 112 were 9th and 10th grade students. For the remainder of the report, analyses focus on these 112 9th and 10th graders, the targeted participants of the Éxito program during the second year. In all, about one-third of the 2009-10 participants were returning students.

Table 2.2: Enrollment 2009-10 by Grade Level and Program Component

	Total Students	Returning Participants	Total Attending After-School	Total Receiving PCM Services
9th Graders	61	5	56	21
10th Graders	51	31	54	20
11th Graders	8	5	8	1
12th Graders	4	4	4	0

Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Table 2.3 details the demographic characteristics of the participants, who, like Edison High School, were primarily Latino. Table 2.4 show the percentage of Éxito students who were repeating a grade, receiving special education services, or identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). While these are not among the Éxito EWIs, grade retention, special education, and ELL status are important because they are indications of a student's need for additional support.

Table 2.3: Demographic Characteristics of Éxito Participants, 2009-10

	After-School N=110	PCM N=41
Race/Ethnicity		
Latino/a	82%	74%
African-American	16%	26%
Caucasian	1%	0%
Asian	1%	0%
Gender		
Male	42%	47%
Female	58%	53%

Source: Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia.

Table 2.4: Éxito Participants with Special Needs, 2009-10

	After-School N=110	PCM N=41
Retained[5]		
9th graders	24%	36%
10th graders	2%	0%
Special Education Status		
Regular Education	81%	76%
Special Education	19%	24%
English Language Learner Status		
Non-ELL	75%	79%
ELL	25%	21%

Source: Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia.

As Table 2.4 demonstrates, a substantial number of students had repeated the grade that they were in during 2009-10. There was a much higher rate of 9th-grade repeaters during Year Two than during the first year (24% versus 9%). Ninth graders were also much more likely to have repeated than 10th graders. The Éxito after-school program had a proportion of special education students (19%) and ELL students (25%) similar to Edison as a whole (20% and 23% respectively[6]). Special education students and ELL students were overrepresented among students received PCM services. See Appendix A for student demographic characteristics and special needs by grade.

Éxito Early Warning Indicators

We also assessed the extent to which the Éxito program successfully enrolled its intended population of students with at least one of the four EWIs. Students' baseline characteristics were assessed at a point prior to entry into the program—that is, at the end of eighth grade, the end of 9th grade, or the preceding quarter if they entered the program midyear. This was a modification to the Year One approach in which recruitment and enrollment were based solely on students' eighth-grade performance. The Year Two modification was made to align with the program's decision to serve 10th grade students and students who were

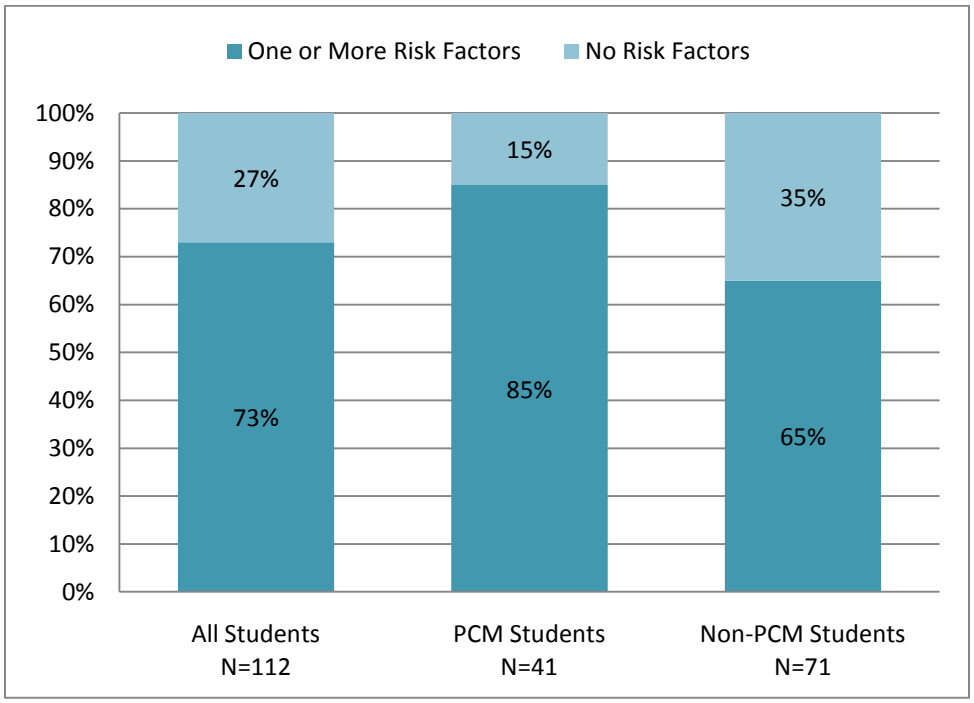
[5] Retention refers to students repeating the grade they were in during 2009-10 (e.g., 9th grade for 9th graders).

[6] School District of Philadelphia (2010). *School Profile: Thomas Edison High School.* Retrieved October 7, 2010 from https://webapps.philasd.org/school_profile/view/5020.

demonstrating Éxito EWI's mid-year. Despite this broadening of the definition of "at risk of dropout" in Year Two, we found that Éxito enrolled slightly more after-school students with eighth grade EWI's in Year Two than in Year One (34% versus 31%).

However, when we included students who had EWI's at the two additional time periods (i.e., end of 9th grade and preceding quarter) we saw that substantially more students had a high risk of dropping out[7]. As Figure 2.1 shows, in all, almost three-quarters (73%) of Éxito participants exhibited at least one of the four EWI's that were part of the program's original eligibility requirements.[8] This percentage is higher than the 62 percent of all 9th and 10th graders attending Edison during 2009-10 who demonstrated EWI's at the end of eighth or 9th grade. As expected, students receiving PCM services, especially those in 10th grade, had higher rates of EWI's than non-PCM students (85% versus 65%), as revealed in Figure 2.1. For the remainder of this report, we will focus on rates of early warning indicators among students regardless of when they demonstrated risk, unless noted otherwise. See Appendix A for more detail on baseline EWIs.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of Students with Early Warning Indicators, 2009-10



Source: Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia.

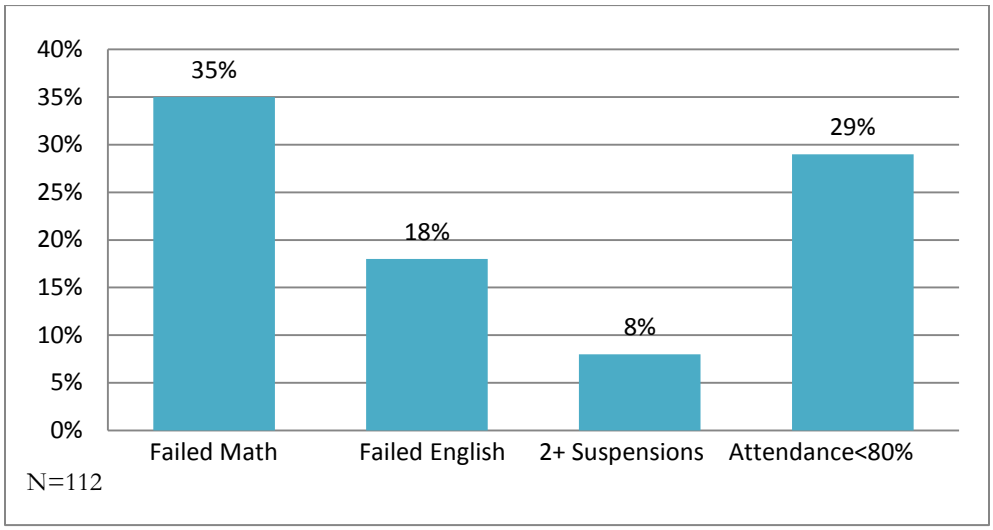
One quarter (25%) of the participants had three or four EWIs in eighth grade or in high school prior to enrollment in the program. Figure 2.2 provides the distribution of EWI's by

[7] There were 16 students who began to struggle during the first, second, and third quarters, and entered the program midyear.

[8] Students with missing data were treated as though they did not have those risk factors. Because we based our count of risk factors on the data that was available, there may be additional students who met risk criteria but are counted here as not having them because we did not have complete risk factor data for them; this is a limitation of several of the analyses in this chapter.

type. With 35 percent of students failing math, this was the most common warning sign that a student may dropout. Attendance was the second most common EWI (29%). A much lower percentage of students entered the program failing English (18%) and few students (8%) entered the program with the behavior EWI. Tenth graders were much less likely than 9th graders to have the attendance or suspension EWI and much more likely to have failed math the previous year (9th grade Algebra 1).

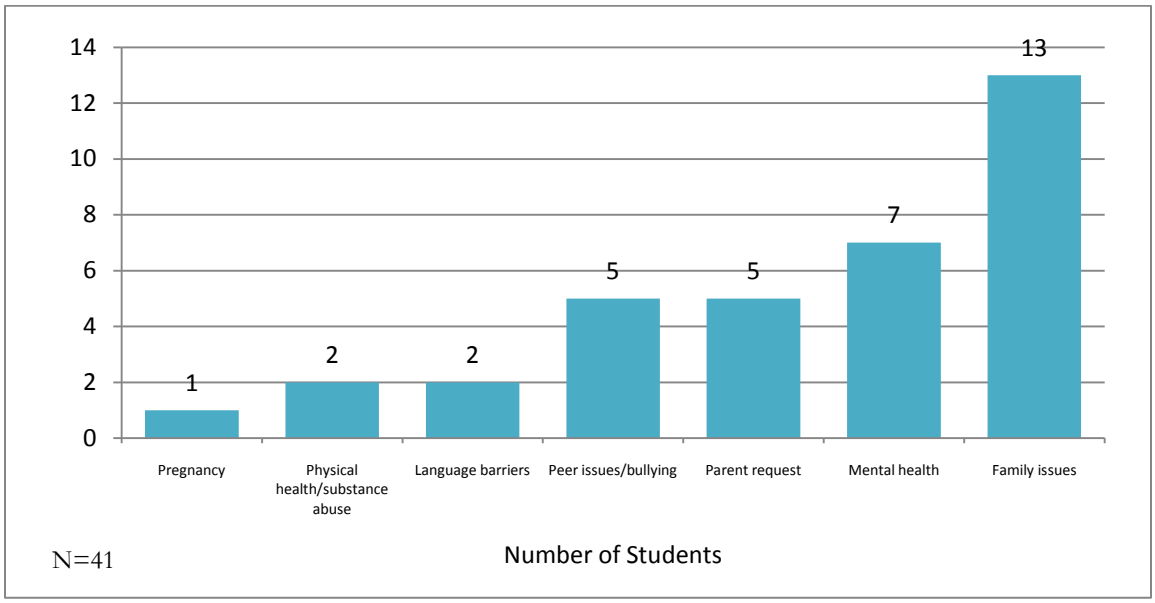
Figure 2.2: Percentages of Students with Early Warning Indicators by Type, 2009-10



Source: Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia.

A substantial group of 41 9th and 10th grade students received case management services (PCM) services based on evidence of school failure and personal obstacles. Besides the 85% of these students with EWIs, an additional 10% (4 students) were exclusively referred to PCM services for other risk factors. A total of 95% of the PCM students exhibited one or more risk factors (an EWI or other risk factor) prior to entry into the program. The other risk factors, affecting about half of the PCM students, are shown in Figure 2.3 below. When early warning indicators and other risk factors were pooled, we found that three-quarters (76%) of the PCM students were referred for multiple reasons (i.e., two or more). Of these 7 additional reasons, family issues and mental health were the most prevalent.

Figure 2.3: Number of Students Referred for Other (non-EWI) Risk Factors Reported by Program Staff, 2009-10



Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Summary

The Éxito program recruited and enrolled a total of 110 9th and 10th graders in the after-school component and 41 in PCM services during Year Two. The targeted recruitment strategies were successful, resulting in the enrollment of three-quarters of the participants exhibiting at least one of the four EWIs that were part of the program's eligibility requirements. An even larger percentage of PCM students (95%) exhibited one or more EWI and/or other barriers to school success. Overall, the proportion of students with EWI's was much higher than during the first year of programming in 2008-09. In addition, the percentages of students who had been retained, received special education services, and were English language learners were slightly higher during Year Two than Year One.

We found that the most successful recruitment strategies capitalized on relationships among program staff, school staff, students, and parents. Éxito staff worked with Edison counselors, teachers, and administrators to reel in students who demonstrated need for supplemental academic and/or socio-emotional support. Returning students comprised one-third of the participants and oftentimes drew their peers to the program. In multiple cases, students' willingness to attend was reinforced when program staff connected with parents, engaging them in the recruitment process.

Chapter 3
Program Intervention: After-School Program

As described in the theory of action diagram in Chapter 1, the after-school program was an intervention implemented in the Éxito model with the goal of improving students' grades, attendance, behavior, and chance at graduating. The youth recruited into Éxito participated in an after-school program Monday through Thursday, October through June. As illustrated in the theory of action, the after-school program consisted of project-based learning activities, homework help and informal student support. Project-based learning (PBL) was a new addition to the program in the 2009-10 school year. In addition, the program became more intentional about providing time for the informal student support when they added an extended gathering time at the beginning of the program before students dispersed to their project groups. These changes occurred while the after school program also underwent a change in leadership. The changes were largely viewed by staff and students as improvements to the program, but they also raised new tensions and need for clarification. This chapter will describe the implementation of the after-school program as it evolved in year two by:

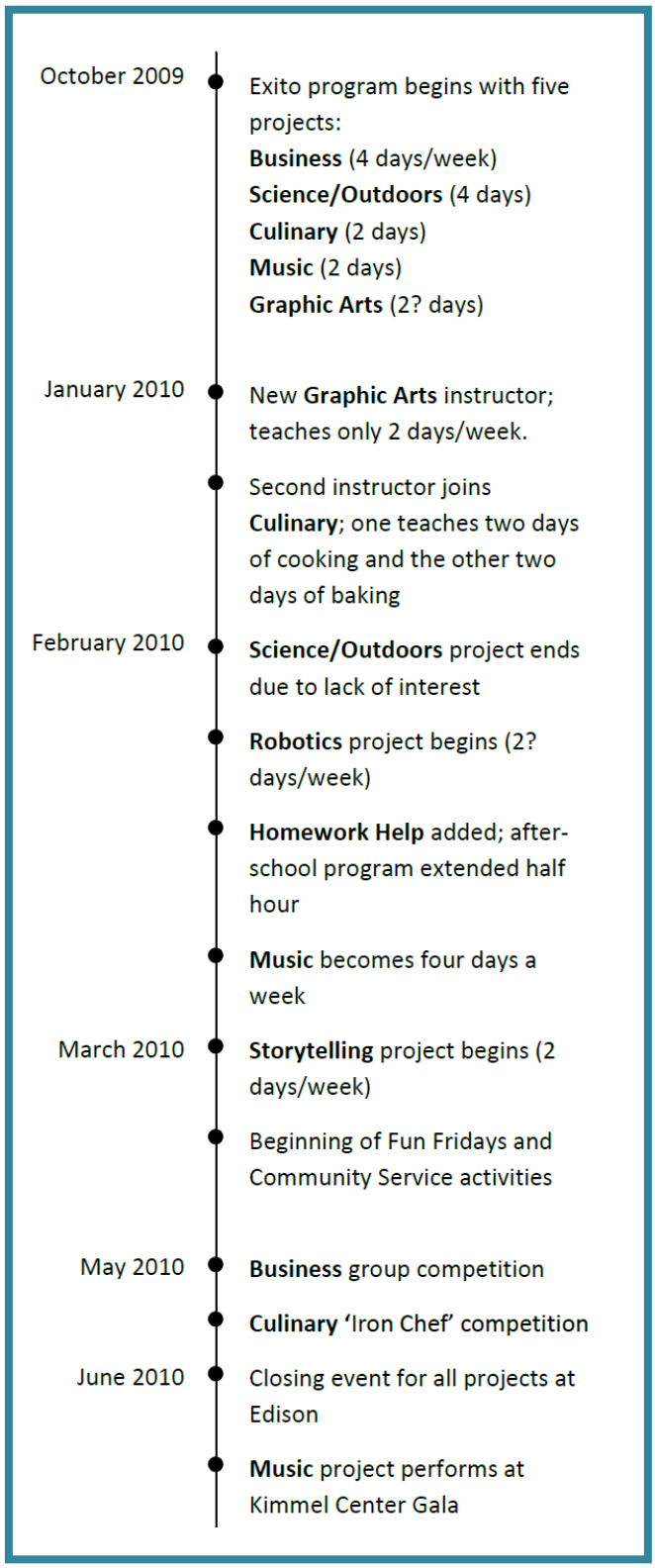
- examining the benefits and challenges created by a transition to project-based learning,
- describing the implementation of homework help partway through the year,
- introducing informal adult-student interactions as a key, though often less recognized, program activity, and
- highlighting the pivotal program coordinator position.

Project-Based Learning Activities

In year two, Éxito students were to choose a project that was of interest to them from a list of offerings, and then participate in their chosen project after school with a group of other students for the remainder of the year, culminating in a final presentation, performance, or product. As is evident in Figure 3 six projects were offered over the course of the year, one of which ended in January due to low student interest:

- Science/Outdoors (October – January)
- Entrepreneurship (October – June)
- Music (October – June)
- Graphic Arts (October – June)
- Culinary Arts (October – June)
- Engineering/Robotics (February – June)
- Storytelling (March – June)

Figure 3 Timeline: Solidifying an Evolving Program Model



The impetus to focus the program on project-based learning came from the recognition that last year's model needed revising. RFA's year one report documented the lack of student engagement in the academic support activities. Staff expressed the belief that because project-based learning tapped into student interests and focused on hands-on, real world issues, it would help students begin to see academic learning as relevant to their lives and future careers and increase their academic motivation. One of the program designers described the new model saying, "We're going to teach to the passions of the kids."

Partly as a consequence of the fast-paced startup, significant responsibility for orienting staff and launching the new model fell on the shoulders of the after-school program coordinator. Determining project topics and hiring project-based learning instructors was particularly challenging. Projects started at different points throughout the year, and some were offered two rather than four days a week. Furthermore, while Éxito's two client managers reported that their clients were finding the PBL activities more engaging than last year's large-group tutoring sessions, they also raised concerns early in the year that the PBL was not meeting their client's academic needs and inquired whether tutoring support could be re-introduced to the program. As Figure 3 shows, a homework help component was added in February, and modifications to project offerings did not settle until March.

The PBL observed in the Éxito after-school program was in some ways similar and in some ways distinct when compared to models of project-based learning described in other sources.

Project instructors developed "authentic learning activities that engage[d] students' interest and motivation…and generally reflect[ed] the types of learning and work people do in the everyday world outside the classroom."[9] For example, in the context of learning about graphic arts, the project instructor discussed the variety of jobs within the field of graphic arts and encouraged students to consider it as a viable career option. A number of the students we interviewed made a connection between their projects and possible future careers, and in some cases were influenced by their experiences in the project. For example, five culinary students identified culinary careers as future goals, and two of these students said they changed their mind about a culinary career as a result of their project. Students reported that projects like the culinary arts project were also related to their lives outside of school. One student explained: "[I'm learning] how to cook on my own...like say if my mom is out, or she's working or something, I can just whip something up because I know how to cook."

Far fewer students, however, felt that what they learned in the PBL groups was relevant to their classroom learning. While Congreso did not expect that the projects would address remedial academic issues, they did expect that instructors would incorporate math and literacy skills into the activities. The few students who did tell us they benefited from their projects' academic content reported picking up some math and science concepts in their culinary or robotics classes. Most students we interviewed, however, were clear that the content of their project-based learning class was distinct from their academic subjects.

In addition, Éxito's PBL model differed from the approach described by PHMC and others in that most projects were not "designed to answer a question or solve a problem," but were instead a series of daily activities related to the project topic (e.g. playing music or drawing).[10] Éxito's projects also varied in the amount of choice they provided students about their daily activities and year-end products or performances. According to the Buck Institute for Education, PBL activities should be shaped by student input.[11] While project offerings were developed based on student interests and students were allowed to choose the project in which they would enroll, the day-to-day activities were generally instructor driven. Furthermore, the final project for each group was determined not by the students nor by their instructors, but by Congreso staff.

We found some evidence that a greater attention to student voice could have increased engagement and attendance. We heard from the two culinary instructors, for example, that some students did not attend when they did not like the recipe for the day. Culinary students in one focus group also described their *least* favorite activities as the activities related to the final project—a healthy foods cookbook—that they had not chosen. Thus the staff sometimes experienced a tension between wanting to expose students to new activities—or, in this case, new foods—and keeping students engaged by allowing them more say in the project activities.

Despite this, a high level of student engagement in the PBL activities was apparent in most of RFA's program observations, particularly in the second half of the year. All students were

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[9] PHMC RFP, page 12. This description draws on definitions from the Buck Institute for Education (www.bie.org).

[10] Jobs for the Future, 2010; PHMC RFP, p. 12

[11] Buck Institute for Education. (2010). *What is PBL?* Retrieved from http://www.bie.org/about/what_is_pbl/

observed to be actively participating, interacting with the program instructors and their peers, and enjoying the activities. Student comments in interviews and focus groups confirmed our observations. As one student said:

> *I have two [projects]. I chose storytelling because I think it's good to let your story go than to keep it in…Everybody has stories to tell and I have one. And I just love to write. And music is my thing. Every day when I come to school I have music on. I feel like my life is going to fall apart if I don't have music."*

None of the students commented that the program was "too much like school,"a refrain heard frequently last year; and a few returning students told us it was more fun this year. They appreciated the active learning that took place in the projects and spoke positively about their project instructors. "You're not sitting in classes doing work or writing or boring…You're moving around, doing things, you know?" A number of students also appreciated the individual attention they received in project groups particularly when the group size was small. Even when full, the largest groups were no more than 15 students, and students felt they could get help from instructors when they didn't understand something.

While students reported being engaged, some instructors reported that it wasn't always easy to keep students engaged. As mentioned by instructors last year, they felt students were often tired at the end of the day and at times unmotivated and disrespectful to the instructors and each other. However, reports and observations of disruptive behavior were minimal in comparison to the challenges the program experienced with student engagement last year.

Homework Help

In February, in response to concerns raised by the PCMs that the PBL activities were not providing sufficient academic support for struggling students, the after-school program added a homework help period for an hour before student projects began. This component of the program was not intended to provide remedial help or significant academic content—as a more structured tutoring program would—but to improve students' school performance by seeing that they completed their homework and providing the one-on-one help some needed in order to do so. Homework help was optional. Students arrived in the cafeteria after-school to receive their snacks and if they chose, could work on homework and laptops were made available to students as an additional resource during this period. When students dispersed to their project groups, those who still needed homework help could remain in the cafeteria. Students were also allowed to join the program just for homework help, rather than joining a project group.

A staff person was hired to oversee this component of the program and recruit volunteers. The program had hoped to arrange for college student tutors but when this did not materialize, they recruited several Edison high school seniors, who were all honor students, to provide homework help, thereby completing the community service hours they needed to graduate. Other staff and some project instructors also served as tutors.

Éxito students and staff had differing views on the quality of the homework help period. Both after-school program staff and the PCMs consistently reported that there was room for improvement. Some adults were uncomfortable with the loose nature of the homework period. Each day there was variation in the number of students needing and accessing

homework help and it was generally a minority of the group. Staff with this perspective wanted to ensure students who needed help were receiving it. Others felt it was important to keep homework help optional rather than a mandated activity. In addition, staff felt that at times, students needed more help than peer tutors were able to provide. Our observations of the homework help period suggest that, at times, peer tutors may have needed more training. In one instance, a tutor was observed doing an assignment for a tutee. A staff member also observed this and corrected the tutor and student. A final recommendation from several staff was that those coordinating the homework help component of the program have more regular communication with students' teachers, a "best practice" described in literature about effective after-school programs.[12] While program staff did have some communication with teachers, there was a perception that this contact was not regular enough, particularly with teachers of key gatekeeper courses like algebra.

While the adults recognized a need for improvement in the homework help component, more students than not told us that they had received helpful homework support from the peer and adult tutors. Several specifically said that the tutors helped them understand work they didn't understand. Twelve of the 26 students we spoke with pointed to the homework help they received during the after-school program as the reason their grades were improving. As one student said, "Before I started this program my grades wasn't as good as they could have been. But I started coming here and getting help and now my grades are improving." Another student pointed to the strengths of the peer tutors in particular, saying, "Because they are kids, they know—they understand what we are going through. And how to explain it to us, like we've been there—and tell us how they went through it." From the students' perspective, then, the homework help component of the after-school program was beneficial.

Informal Student Support

The gathering time right after school ended proved to be an important addition to the program in year two. Whereas in year one, students went immediately to their small group activities, the program's second year had them gather after school in the cafeteria, where they were given a snack and allowed 45-60 minutes to socialize and do homework before going to their project groups. We found in our observations of the program that the staff also used this time to check-in with students and provide them with adult attention and support. The staff discovered that this time immediately after school was significant because it was the time students would unload the stresses of the school day. As one staff member explained:

> *I made sure we were all available right at three o'clock, right at 2:45, having those conversations. "What happened today? How was your day?" Because right after that point, they don't talk. They don't tell their parents what's going on, they don't do anything. So we are that source, right there after school, for them. They get to talk, they tell us everything. You have all these conversations that's making them think. "Let's look at this differently. You think if you didn't speak to the teacher that way it would have turned out differently?"*

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[12] Birmingham, J., Pechman, E. M., Russell, C. A., & Mielke, M. B. (2005). *Shared Features of High-Performing After-School Programs: A Follow-Up to the TASC Evaluation.* Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

One of the client managers observed that the adult-student relationships in the after-school program may have been more compelling for students than the project-based learning:

> *I think more than anything they really benefit from just having a safe place to be, people to talk to, adults that are consistent. I really don't know if it was about the projects for them. Because, they dropped off attendance sometimes, but the ones that had strong relationships were likely to come back.*

The adult-student relationships that developed during these "in between" times, while not included in formal descriptions of the program design, emerged in our research as an important informal intervention and short-term impact of the Éxito program, which will be described further in Chapter 7.

Staffing Structure: The Importance of the Coordinator

Finally, another significant change to the Éxito program in year two was the designation of one coordinator, rather than two, to oversee day-to-day operations of the after-school program. Not surprisingly, the sole coordinator's style and approach set the tone for the after-school program. The year two coordinator had a particularly relational style and because she had worked with the after-school program the previous year, she already knew many students and school staff. As a former case manager, she emphasized individual relationships with students as the most important aspect of the program. In her relationships with students, she demonstrated a genuinely warm and caring style which translated into being available to students beyond the limits of the 9-5 workday:

> *I try to keep in contact and hug them. But you're always going to miss that one or two. When I go home in the evening, I sit and I call them. And say "I missed you today, I didn't get a chance to talk to you, but you didn't look too happy. Is everything OK?" This job is not 9 to 5. It's not a job. It's my work. Sometimes they'll call you on the phone, just wanting to talk. You need to be there.*

The coordinator's approach to the after-school program relied on relationships more than rules and structure, giving the after-school program a somewhat loose but highly supportive feel. She modeled a strengths-based approach to working with students. One project instructor noted that the coordinator "*sees the potential in every one of them*". Through caring and trusting relationships, the coordinator developed a level of "moral authority" with youth.[13] Youth commented that the program coordinator both knew how to "hype it up" and at the same time, they "know when she's serious" in asking them to settle down. Thus, despite the coordinator's decision to de-emphasize rules, the after-school program did not have any serious behavioral problems.

In sum, with a single coordinator, the style of the coordinator played a significant role in shaping the tone of the program. She was the face of the program to the students and school staff in year two. Throughout the year, concerns were raised that the coordinator was carrying too much of the load for the program and at the end of the year, she decided to resign. Given the centrality of the coordinator position, the transition of relationships to a new coordinator will be a critical challenge for the program in year three.

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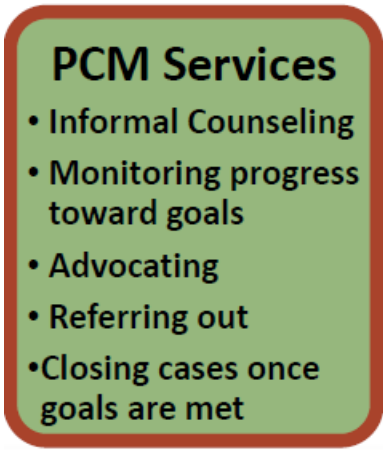
[13] Noguera, P. (2008). What Discipline Is For: Connecting Students to the Benefits of Learning. In M. Pollack (Ed.), *Everyday Antiracism: Getting real about race in school* (pp. 132-138). New York: The New Press.

Summary

Overall, after several changes to the model—and most notably the shift to project-based learning—it appears that year two Éxito students found the after-school program to be more enjoyable, and less like school, than the group tutoring and enrichment activities offered the previous year. We found, however, that while a number of students said the PBL activities exposed them to new experiences and skills that were relevant to their future life and/or career, the connection between the PBL activities and academic skills was weak. Midyear, a loosely structured homework help period was added to help fill this gap. The homework help was a positive addition to the program and students reported appreciating the help they received, but staff pointed to ways this component of the program could be strengthened. Meanwhile, in addition to these formal elements of the daily after-school schedule, we found that the informal interactions that took place between students and adult staff, particularly during the gathering time immediately after the school day was over, were important and, in fact, emerged as a less-often recognized short-term outcome of the program, to be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Chapter 4
Program Intervention: PCM Services

One of the Éxito program's distinguishing features has been the referral to client management services for students whom the after-school coordinator identifies as needing additional support both in and out of school. As illustrated in the theory of action diagram, the program's two client managers, or PCMs, were expected to play a variety of roles in their clients' lives. These included informal counseling, goal-setting and monitoring, advocating, and referring students for other services at Congreso or in the larger community, with the goal of providing emotional support and identifying and addressing barriers to their success in school. Client management was intended to be a short-term intervention and the PCMs would close cases once their clients had met their goals.



PCMs could carry a caseload of up to fifteen students each, and they counted on the after school program staff to make the referrals to them over the course of the year. This process, however, did not always run smoothly, and PCM caseloads were not full until near the end of the year.

Once students were referred, their assigned PCM would tailor the services and referrals provided for individual clients to meet their unique needs. The staffing and design of Éxito's PCM component remained largely the same in year two, but with two changes. First, an experienced PCM left the program and a new one joined the team, completing her orientation late in the fall of 2009. Second, while in the prior year, case managers were required to appeal for an extension when working with a client for longer than three months, a time period that they often found insufficient, in 2009-10, there was no time limit placed on PCM cases. These changes did not interfere with the PCMs' ability to provide emotional support to their clients, which they did with a Strengths Perspective. Overall, however, the PCMs found many of their clients' cases to be tough—perhaps more so than in the prior year—and had difficulty addressing the multiple barriers and re-occurring crises students faced. This led to questions regarding how to handle non-compliant clients as well as the appropriate dismissal point. This chapter will describe the implementation of the program's PCM component, including:

- the provision of emotional support and alignment of the PCM approach with the Strengths Perspective,
- clients' life challenges—and the client managers' difficulties addressing them, and
- a need for clarity regarding when to close cases.

Providing Emotional Support through a Strengths Perspective

In the history of youth programs, case management approaches have often focused on identifying problems, sometimes labeling and diagnosing them, and then trying to solve

them. In response to this focus on negative pathology, the Strengths Perspective emerged in the social work field. The Strengths Perspective focuses on helping individuals identify the capabilities, resources, and possibilities already present in their lives and communities.[14] While Éxito students were initially referred to PCM services because of *problems* (school failure or family issues, for example), our observations and interviews provide significant evidence that the PCM approach in the Éxito program was not problem-focused but very much aligned with a Strengths Perspective and this allowed the client manager to provide much needed emotional support.

The Strengths Perspective was evident in the approaches and strategies PCM's used in their work with students. First, the PCMs made efforts to identify and affirm strengths, and to convey to their clients a belief that growth and change were possible. Next, the PCMs' urged students to set goals for themselves, reflecting client self-determination which is a key element of a strengths-based perspective.[15] In interviews, students talked about a variety of personal and academic goals they had identified with the help of their client managers. In addition, the PCMs sometimes helped their clients identify personal and recreational interests as sources of confidence, and then transfer that confidence to their areas of difficulty.[16]

The Strengths Perspective also emphasizes the importance of the relationship between social worker and client.[17] In our interviews with students, the rapport the PCMs built with their clients emerged as a clear asset of the program, which likely counteracted the stigma after-school staff told us some students sometimes associated with case managers. Students regularly used the word "friend" to describe their client manager, saying, for example, "I don't speak with her like any other adult. I speak to her like a friend." The emotional support received by PCM clients will be discussed in more detail as a short-term outcome in Chapter 7.

In the context of caring relationships, PCM's monitored student progress in school. One student described this monitoring as her client manager "watch[ing] over her." This monitoring role came up often in interviews with students and with the PCMs themselves, and echoes the literature on the role case managers play in schools.[18] Client managers focused particularly on their clients' school attendance. They regularly checked school data on students' absences and class cuts, and then followed up with students who were missing school. One PCM explained, "I think my kids respond well to having someone check in on them. . . . Some just need the consistency that someone is watching."

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[14] Finn, J. L., & Jacobson, M. (2003). Just Practice: Steps Toward a New Social Work Paradigm. *Journal of Social Work Education, 39*(1), 57-78.

[15] Arnold, E. M., Walsh, A. K., Oldham, M. S., & Rapp, C. A. (2007). Strengths-based case management: Implementation with high-risk youth. *Families in Society, 88*(1), 86-94; Rapp, C. A. (1998). *The Strengths Model: Case Management with People Suffering from Severe Mental Illness.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

[16] Arnold, et al., 2007

[17] Rapp, 1998

[18] According to Debra J. Woody, "One task performed by the case managers is to monitor the daily attendance of the students assigned to them. If attendance records indicate that a student is absent, the case manager attempts to locate the student and inquire about absences from school" (p.946). See: Woody, D. (2006). Employed by the School? Essential Functions of a School-Based Case Manager. In C. Franklin, M. B. Harris, & P. Allen-Meares (Eds.), *The School Services Sourcebook* (pp. 945-953). New York: Oxford University Press.

Clients' Challenging Environments and Barriers to Success

A Strengths Perspective also understands that clients do not exist in a vacuum but within larger structures and communities.[19] A client's environment could be a source of challenge as well as what Arnold et. al. call an "oasis of resources."[20] One goal of the PCM was to "remove barriers to student success," as stated in the theory of action diagram. The Éxito Program's theory of action is based on the assumption that the difficulties a student is facing beyond the school's walls are likely to influence his or her capacity for success during the school day. PCMs attempted to remove barriers within students' environment by referring clients and sometimes others in their families to services at Congreso and elsewhere including, for example, a family planning clinic, utility assistance or housing services, and anger management programs. They also commonly made referrals for psychotherapy when mental health services were needed to treat depression or grief following the loss of a loved one.

We also heard a few examples of PCMs attempting to remove barriers in the school environment. We heard about a PCM setting up a meeting in which the student sat down with numerous adults from their school and home life to address a problem, and about a PCM working to get student enrolled in a different school that would be a better fit.

Because of their focus on the interface between the clients and their environments, including visiting clients in their homes and working to build rapport with family members, PCMs could help other program staff understand why a student was behaving a certain way or performing poorly in school. One staff member said, for example, that a PCM had uncovered the reason one student was not attending school which was that "their mother just left and they had to move and live someplace else and now they don't have money to get to school."

While our data to assess the client managers' level of success in alleviating social barriers for students is limited, we did find some evidence that students had greater challenges than the PCM services were able to address, at least in the short-term. Moreover, our observations suggest that the PCMs and their clients may have had more difficulty addressing these challenges in year two, though we do not have sufficient information to conclude the cause of this difference. The students referred to PCM services may have faced more complicated social barriers than in year one; the fact that the PCMs in year two had fewer years of experience may also provide part of the explanation; in addition, the collaboration between the PCMs and the after-school staff was more challenging this year (see Chapter 5). One staff member reflected on the difference in the PCM clients between the two years: "The goal last year was kind of watered down, I will say, because we had kids that didn't have any of those problems [i.e. early warning indicators] and were not within the target population that [PCMs] were supposed to be serving."

PCM students were more likely than other Éxito students to have entered the program with one or more risk factors predictive of dropout, and as described in Chapter 2, many also faced family, mental health, and other out-of-school issues. The following excerpt from our

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[19] Hepworth, D. H., Rooney, R. H., Rooney, G. D., Strom-Gottfried, K., & Larson, J. (2006). Direct Social Work Practice: Theory and Skills (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

[20] Arnold et al., 2007, p.87

field notes describes the life circumstances of one PCM client, as presented in a case review meeting:

> *Home is tough. There are 11 people living there. She doesn't have a bed. She's sleeping on the couch. Last week, there was a report of abuse that was called in and had to be investigated. This is not the first time that's happened - though it's the first it's happened since I've been working with her - but she doesn't want to leave the house. I think she was in placement before though we've never discussed it. . . . One of the counselors called it in. Also, the house was raided over Thanksgiving and Grandpa was caught with drugs. There is a lot of drug use in the house from what I can tell -pretty much everyone that is of age is using.*

The above description of one PCM student's day-to-day reality suggests, however, that "removing barriers" for some Éxito students may require more intensive interventions than the client managers are able to provide. Referrals to outsider services are important, as is the PCMs' supportive and consistent presence in students' lives, but we heard from the client managers that for students who faced such multi-layered challenges in their environments outside school, change was sometimes painstakingly slow, and once one crisis was resolved, it was soon replaced by another.

In other words, the PCMs' ability to address social barriers in a lasting way may have been limited by the structural causes of the problems, rooted in poverty. Nonetheless, the PCMs' "being there" for clients may have had both socio-emotional and school-related benefits as will be suggested in later chapters on the short-term and intermediate outcomes.

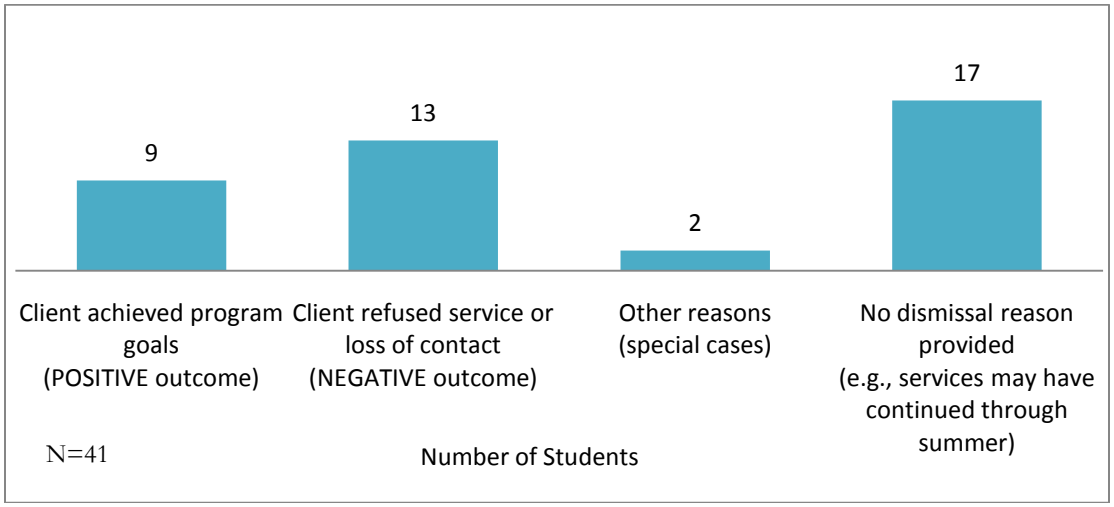
The Dismissal Quandary

In year one, PCMs were given a window of three months to help a student get back on track. They could then request an extension, but the extension wasn't guaranteed. Towards the end of year one, this time limit was lifted. While the PCMs felt that the removal of the three-month time limit for their cases was a positive change, this opened the door in year two for significant ambiguity as to when it was appropriate to close cases. Knowing when to close a case (or "dismiss" a client) was not cut-and-dry, and there was no clear protocol for the PCMs to follow in deciding when dismissal was appropriate.

The PCMs dismissed 24 clients over the course of the 2009-10 school year. Figure 4.1 below shows that of these 24, nine were reported to have achieved their goals, while 13 were dismissed because of "refused service or loss of contact." This echoes the frustrations we heard from the PCMs, who said that while some students were very receptive to PCM services, other students or their families were "noncompliant" and "not doing anything they don't want to." In these situations, the client managers told us, "there is only so much we can do." In a case review meeting, one PCM explained her decision to dismiss one of her clients, even though she had not achieved her goals:

> *With all my other clients, they have a recognition that their behavior is unacceptable and they have a goal they are working toward. [This client] says, "The only thing I want to do is sleep, eat, and watch TV." And she literally laughed out loud through the whole meeting we had with everyone there. She's not in the place to do goal-setting. She's not ready for PCM. She's annoyed by me and any kind of intervention. She has to be at a different place in life to be receptive.*

Figure 4: Dismissal Reasons for PCM Students, 2009-10



Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Non-compliance sometimes meant that a student refused to attend the after-school program despite strong encouragement from the PCM to do so. The client managers then faced a dilemma. They understood that their role was to provide client management services to students in Éxito's after-school program. How long would they maintain clients on their caseload who had stopped attending? In these and other cases of non-compliance, PCMs expressed a desire to have alternatives to dismissal, such as placing a case "on hold" and reducing the number of contacts with that client until he or she appeared ready to move forward again.

Other students were never dismissed and remained assigned to a PCM even after months or, in at least one case, more than a year of service. PCMs said they sometimes kept cases for this long because of the ongoing difficulties the students faced, and new challenges that emerged even after others had been addressed. "The thing about it is that when you set goals with them, sometimes they accomplish those goals but something else happens," said one. "Are you willing to leave that kid just because they accomplished this, but they have something else going on that just came up?"

The ambiguity around when to dismiss clients who were "noncompliant" and clients who were receiving PCM services for months on end, points to the need for a clear dismissal protocol to guide the PCMs in making these difficult decisions.

Summary

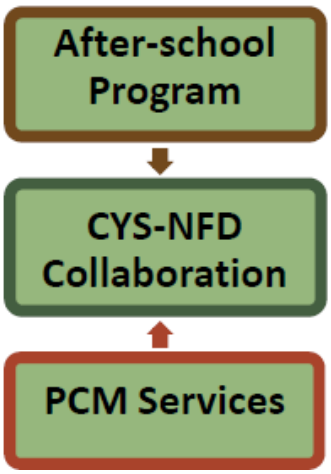
The Éxito PCM's adopted a strength-based perspective in their provision of client management services. This perspective allowed them to provide socio-emotional support and effectively monitor student progress in school. They also attempted to remove barriers in students' lives. While our data on their effectiveness of barrier removal is more limited, it suggests that PCM's may have had greater challenges in this regard this year as more clients

entered the program with early warning indicators and as some clients brought multi-layered and recurring challenges.

PCM's reported greater challenges this year than last year in terms of engaging clients and also reported more questions about the appropriate point for dismissal. Some clients were not eager to work with a PCM or lost interest before their goals were reached. These students were dismissed from the PCM caseload, although PCM's wondered if alternatives to dismissal were possible. Other students were served by a PCM for an extended period of time because as they achieved one goal, another problem emerged. PCM's needed more guidance in determining when the intervention should come to an end.

Chapter 5
Program Intervention: Collaboration

The Éxito dual-component program relies on a working collaboration between two divisions within Congreso: Children and Youth Services (CYS), which runs this and other after-school programs, and Neighborhood and Family Development (NFD), which provides PCM services for a variety of a programs, including Éxito. The collaboration took place through formal structures such as the multi-disciplinary support team (MDST) meetings, which were attended by the on-the-ground staff from both departments and their supervisors, as well as through emails, phone calls, and informal interactions between CYS and NFD staff. Collaborations take added energy from all partners, and often create challenges—as well as benefits—that the program would otherwise not have encountered. In the 2009-10 school year, Éxito's collaborative model appeared to benefit the PCM-assigned students, but dynamics between staff in the two divisions were more challenging than in its first year. Despite these challenges, the rationale for the Éxito collaboration remains strong and suggests that there is potential for improvement. In this chapter we:



- Outline the strengths as well as additional potential advantages of a successful collaboration between CYS and NFD;
- discuss the challenges of this year's collaboration; and
- point to two possible factors that contributed to this year's difficulties.

Collaborative Advantage

Collaborative efforts are built on the theory that two or more groups can achieve more working together than they would have independently, giving them a *collaborative advantage.*[21]However, Babiak and Thibault cite existing research on an array of challenges that can arise in partnerships within or between the nonprofit, commercial, and public sectors. These include the following[22]:

- Differences in goals and objectives between groups
- Inability to establish "joint modes of operating" (p.117)
- Insufficient communication between groups
- Power differences between groups
- Significant expense of resources (including time and energy) that could have been used elsewhere

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[21] Huxham, C. & Macdonald, D. (1992). Introducing collaborative advantage: Achieving inter-organizational effectiveness through meta-strategy. *Management Decision, 30*(3), 50-56.

[22] For a more thorough review of relevant studies, see: Babiak, K. & Thibault, L. (2009). Challenges in multiple cross-sector partnerships. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 38*(1), 117-143.

- Mistrust between groups
- Competition between groups (e.g. for resources, constituents, or publicity)

Despite the challenges that partnerships sometimes face, there remains a strong rationale for collaborative models. In the case of Éxito, the collaboration between the after-school program and PCM services showed several strengths in year two, as well as potential for additional "collaborative advantages" that came up in our interviews and observations but infrequently.

Staff in each division appreciated the services that the other was uniquely suited to provide. The partnership between an after school program and individualized case management services is a logical pairing. Youth case managers often look for after-school programs that would suit their clients' needs, and after-school staff often work with students who need additional social services they cannot provide. One PCM said of the collaboration:

> *I think it deepens the after-school element and broadens the PCM element. Because a lot of PCMs spend a lot of time trying to find afterschool programs for their kids, and it's great that we have one that we can just keep encouraging them to go to. So I think they kind of broaden and deepen each other.*

We heard in interviews that the after-school staff were grateful that the PCMs were going into students' homes, a role the after-school staff were not able to take. "I think it would be too much for us to deal with all the issues that most of the students have," said one, "and [the PCMs] take some of that burden on them which is a lot." Meanwhile, the after-school staff planned activities and provided homework help for a much larger group of students than the PCMs would have the capacity to serve; several of the PCM-assigned students we interviewed reported enjoying the after-school activities, and both PCMs spoke of the benefits they saw for their clients.

Collaboration opens the possibility for joint interventions. Through the collaboration, a student's client manager could potentially coordinate with the after-school staff to provide the student with targeted support in attaining a common goal. For example, we observed in one MDST meeting a discussion of a student who regularly cut his classes during the school day, but seemed to really enjoy music class after school. The discussion led to a concrete action plan: The after-school coordinator and the student's PCM would sit down together with the student and develop a contract with him. They hoped to use the music class as leverage in pushing him to attend his classes during the school day. While we were unable to confirm that the plan was carried out, joint interventions like this one hold the potential to encourage change in students' behavior by surrounding them with consistent messages and measures of accountability. Joint interventions could be used more often and intentionally—capitalizing on a "collaborative advantage" of the CYS-NFD partnership.

Staff appreciated the network of caring adults available to students. The fact that many of the students were known by several Éxito adults also gave staff members a sense that they were not alone in providing students with positive support. One said in an interview how helpful it was in her conversations with students to know that there is a broad base of adults who care about them. She reminds the students, "You know that I care about you, [staff member] cares about you, [staff member] cares about you." This was a third "collaborative advantage" made possible by Éxito's two-pronged model. It also meant that when a PCM decided to dismiss a client, the after school program could serve as a "safety net" for her. If the student continued to attend the program, the PCM could maintain a low-intensity

relationship with the student when visiting other clients after school. Moreover, after-school staff were able to keep an eye on former PCM clients and refer them for further services if needs arose. We heard this strategy discussed at one MDST meeting. It could perhaps be used more intentionally as a way to handle the "dismissal quandary" described in the last chapter.

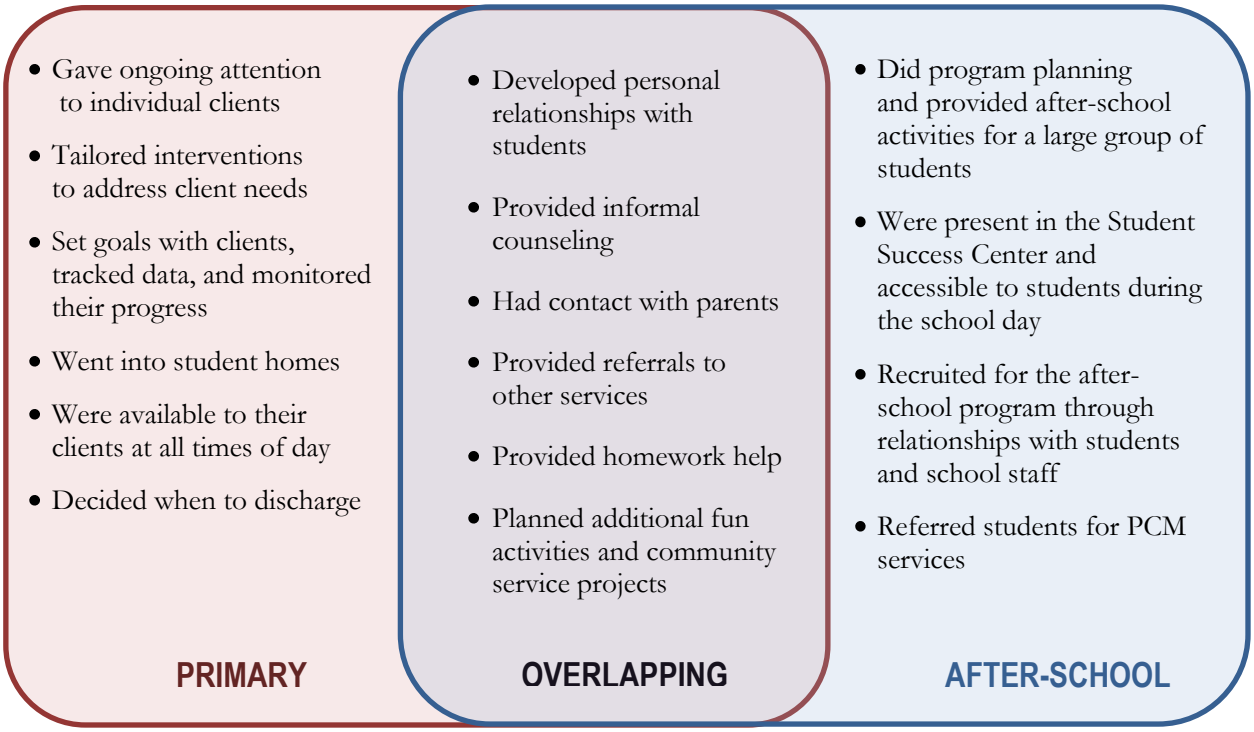
Challenges of the Year Two Collaboration

Overlapping services caused confusion about roles and responsibilities, and created points of tension. In addition to the unique services provided by the CYS and NFD, the two divisions provided students with several similar services, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. The problem was not that there was some overlap in services—which can be expected in a collaborative arrangement—but the ambiguity about how these would be carried out. One program administrator put it this way:

> *Because there are two components, they are not sure where their boundaries are. Is it something they should do or is it something someone else should do? And also trusting that if you don't—if you are not doing it—the other side will do it.*

The tensions caused by these service "overlaps" manifested at different times throughout the year. For example, the PCMs were initially tasked with planning the "Fun Friday" activities, which originated out of a discussion at a February Education Workgroup meeting. Program-planning of this sort was a new role for the PCMs, and staff across and within divisions had different understandings about whether the Fun Fridays were PCM activities—primarily for PCMs and their clients—or whether the after-school staff should have been more involved in advertising the events and attending themselves. Upper-level staff in both divisions facilitated a resolution to this issue and a clarification of roles at an MDST meeting in early April.

Figure 5.1. Unique and Overlapping Roles and Responsibilities



A second point of tension remained unresolved at the end of the school year. As described in the previous chapters, the after-school staff and instructors, like the PCMs, developed close relationships with many students during the hours spent together after school. As such, they sometimes took on counseling, mentoring, and referral roles similar to the PCMs', albeit with less intensity. While they did not visit homes, after-school staff did make contact with many students' parents, and while they did not use student data to tailor individual interventions for clients, they did intervene regularly in students' lives. "We do a lot of that triage," said one staff member, describing the role the after-school team sometimes plays for students. "We're right there, on hand . . . Some of [our students] just need you there, right there, at that moment." Taking on this role in addition to planning and running the program overloaded some of the after-school staff, and also created tensions with the PCMs who saw the counseling and referral roles as primarily their terrain. Where overlaps like these emerge, it becomes important that staff and administrators clearly articulate the new roles and responsibilities of everyone involved.

Overall, the CYS division envisioned a higher degree of integration than the NFD division. The term "integration" describes the extent to which partners in a collaboration operate as two independent groups with separate responsibilities, or as one entity, with common goals and activities.[23] Last year, we found that the two divisions operated largely independently in making decisions about their own areas of work. This year, we go a step further to suggest that the two divisions differed noticeably in this regard: the CYS staff

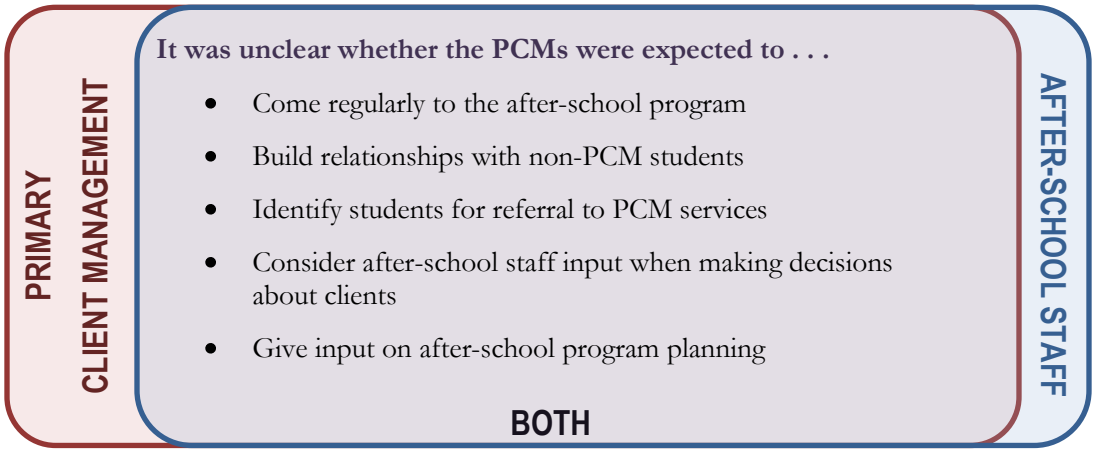
[23] Gajda, R. (2004). Utilizing collaboration theory to evaluate strategic alliances. *American Journal of Education, 25*(1), 65-77.

expected more integration of services and decision-making, while the NFD staff wished for more autonomy.

In other words, in addition to the overlapping roles outlined in Figure 5.1, the CYS staff believed the client management services and after-school program should be even further integrated, as illustrated in Figure 5.2. They envisioned, for example, that the PCMs would regularly attend the after-school program, socializing with their clients as well as with other students, and helping to identify possible referrals. CYS staff argued that this would reduce the stigma some students associated with case management. The NFD division, however, did not see this as their role. "It's not [our] job to be at the after-school program," explained one NFD staff member. "[Our] job is to be on the street, with the family, meeting with the kid, checking with the school counselor, checking how things are going, that kind of relationship."

CYS staff also envisioned that the PCMs would make it a goal to push their clients to attend the after-school program if they had stopped attending. CYS had a strong interest in re-engaging these students because survival of the after-school program is contingent upon attendance. For the most part, PCMs shared this goal because they saw the benefits of the program for their clients and found that those who did participate after school tended to be their strongest relationships. As described in the last chapter, however, both PCMs expressed that there was a limit to what they could do to encourage attendance.

Figure 5.2 The Éxito Collaboration: What is the Ideal Level of Integration?



It was less clear whether the CYS staff envisioned a level of integration that also included the final point in Figure 5.2 – whether the NFD staff were welcome and expected to give input on after-school programming – which, with the exception of Fun Fridays and the PCM suggestion that the after-school program add a homework-help component, remained exclusively the domain of CYS. For example, the NFD staff were not part of the decision to shift to a project-based learning model in the after-school program, nor did they give input on what projects should be offered.

One underlying difference between case management and after-school programs generally may explain, in part, the differences between CYS and NFD in the level of integration they envisioned. The traditional model of case management is rooted in the importance of the

worker-client relationship, with referrals out to other services based on the clients' individual needs.[24] This approach existed in tension with the after school program, which tended towards an "all-hands-on-deck" approach, asking staff to pitch in however possible, regardless of job description.

Challenges in interdepartmental information-sharing at different levels hindered the collaboration. The consistent and trouble-free exchange of information between CYS and NFD is essential to the success of the Éxito collaboration. The MDST meetings, one of the PCMs explained in a December 2009 interview, were a key site "to exchange information. If [the after school staff] doesn't know something or [the PCM] doesn't know something, we exchange information and make a plan on what to do with the child, or receive advice on what to do." The intention of the meetings, we were told in interviews, was that each PCM would present briefly on several of their most difficult clients, giving them, along with their supervisors and the after-school staff, an opportunity to discuss each case. By the end of the school year, however, the meetings seemed to have lost their clear purpose and received negative reviews from everyone who attended regularly.

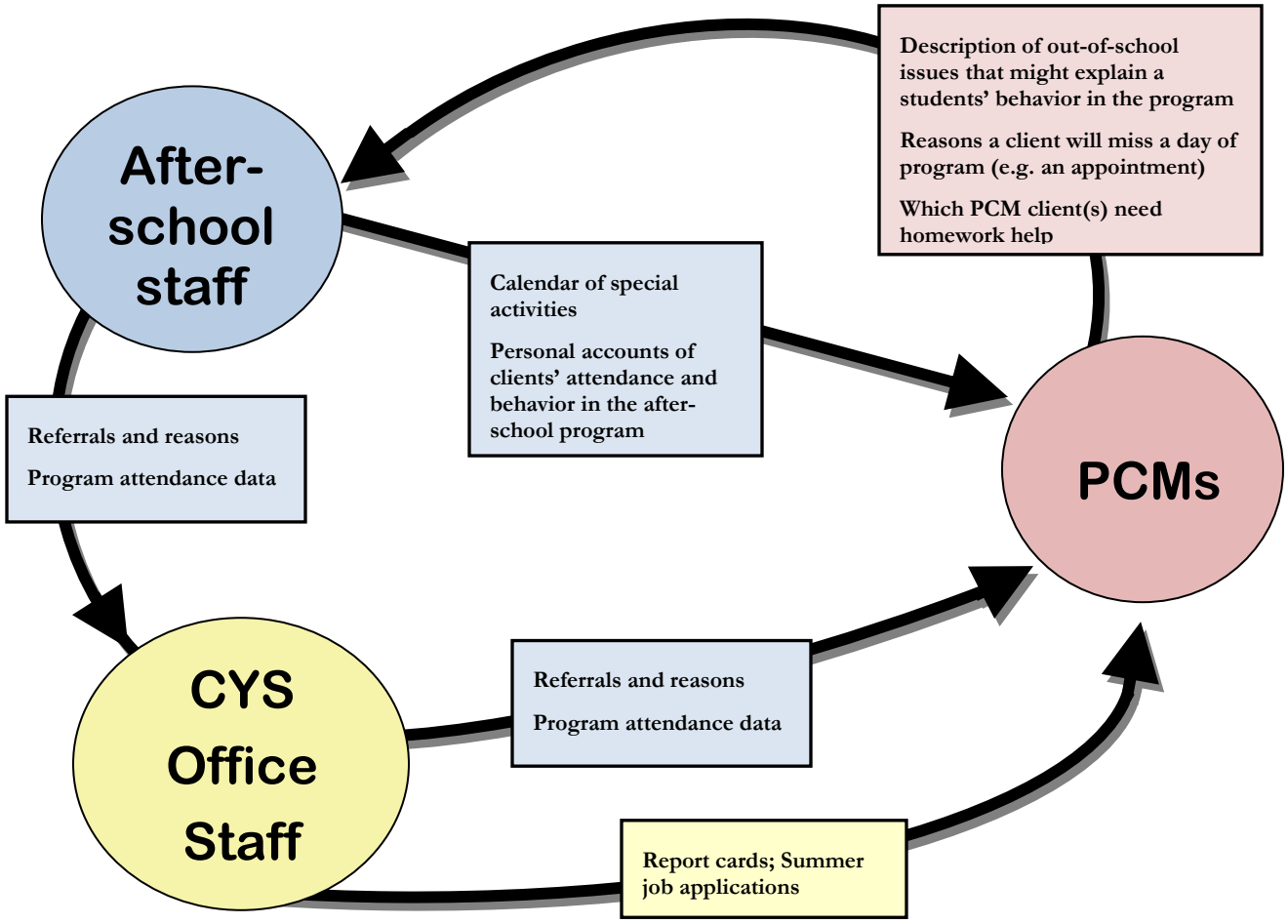
Throughout the school year, the MDST meetings took place less frequently than intended, often happening monthly rather than bi-weekly, and their format—which had been clearly structured in the winter—became inconsistent in the spring. Rather than focusing exclusively on reviewing difficult cases, meeting time was used to discuss a variety of administrative questions. The shift in format was perhaps a symptom of the fact that the staff did not find value in the case review discussions, and also the fact that they had no other place to discuss logistical issues. The on-the-ground staff from both divisions expressed that the case review process did not provide them with information that was new or helpful. We did hear in interviews, however, that significant information-sharing about clients happened by phone, email, and in-person between meetings.

The MDST meetings were also a place to discuss students who were being recommended for referral to PCM services. After the discussion in the case review meetings, CYS office staff were to input the referral information into Congreso's agency-wide database, UNIDAD, so that the student could be officially assigned to a PCM. A breakdown somewhere in this referral-making chain meant that the PCMs did not have full caseloads until the very end of the school year. We also heard from the PCMs that they sometimes had difficulty obtaining other information they needed from CYS office staff.

If staff from both divisions felt they were not getting the information they needed from MDST meetings and elsewhere, what is it that they needed? We created Figure 5.3 to answer this question, based on interviews and observations with staff from both divisions. The figure illustrates what the after-school staff need from the PCMs, what the PCMs need from the after-school staff, and what the PCMs need from the CYS office staff, in order that the collaboration work successfully.

[24] Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, & Larson, 2006

Figure 5.3 Information Exchanges that are Important to the Collaboration



Sources of Challenges

As we have described in this chapter, the collaboration between Congreso's CYS and NFD divisions faced a number of challenges in carrying out the two-component Éxito program during the 2009-10 school year. Literature on group formation explains that conflict is normal during the formation of a collaboration, particularly when groups do not have a shared understanding of the intended level of integration.[25] Some of the challenges in the Éxito collaboration may be the result of staff turnover, significant changes in program model, and a fall startup without sufficient time to clarify and renegotiate roles, and come to agreement on what the collaboration should look like. An orientation or workshop at the beginning of the year with a focus on relationship-building and models of collaboration might help the two divisions come to agreement about the expected level of integration. In

[25] Gajda, 2004

addition to improving the collaboration between the client managers and the after-school staff, it may also be important to build relationships between the client managers and the CYS *office* staff on whom they relied for referrals, program attendance, and other student data.

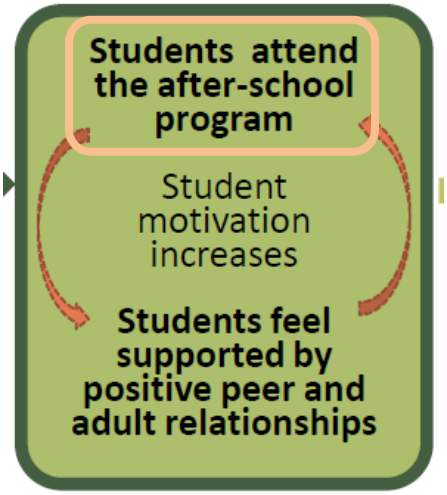
Ambiguity in the structures providing support and accountability for the after-school program coordinator may have been a second contributing factor to the challenges discussed in this chapter. CYS supervision structures changed in the fall and roles continued to evolve throughout the year. There were some indications that the program coordinator position carried too much responsibility in the 2009-10 school year and that tasks that were important to information-sharing sometimes went undone.

Summary

Much has been written about both the advantages and challenges involved in developing successful collaborations. The CYS-NFD partnership in Éxito's second year was difficult on a number of fronts. It appears that the two divisions were not in clear agreement on how to handle overlaps in the services they provided to students, and also entered the collaboration with different expectations about their level of integration and independence from one another. Staff in both divisions also frustrated by obstacles they encountered in obtaining information they needed from one another. The difficulties in the collaboration may be, in part, a reflection of the adjustments the program was going through—changes in staffing and program model just prior to the fall startup—and, relatedly, ambiguity in supervisory structures on the CYS side. Despite these difficulties, the interdepartmental tension did not appear to trickle down to Éxito's students who, as revealed in prior chapters, spoke highly of all the staff they learned to know through the Éxito program, PCMs and after-school staff alike.

The rationale for the collaboration remains strong. Specifically, we point in this chapter to two strengths and potential collaborative advantages. First, by intentionally planning joint interventions, the program can impact students' lives in more ways than they could if working with students independently. Second, the two-pronged partnership creates a "safety net" of caring adults, which ultimately supports not only the students but the staff who appreciate knowing they are not alone in looking out for the students in the program. The program may want to use these strategies more intentionally, thereby capitalizing on the strengths of their collaboration.

Chapter 6
Short-Term Outcome: Program Participation



In order for the Éxito program to have an impact on student outcomes, it needed to engage students so that they attended regularly. Ensuring program attendance was a goal for both after-school and PCM staff. Research has shown that engaging youth in out-of-school time (OST) activities becomes increasingly difficult as students age.[26] But, despite the slow start of the after-school program (described in Chapter 3) levels of student participation in the after-school and PCM components increased from the first year. Increased participation was likely linked to the settling of the program model during the second year. This chapter centers on program participation, presented as a "short-term outcome" in the Theory of Action diagram, with the following topics:

- Participation Trends reports on overall participation in Éxito and changes over the course of the school year.
- Levels of Participation reports on participants' dosage, intensity, and duration in the after-school program and PCM services—as well as findings on the program's daily attendance and participation by project.
- Factors Impacting Participation details factors, external to program implementation that strengthened or weakened students' participation in Éxito.

Participation Trends in the After-School Program

Figure 6.1 shows the number of students who actively participated in the after-school program (i.e., attended at least one session) increased over the course of the school year. In October 2009, the second month of the program, only 37 students attended one or more after-school sessions while participation peaked in May when 92 students participated actively.

Low levels of participation early in the year likely resulted from delays in launching projects and finding instructors which created inconsistency for students. One student described his

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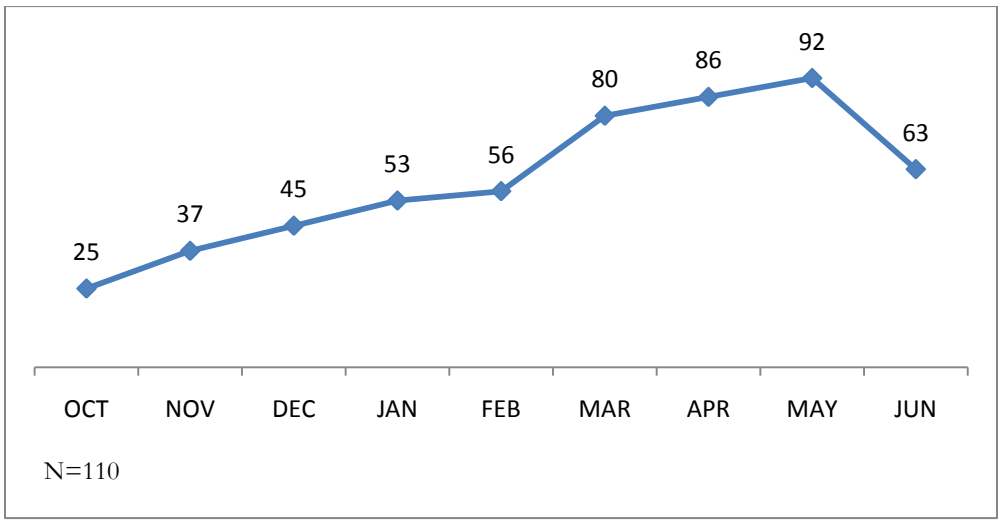
[26] Deschenes, S., Arbreton, A., Little, P., Herrera, C., Grossman, J., Weiss, H., & Lee, D. (2010). *Engaging Older Youth: Program and City-Level Strategies to Support Sustained Participation in Out-of-School Time.* Harvard Family Research Project & Public/Private Ventures; Kauh, T. (2010). *Recruiting and Retaining Older African American and Hispanic Boys in After-School Programs: What We Know and What We Still Need to Learn. GroundWork.* Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures; Barr, S., Birmingham, J., Fornal, J., Klein, R., & Piha, S. (2006). Three High School After-School Initiatives: Lessons Learned. *New Directions for Youth Development*, (111), 67-79; Harvard Family Research Project. (2004). *Moving beyond the Barriers: Attracting and Sustaining Youth Participation in Out-of-School Time Programs.* Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation. Number 6. July 2004. Boston: Harvard University Harvard Family Research Project.

negative experience with Éxito at the beginning of the year which deterred him from coming back: "The first time I came they didn't show up… The second time I came, I kind of got mad so I left…We were in the lunch room…We were just sitting there for like hours, so I just left. Now today [a day in late April] this is the longest I've stayed." We don't know if other students were also deterred by the limited programming at the beginning of the year, but, participation data shows that the program was able to recover from its slow start and came close meeting its recruitment goals.

Figure 6.1. Students Actively Participating in the After-School Program by Month, 2009-10



Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Levels of Participation

The 9th and 10th graders who enrolled in Éxito entered the program at different points during the year and experienced it at varied levels of participation. This section provides the participation findings according to dosage, intensity, duration, daily attendance, and project attendance. Findings are reported for the whole group of participants—and in some cases, for the sub-groups of PCM versus non-PCM students, and "high-risk" students who exhibited one or more early warning indicators for dropping out of school versus "lower-risk" students with no indicators. Levels of participation are defined in the following ways:

- *Dosage* – The total number of after-school sessions attended by participants or the time spent with a client manager
- *Intensity* – The number of after-school or PCM sessions attended per month and during students' enrollment periods
- *Duration* – The number of months attending the after-school program or working with a client manager
- *Average Daily Attendance* – The number of participants attending the after-school program each day over the course of the year

After-School Participation

Dosage

On average, students attended 25 percent (32) of the 129 sessions offered. Table 6.1 below shows that despite more sessions being offered during 2008-09 (143), students participated in a higher number and percentage of after-school sessions during Year Two.[27]

During 2009-10, students who had one or more early indicators for dropout (the "high risk" group in Table 6.1) attended 8 fewer sessions on average than lower-risk participants who had no early indicators. Nevertheless, the mean number of sessions attended by high-risk students was greater than the mean for all participants in 2008-2009.

As in Year One, during 2009-10 PCM students typically attended a greater number of after-school sessions (i.e., 6 more) than non-PCM students. One reason for this could be that these students often spent time meeting with their client managers after school, which may have provided an added incentive for attending. Several PCM students were also referred through truancy court and mandated to attend. On the other hand, several PCM students also had obstacles, such as therapy appointments, that limited their attendance.

Only 13 percent (14) of the participants attended 50 percent or more of the sessions offered. This low overall dosage was likely influenced by the low attendance at the beginning of the school year. As shown in Figure 6.1 above, student attendance improved during the second half of the year.

Table 6.1: After-School Dosage, Year One and Year Two

	2008-09 N=122	2009-10				
		Total N=110	**High Risk** N=81	**Lower-Risk** N=29	**PCM** N=39	**Non-PCM** N=71
Average sessions attended	26 sessions	32 sessions	30 sessions	38 sessions	36 sessions	30 sessions
Percentage of students attending 50% or more of sessions offered	8%	13%	12%	14%	18%	10%

Source: Congreso UNIDAD; Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia.

[27] During Year 1 there was differentiation between "tutoring" and "entrepreneurship" sessions, so in many cases a student's participation was counted twice for the same day. While there were 143 program days, there were 177 sessions offered. This means that there was an even wider gap between average sessions attended for the two years than reported in Table 6.1.

Intensity & Duration

During Year Two, a typical Éxito student attended the program for a period of about 4 months (see Table 6.2). The enrollment period is based on the number of days between the date the student first attended and the date the student last attended.[28] Once students enrolled in the program, they attended, on average, half of sessions offered during the time that they were enrolled. While there was a range of 10 to 20 sessions offered each month, students generally attended 8 of those during their enrollment periods, or two sessions per week. These findings were similar for the sub-groups, but students with client managers and those without risk factors tended to spend more time in the program.

Table 6.2: After-School Intensity and Duration, 2009-10

	Total N=110	**High-Risk** N=81	**Lower-Risk** N=29	**PCM** N=39	**Non-PCM** N=71
Average months in program	4.1 months	3.9 months	4.8 months	4.5 months	3.9 months
Average percentage of sessions attended while enrolled	48%	46%	54%	49%	48%
Average sessions attended per month while enrolled in program	8 sessions	8 sessions	8 sessions	8 sessions	8 sessions

Source: Congreso UNIDAD; Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia. © 2010 The School District of Philadelphia.

For more than a third of the Éxito participants, duration of involvement in Congreso programming extended beyond the school year. As Table 6.3 shows, 42 Éxito students were involved in Youth Works, another Congreso program, during the summer following the 2009-10 school year. Twenty-three of these students had participated in Éxito during the 2008-09 school year and returned to Éxito during 2009-10, comprising a majority (64%) of its returning students. Student participation in Youth Works and Éxito likely reinforced one another. Moreover, almost half of the 42 students received PCM services during the 2009-10 school year, a disproportionately high rate of continuity in Congreso programming for this sub-group. This may have been partly due to the client managers' facilitation of the enrollment process for their clients through communicating with parents and helping to complete and submit paperwork for the summer program.

[28] Comparison findings for Year 1 are not provided for intensity and duration due to the difference in the way that sessions were recorded, as mentioned directly above, and in the way that the enrollment period was defined (i.e., according to a student's start and end dates reported in Congreso UNIDAD).

Table 6.3: Éxito Students' Summer Youth Works Participation, 2009 and 2010

	Total Youth Works participants	Summer 2009	Summer 2010	Both Summers
2009-10 Éxito participants	42	23	33	14

Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Average Daily Attendance at the After-School Program

Average daily attendance (ADA) is the average number of students attending each day between the first and last program days. The ADA at the after-school program was slightly higher during 2009-10 compared to 2008-09 (see Table 6.4). However, there was greater variation in average daily attendance across months during 2009-10 compared to the previous year.

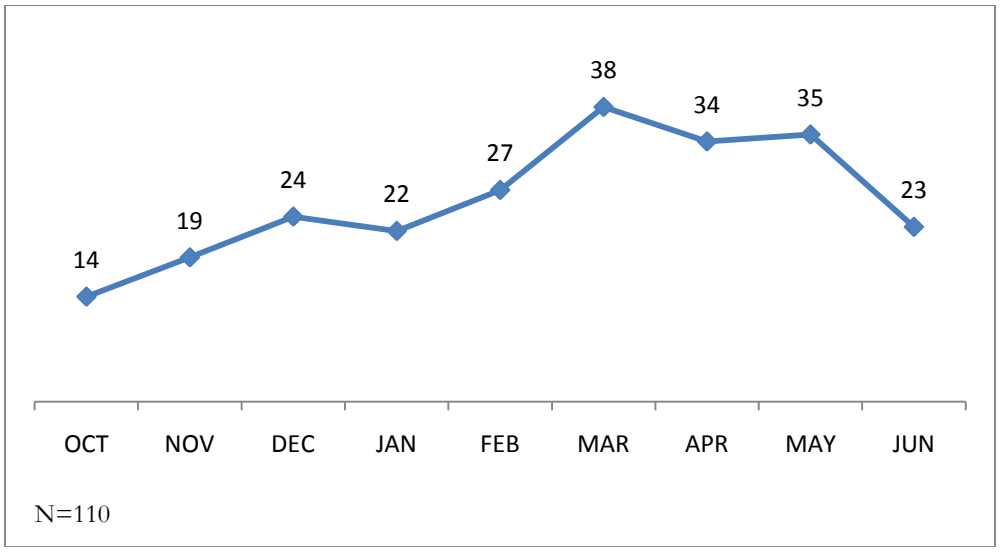
ADA generally increased during the 2009-10 school year, peaking during March. Figure 6.2 illustrates the upward trend in average daily attendance by month. One reason attendance lagged at the beginning of the school year is likely that programming was still developing (see Chapter 3 of this report for a description of program development during the year).

Table 6.4: Daily Attendance, Year One and Year Two

	2008-09 N=122	**2009-10** N=110
Average daily attendance	25 students	27 students
Range of average daily attendance by month	25-29 students	14-38 students

Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Figure 6.2: Average Daily Attendance by Month: Éxito After-School Program, 2009-10



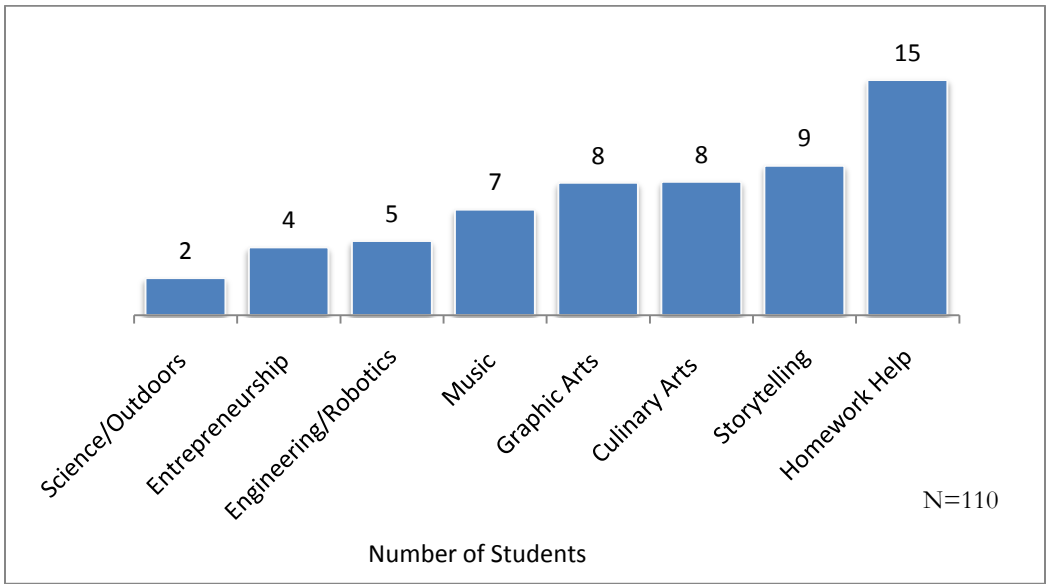
Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Higher rates of participation in Year Two suggest that the changes made to the program were perceived as improvements by students. As described in the previous chapter, students reported the program was "more fun" than last year. As will be discussed in the next chapter, students also developed supportive adult and peer relationships in the program which research has found are related to high levels of attendance in programs for older youth. Several students also reported that the after-school program was better than the alternatives of going home to a difficult family situation, watching television, or hanging out after-school in their neighborhood. Éxito staff also worked to ensure regular attendance, following up with students whose attendance faltered. The Program Coordinator made efforts to round up straggling participants after school and directed them to program activities. Client managers also played a role through encouraging their clients to attend.

Project Attendance

A variety of projects and enrichment activities were provided to the students throughout the school year. As described in Chapter 3, additional project groups started during the second half of the year, including Engineering/Robotics and Storytelling. The Culinary Arts, Music, and Entrepreneurship projects had the longest duration and greatest number of meeting dates, or sessions. Average daily attendance ranged from 2-9 students per project, with Science/Outdoors and Entrepreneurship on the lower end and Storytelling and Culinary Arts on the upper end of the spectrum (see Figure 6.3). Most projects could accommodate up to 12 students. On a typical day during the spring, slightly more than 10 percent of the participants took advantage of homework help either as a standalone activity or prior to entering their projects. The group of 39 PCM students, constituting one-third of the after-school participants, were over-represented in Science, Entrepreneurship, Engineering/Robotics, and Visual Arts. Attendance rates for these students in Music, Storytelling, Culinary Arts, and Homework Help were proportionate to their subgroup size.

Figure 6.3: Average Daily Student Attendance by Project, January-June 2010



Source: Congreso UNIDAD

PCM Participation

Dosage

As Table 6.5 shows, PCM participation levels were higher during 2009-10 than during 2008-09. On average, during 2009-10, a PCM student received 16 more contacts and spent 3 more hours with the client manager. As described elsewhere, the higher rates of contacts and hours with client managers are likely a result of lifting the three-month restriction on serving clients. In addition, more students came to the program with risk factors, which often meant that their cases were more difficult and therefore required the client managers to spend increased time and effort with them.

Table 6.5: PCM Dosage, Year One and Year Two

	2008-09 n=48	**2009-10** n=41
Average contacts	27 contacts	43 contacts
Average hours	10 hours	13 hours

Source: Congreso UNIDAD

Intensity & Duration

The intensity and duration for each student receiving PCM services varied according to the individual's needs, goals, and level of compliance. Typically, however, PCM students had about 8 contacts per month with their client managers over the course of their PCM enrollment periods, which were an average of 4.2 months (see Table 6.6), between their first and last contact dates. Ten of the PCM students had started receiving the services prior to the 2009-10 school year. The findings presented here are solely based on data collected

between September 2009 and June 2010. There were 12 students who received 10 or more contacts with their client managers during any given month of their enrollment periods.

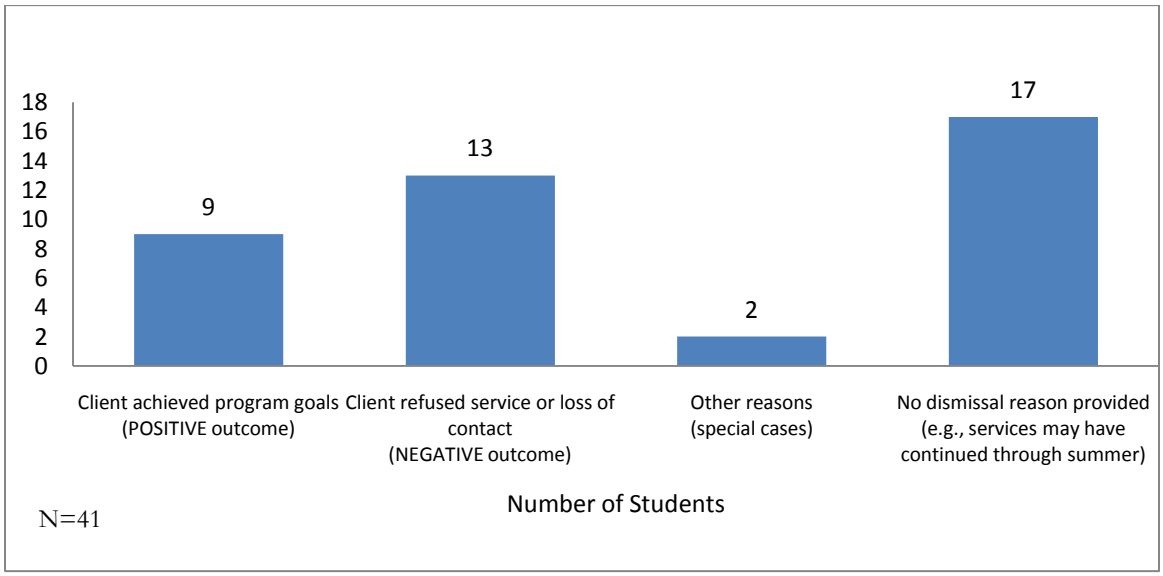
Table 6.6: PCM Intensity and Duration, 2009-10

Average contacts/month with a client manager	8 contacts
Average months with a client manager	4.2 months
PCM students dismissed	24 students

Source: Congreso UNIDAD

There were 24 students for whom dismissal data were provided. Of these 24, 9 were dismissed because they achieved their goals. About one-third of all PCM students were dismissed for negative reasons, such as refusing service or being difficult for the client managers to contact (see Figure 6.4).

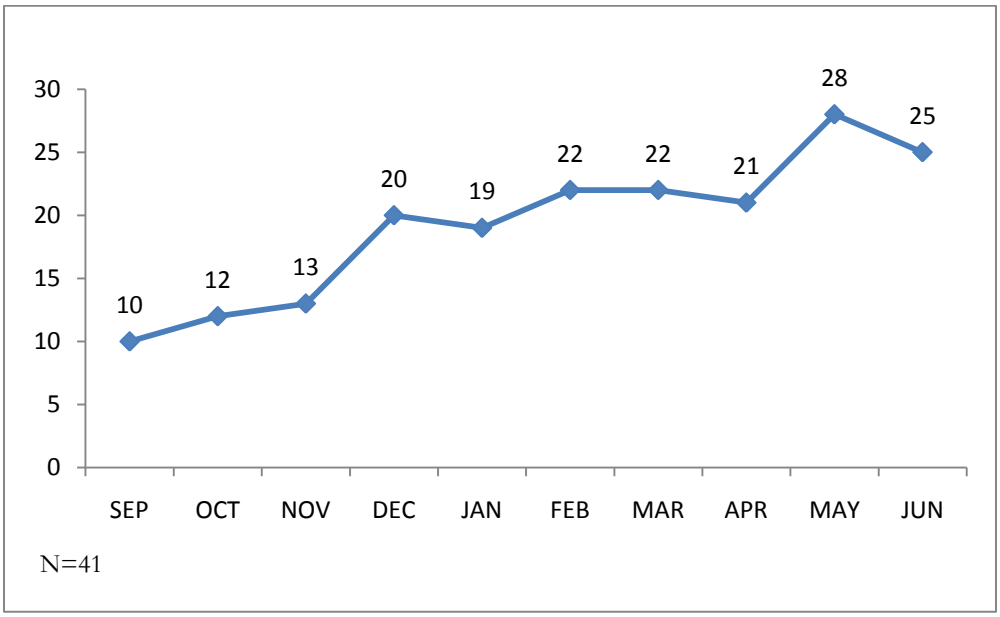
Figure 6.4: Dismissal Reasons for PCM Students, 2009-10



Source: Congreso UNIDAD

By May, there were 28 students working with a client manager (see Figure 6.5), which closely approached the goal of 30 clients at one time. The referral process was improved toward the second half of the year, resulting in more students being matched with a client manager.

Figure 6.5: Number of Students with a Client Manager by Month, 2009-10



Source: Congreso UNIDAD

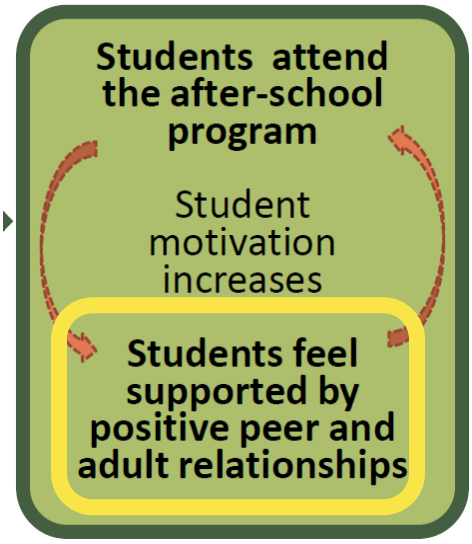
Summary

In Year Two, the Éxito program enrolled fewer students than in Year One, but attendance patterns improved. On average, after-school students attended more sessions, and PCM students spent more time with their client managers than in the previous year. The upward trend in attendance and client manager matches by month suggests that the program strengthened over time.

During any given month, a group of about 30 students attended the after-school program each day. Across the whole group of after-school participants as well as subgroups, a typical student attended 2 sessions per week during his or her enrollment period. Having the participants attend Éxito 50% of the time is an accomplishment considering the difficulty of engaging high school students in after-school programs, as noted in the research literature. As in the first year, PCM students averaged higher dosage in the after-school activities compared to non-PCM students.

The participants identified as "high-risk," exhibiting one or more early warning signs for dropping out of school, had lower levels of participation compared to lower-risk participants but still attended an average of two sessions per week during the period of their enrollment. Éxito's success in engaging this group suggests that the program can help to prevent these students from exiting school.

Chapter 7
Short-term Outcomes: Supportive Relationships and Socio-Emotional Benefits



Once students begin to attend the after-school program and receive PCM services, the question remains how do these activities lead to the targeted outcomes? The link between program activities and targeted outcomes can be referred to as short-term outcomes. Éxito staff theorized various short-term outcomes that linked project-based learning, case management and improved grades, attendance and behavior. These short-term outcomes are illustrated in the complete theory of action (see Figure 1) and a number of them have already been discussed in chapters addressing project-based learning and case management. This chapter reports on short-term outcomes that were thought to result from both components of the program—specifically, supportive adult and peer relationships and socio-emotional benefits such as increased motivation. As students attended the program or worked with a PCM, they experienced adult support (and peer support in the after-school program) which reinforced their program attendance and together, these had the potential to result in socio-emotional changes like increased motivation that then lead to improved grades, attendance or behavior. This chapter describes the evidence that these links were happening--students were experiencing adult and peer support and this support, along with aspects of the project-based learning, showed promise for increasing student motivation, persistence, and self esteem. These short-term outcomes represent central pathways of change within the Éxito model and are important to recognize so that they can be retained and intentionally developed as the model evolves. While these short-term outcomes are not typically fore-fronted in Éxito's public documents, they were in the forefront of staff and student comments about the program. This chapter will:

- Report evidence of positive adult relationships resulting from the after-school program and PCM supports
- Discuss evidence of positive peer relationships experienced in the after-school program
- Provide evidence of the socio-emotional benefits of program participation resulting from supportive adult and peer relationships as well as project-based learning

Supportive Adult Relationships

The literature on youth development has consistently found that relationships with caring adults are critical factors in drawing and retaining adolescents in after-school programs[29] as

[29] Arbreton, A. J. A., Bradshaw, M., Metz, R., & Sheldon, J. P. S. (2008). *More Time for Teens: Understanding Teen Participation - Frequency, Duration, Intensity - in Boys & Girls Clubs*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures;

well as impacting their decisions and behaviors. Students comments shared in this chapter confirm that students with the early warning indicators are seeking and benefit from adult support. We observed significant evidence that students were experiencing adult support in both the after-school program and PCM component in year two.

Adult Support in the After-School Program

While not a formal part of the Éxito program model, both students and staff pointed to the relational aspects of the program as the glue that held the after-school program together. While last year's research documented student reports of adult support in the after-school program, reports of adult support were more widespread and substantial this year suggesting that the style of the new coordinator and new program structure were beneficial to increasing students experience of adult support.

In each of the four student focus groups RFA conducted, there was consensus that students experienced caring relationships with core after-school program staff—the program coordinator, assistant and tutoring coordinator. Only one student in the focus groups commented he wasn't sure if staff cared about him. Students saw caring in particular staff behaviors such as expressing interest in students and listening. One student commented: *They [the staff] help us anyway. If we have a problem, we can always go to them and talk to them. They're always there to listen.* Across youth comments was the sense that they trusted the Congreso staff. A second student articulated this sense of trust saying,"I can count on them."

In general, students felt that all the Éxito adults (both Congreso staff and PBL instructors) cared about them more than their Edison teachers. One student in a focus group reflected on this saying: You can tell the staff something personal going on in your life and they'll care. Compared to the [Edison] teacher who would just say "Oh, it's okay, it happens to everyone." And continues teaching."

Students were also appreciative of the guidance and correction they received from staff seeing it as another sign of their caring. One student explained, "She tells you 'You're not supposed to do that, you're supposed to do this,' so she actually corrects you and she gives you good advice." And at least two students reported that this advice and correction led to improvements in their grades and behavior.

Adult Support from PCMs

Providing adult support is an intentional strategy of PCMs and client comments suggest that PCM's were successful in providing this support when they were able to engage clients the PCM process. Seven of eight PCM students we interviewed described experiencing this

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Herrera, C. & Arbreton, A. J. A. (2003). *Increasing Opportunities for Older Youth in After-School Programs.* Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures; Russell, C. A., Vile, J. D., Reisner, E. R., Simko, C. E., Mielke, M. B., & Pechman, E. (2008). *Evaluation of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development Out-of-School Time Programs for Youth Initiative.* Washington, D.C.: Policy Studies Associates, Inc.;

support from their PCM.[30] These students felt their PCM listened to them—sometimes when no one else would—and were easy to talk to about difficult issues. Five described their PCM as their friend. As one student stated, "*I enjoy having [her] as my case manager. It is easy to talk to her and when I have problems…I like how she supports me. I'll get the support that I need….*"

Five of eight students also expressed the absence of having other listening ears in their lives, or other adults they trusted in the same way as their PCM. The following quotes illustrate the important support role the PCM was playing in students' lives:

> *Knowing that she cares, like knowing that somebody's there to care. Because usually- when my mom was incarcerated, it was just my grandma- it was just like, my grandma was just on drugs and stuff like that, I didn't know who to depend on…but it's now that I have a friend to talk to, and knowing that she is going to be there to help me throughout.*

This data suggests that case management may be an effective way to reach some students with the early warning indicators. Three of our interviewees showed a reduced number of risk indicators by the end of the year. A fourth student, for whom we were missing academic data, as well as and two other students who finished the year with the same number of indicators as they started, also reported significant socio-emotional benefits which will be described later in this chapter.

Positive Peer Relationships in the After-School Program

Students in focus groups also reported that students in the program and in their project group generally got along with each other, although, there were exceptions of particular students who had difficulty fitting in. Observations of the project-based learning activities suggested that these activities provided more opportunities for positive peer relationships to develop than were available in the program last year, because most of the projects required group work. For example, the music instructor regularly asked more experienced students to teach newer students. The storytelling project required students to share personal stories with each other and the instructors were conscious of building trust and establishing the right climate for risk-taking and sharing.

Students described helping each other in their project groups. As one student explained: *"Everybody helps each other. If I'm not playing something [music] right, we help each other, we practice, everybody is like family."* This was particularly important for the ELL students who, last year, reported feeling unwelcome when mixed in groups with English speaking students. This year, ELL students reported feeling comfortable in classrooms with English speaking students because there were many bi-lingual students in their groups who were willing to help them when they didn't understand something. The Ell students who participated in the focus group all agreed that they preferred to be mixed in with other students in contrast to

[30] The seven PCM students we interviewed were actively engaged in PCM supports, and had been receiving PCM support for at least two months at the time of our interview. Seven had worked with a PCM for four or more months and only one student had been dismissed by the end of the year for loss of interest/non-responsiveness to PCM contacts. All the students we interviewed entered the program with at least one early warning indicator and four had multiple indicators. Data was missing for one student.

last year's model which had a separate ELL class: [It's better] w*ith everybody mixed together because that way you meet more people.*

Again, students perceived a difference in peer relationships in Éxito and those that existed between students during the school day. As one student explained the difference:

It's completely different, right. During school, you got beef with that person, right? Then when you get in the kitchen you be like, [politely] "Pass me the salt?"…Because, you know, in school, you gotta fight to not look like [weak]. But in the program it's like, you don't have to impress.

Some students reported that their positive relationships with Éxito peers were helped by the fact that they recruited friends to attend the program. In addition, four students reported that Éxito helped them to make new friends in school and become more social in school. Thus, there could be other benefits resulting from positive peer relationships including an increased sense of belonging which is critical to keeping students from disengaging from school.

Increased Motivation

As theory of action describes, staff hoped that regular participation in the after-school program and supportive adult and peer relationships would allow students to find the motivation that would propel them towards high school graduation. While our qualitative data cannot definitively report on the number of students who experienced increased motivation as a result of Éxito it does provide some evidence that certain activities were leading to increased motivation particularly for PCM students. We heard examples of increased motivation from six of eight PCM students we interviewed. In addition, other socio-emotional benefits, such as increased persistence and self-esteem were reported by seven students participating in the after-school program.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, PCM's focused primarily on improving attendance and five of our PCM interviewees described increased motivation to attend school as a result of the support and "push" they received from their PCM's. As one students said, "*They motivated me. Before I was in low spirits and they motivated me to go to school and everything".* Although it may be somewhat counterintuitive, half our PCM interviewees appreciated having their PCM's check up on them and hold them accountable when they cut school or class. As one student stated, *"I just need somebody to push me to do those things. So I guess the program supported me because like, I just needed somebody to push me to do things"*

Four PCM students attending the after-school program also shared examples of the way the after-school program helped to motivate them to attend school. One student commented that the project had helped her clarify her career goal and this helped motivate her to come to school. Another described receiving encouragement from after-school program staff that she could attend college and this had provided more motivation in school. For three other students, attending Éxito after-school motivated them to attend school. One of these students expressed, "*So, knowing that, oh, I'm going to school, but I know after school is going to be better, because I got Éxito…I know that it's going to be better at the end because of Éxito."* Two students also told us that their PCM and an after-school staff motivated them to improve their behavior By altering their reactions to teachers and peers. In summary, the "push" and accountability students received in the context of caring relationships with Éxito staff appears to be able to motivate some students to improve attendance and behavior.

Increased Persistence and Self-Esteem

Project-based learning also seemed to result in a number of other socio-emotional benefits for some students including students who were only involved in the after-school program. These benefits included an increased sense of what might be described as "persistence", arising from challenging PBL activities, and more positive feelings about oneself as a result of experiencing success and positive feedback in PBL activities. While again, our data don't allow us to determine if these benefits were widespread they are important to highlight because they occurred in activities such as the music program in which it was more difficult to tie to academic skills. In addition, they suggest other mechanisms through which Éxito may be working and which Éxito could more intentionally cultivate to increase its impact.

Four students, including three students who were only involved in the after-school program and one PCM student also involved in the after-school program, reported learning what might be described as "persistence", ie., the ability to stick with something that is difficult. For example, a music student described a sense of persistence resulting from experiencing success in their music project saying:

At first I didn't think I was gonna do very well in drums because some music pieces were really complicated and when I saw it being played it looked really hard, but when you break it down it was actually really easy.

Persistence is seen as one of the most important socio-emotional characteristics for achievement.[31]

Five students also reported more positive feelings about themselves as a result of experiences they have in the after-school program. This included three students who participated in the after-school music group described increased confidence as a result of having to perform in front of an audience. In a focus group discussion, students made the following comments about the benefits of this experience:

> M1: At first I was nervous, because you see all these people and you're thinking oh my god, I'm going to mess up, I hope I don't mess up… And then it's awesome because then you look back at it and be like 'I got this'.
>
> M2: Same thing for me; when we had the performance I was really nervous because it was like the whole 9th grade academy and it was my academy and I see them every day. And I thought they would laugh and stuff. But afterwards I got good feedback and they were saying it was really good and stuff. It made me feel happy.

As the second student above states, he was receiving positive feedback from peers in the school. Three other students reported similarly, that because of Éxito, they were receiving positive feedback from their peers in the school and Éxito was helping them develop a positive name for themselves in the school. For one student, this seemed related to community service activities he conducted with Éxito. The students articulated this in the following excerpt from a focus group:

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[31] Duckworth, A., Peterson, C., Matthews, M., Kelley, D.(2007). Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-term Goals. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92, 1087-1101.

M1: [Without Éxito] I probably wouldn't have been acknowledged.

M2: I wouldn't be noticed.

M3: Yeah, like, everybody in the school knows me now, because I've been in this program. Everybody…Through my accomplishments. Because I give before I receive, I will help you before I help myself.

These quotes suggest some of the social benefits of participating in Éxito do carry over to students' lives in the school and even outside of the school as community members see students involved in positive activities. Research on adolescent identity development points to the critical role that social feedback plays in the development of a student's ideas about themselves and their own identity.[32] Éxito may want to more intentionally cultivate this positive feedback for student In addition, regular community service activities are another way to cultivate positive public attention for students.

Summary

In summary, supportive adult and peer relationships are a key mechanism through which Éxito is having an impact on students. These caring relationships allow staff to guide student decision-making, provide emotional support and the "push" and accountability that can increase student motivation. In addition, positive peer relationships within the after-school program may carry over into the school day for some students--increasing students' sense of belonging in school. While not often in the foreground of the program model, these supportive adult and peer relationships are important to the programs ability to engage and impact students.

We also heard instances in which the activities of project-based learning, as well as case management relationships were teaching persistence, ie., students need to persevere through a difficult time or a difficult task. Persistence is an importance socio-emotional characteristic for success in school and life[33]. Several students also reported more positive feelings about themselves as a result of the successes they experienced in PBL activities and the positive feedback that resulted from Éxito involvement. Éxito may want to capitalize on this mechanism for supporting students by finding more ways to bring positive public attention to Éxito students in their school and community. As further revisions to the program model are made, it is important to recognize these mechanisms of change which are referred to hear as short-term outcomes and consider whether new strategies will result in similar short-term outcomes.

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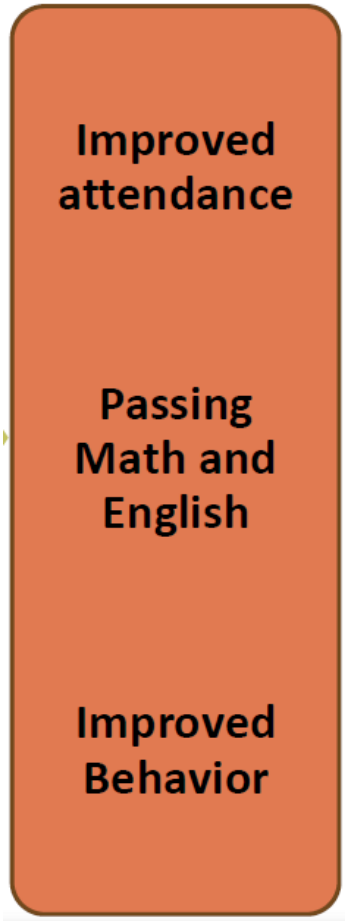
[32] Spencer, M.B. (1999). Social and Cultural Influences on School Adjustment: An Identity-Focused Cultural Ecological Perspective. Educational Psychologist, 34, 43-57.

[33] Duckworth, A. et. al. (2007).

Chapter 8
Intermediate Outcomes: Attendance, Grades and Behavior



Éxito's theory of action argues that program participants with one or more of the EWIs will see improvements in the areas in which they are struggling and be more likely to stay in school as a result of program participation. Research on the Éxito program implemented during 2008-09 provided evidence to support this claim. It found that the attendance of 9th grade students improved when these students were involved in both the after-school program and receiving PCM services. This year's program hoped to replicate those outcomes. However, as described earlier in the report, the program experienced important changes in 2009-2010 that were likely to influence student outcomes.

This chapter reports the findings of our analysis of the three intermediate outcomes in the theory of action. It looks specifically at the outcomes of students who displayed early warning indicators before entering the program and examines differences in outcomes for 9th and 10th grade students as well as returning participants. It also looks separately at the outcomes for participants in the after-school program and the PCM component. This chapter will:

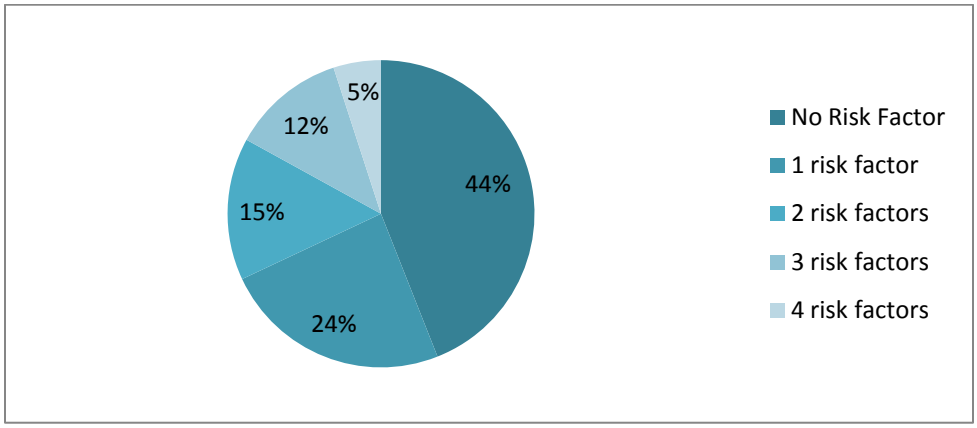
- Report the overall prevalence of EWIs among participants at the end of the school year.
- Examine whether participants with EWIs improved over the course of the year
- Compare Éxito students to a group of matched non-Éxito students

End of Year Prevalence of EWIs

We examined the prevalence of EWIs at the end of the school year for Éxito participants to provide a context for the outcome analysis. In spite of improvements that will be shared later in this chapter, a majority of the cohort, and particularly 9th graders, ended the year still displaying one or more EWIs and will continue to need Éxito supports in the coming year.

Figure 8.1 below shows the prevalence of various risk indicators at the end of the year for participants in the after-school program. These figures show that in spite of their participation in Éxito, over half (56%) of after school students still had one or more key risk indicators at the end of the school year.

Figure 8.1 Percent of Students with Number of Risk Indicators – After School Session Students (n = 110)



Ninth graders were much more likely to have a risk factor than were 10th graders with roughly twice as many 9th graders having each indicator, for both After School and PCM students. Other research has shown that 9th grade is a difficult year for students because of the transition to a new school environment; therefore, it is not surprising that 9th grade students ended the year with more risk indicators than 10th grade students.[34] See Appendix B for a breakdown of EWIs at the end of the year by grade and for PCM students.

Did Éxito Participants Improve Over the Course of the Year?

Next, we looked to see how many students who had a specific risk indicator when they entered the program, improved over the course of their involvement in the program. In Figures 8.2 and 8.3 we see that one third to one half of the students who entered the program with a previous risk indicator no longer had that particular risk indicator by the end of the school year (although, they may have had other indicators). After-school participants were most likely to demonstrate improvement in passage of Math & English. Fewer PCM students demonstrated such improvement. Only slightly more than a third were likely to pass math and English at the end of the year. Participants were least likely to demonstrate improvements in the area of behavior.

[34] Neild & Balfanz, 2006

Figure 8.2: Percentage of Students Improved at End of 2009-10 School Year, By Prior Risk Indicator:

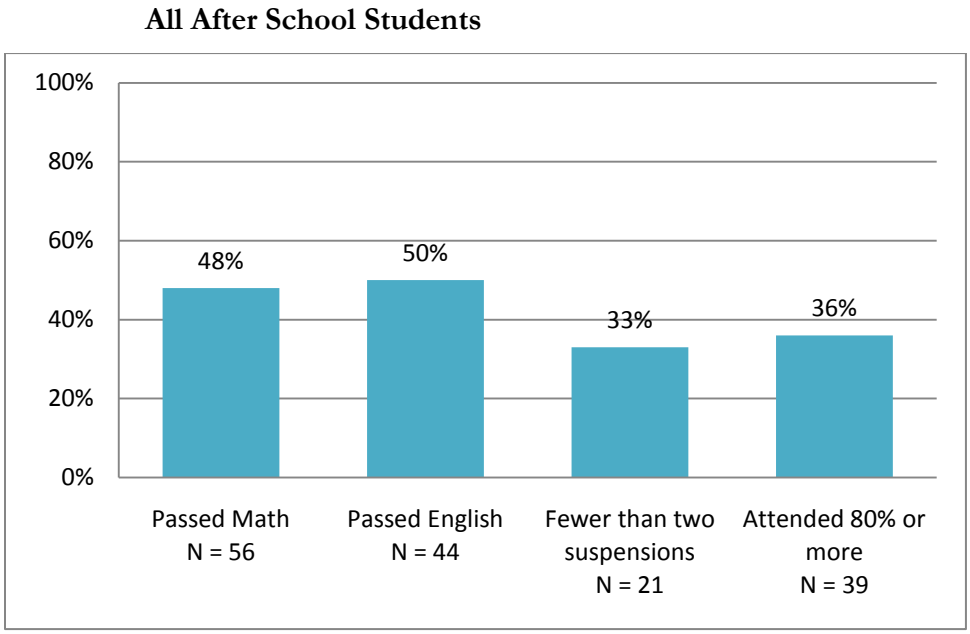
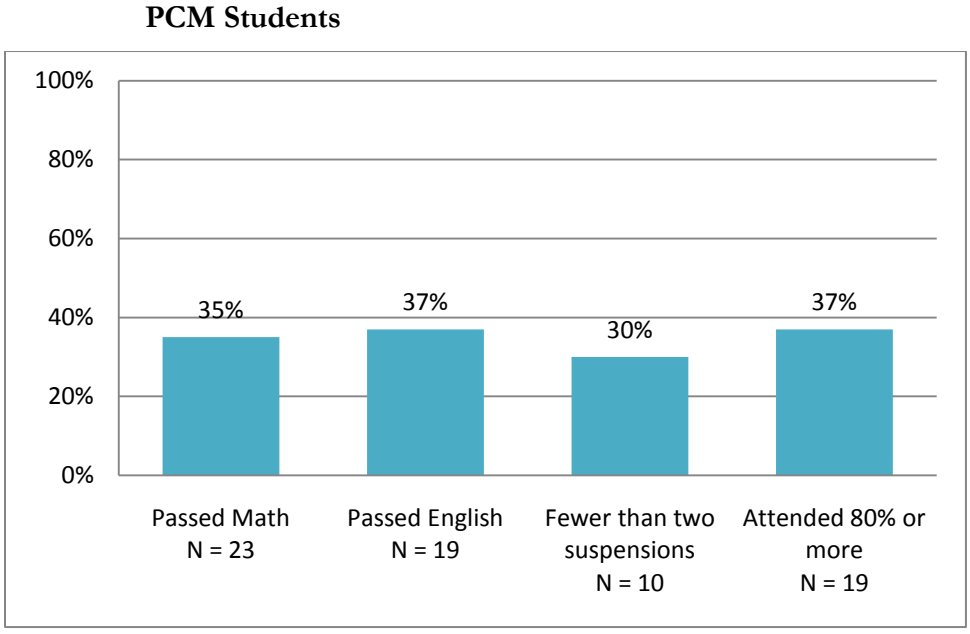


Figure 8.3: Percentage of Students Improved at End of 2009-10 School Year, By Prior Risk Indicator:

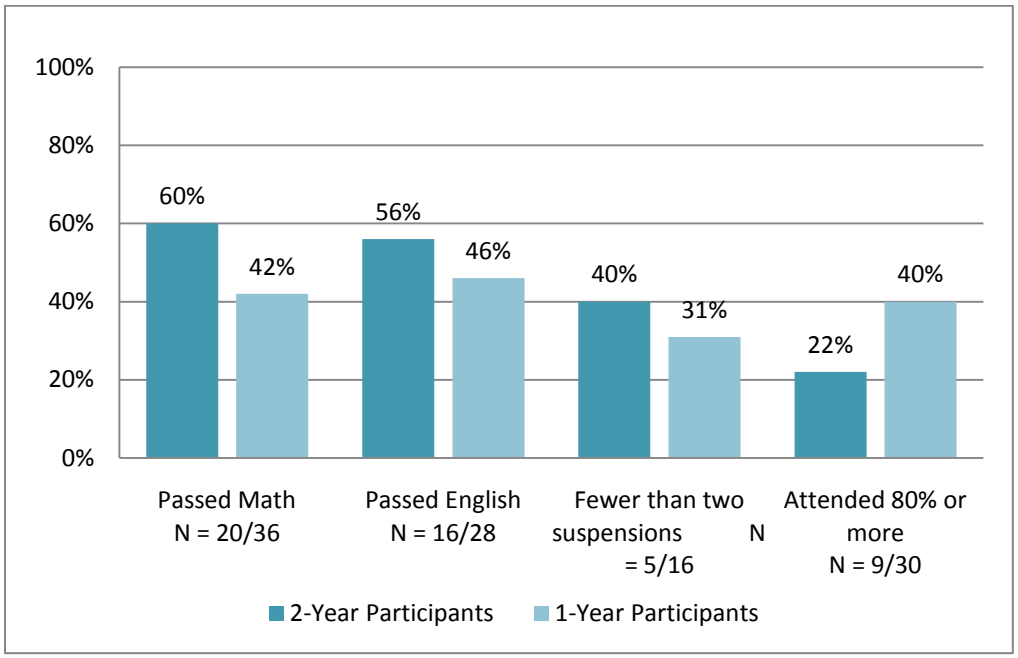


Do students who were in Éxito for a second year in 2009-10 have better outcomes than those who were first-time participants?

The earlier analysis showed that 10th grade students generally had fewer risk indicators than 9th graders. Many of these 10th graders—as well as some 9th graders—were in their second

year of involvement in Éxito. Many of these students also participated in the Éxito summer program. We looked to see whether multiple years of involvement in Éxito made a difference (see Figure 8.7). Comparing outcomes for students with two years vs. one year of involvement we see that returning students who had a risk indicator in the areas of failing math or English and behavior had improved after two years of involvement. The only area in which first year participants showed more improvement was attendance. This suggests multiple years of involvement has a positive effect on Éxito participants. However, it could also be the case that students who had improved grades and behavior chose to return to Éxito in the second year because they perceived it to be beneficial.

Figure 8.7 Percentage of After-School Students Improved at End of 2009-10 School Year, By Prior Risk Indicator and Years of Éxito Participation



How do Éxito student outcomes compare to other Edison students?

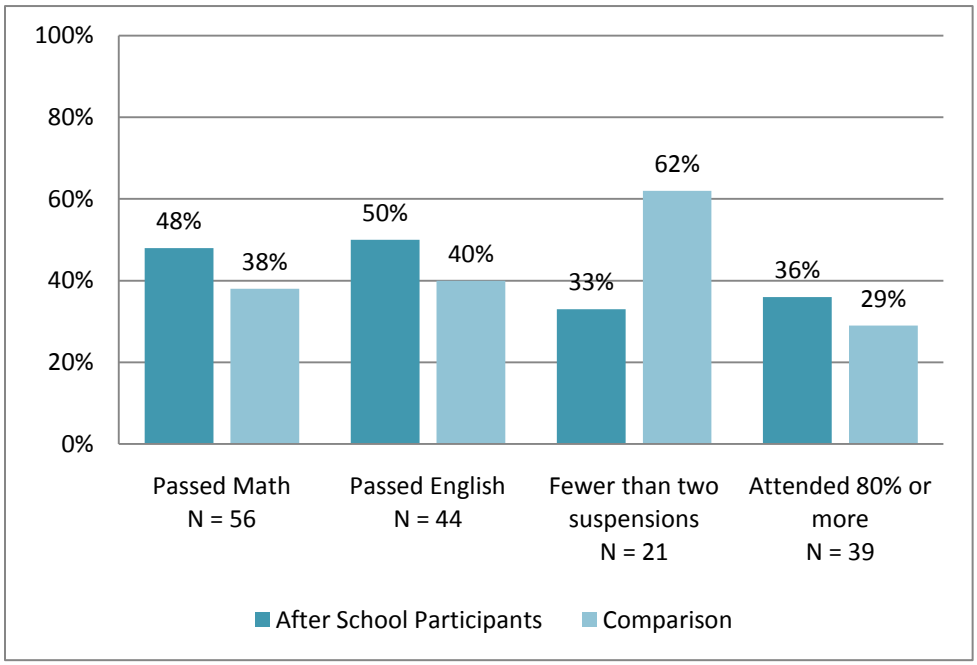
To evaluate the above outcomes in a more rigorous fashion, a group of students from Edison HS who did not participate in the Éxito program, but who were very similar to the group of Éxito participants, were selected as a point of comparison. These comparison students were selected and matched individually to each Éxito participant, based upon their grade level, gender, ethnicity, and the total number of risk factors they had previously exhibited (and where possible the students were also matched specifically on the types of risk indicators). By comparing outcomes from Éxito participants to this group of matched students, we are able to be more confident that any improvements made by Éxito students are due to their participation in the program and not due to other factors. As reported in a previous chapter, PCM students often faced additional challenges not measured by these risk indicators including family challenges, socio-emotional issues etc. We could not match PCM students based on these socio-emotional or family factors because such data are not available for non-Éxito students. Therefore, it is likely that the PCM students had additional risk

factors not accounted for in this analysis. See Appendix C for a description of the comparison group.

After-School Program

The analysis first examined the difference in outcomes between participation in the after-school program, including the sub-group of students who participated in the after-school program and also received PCM services, and similar, non-Éxito students at Edison. We found that Éxito students who entered the program with a risk indicator, improved more than their matched comparison group in math, English and attendance. Figure 8.8 below displays these findings. However, comparison students made greater gains in the area of behavior.

Figure 8.8: Percentage of Students Improved at End of 2009-10 School Year, By Prior Risk Indicator: After School Participants v. Comparison Group



We then tested these differences between Éxito students and comparison students to determine whether they were statistically significant, or whether they could have occurred by chance. Table 8.1 below shows the results from regression models in which the Éxito student outcomes in 2009-10 were compared to those of the comparison group. The regression models controlled for students' grade levels, gender, ethnicity, special education and ELL statuses, as well as their prior risk factors. (See side bar text-box for more detail on the regression models.)

Regression Models

The regression models controlled for students' grade levels, gender, ethnicity, special education and ELL statuses, as well as their prior risk factors. The model tested whether a higher dosage of Exito programs predicts passing grades in English, passing grades in math, suspensions, and attendance. Dosage refers to the total number of days attended Models were run for all participants (including PCM students who participated in the after-school program) and for students who only participated in the after-school program.

In the table, the results are display as an Odds-Ratio for which values over 1.0 mean that Exito participants are more likely to have that outcome, and values under 1.0 mean that Exito students are less likely to have that outcome. A P-value of .05 is considered a statistically significant impact and a strong relationship between Exito participation and outcome.

Table 8.1 Regression Results for After School Students

	Model 1: After-School Dosage (All Participants)		Model 2: After-School Dosage (PCM omitted)	
	Odds-Ratio	**Sig.**	**Odds-Ratio**	**Sig.**
Failed Math	**.984**	**.043***	.976	.065
Failed English	.992	.233	**.970**	**.014***
Two or more suspensions	1.01	.301	.981	.276
Attended less than 80%	**.966**	**.003***	*.970*	*.055†*
Promoted	1.01	.314	**1.06**	**.040***

*p<.05 †p<.10

The results for students participating in the after-school program (including the sub-group of students who also received PCM services) show:

- Students who participated in the Éxito after school sessions were significantly less likely to have failed math. For every day of Éxito attended, they were 1.6% less likely to fail. This means that students who attend the average number of days (32) were 40.1% less likely to fail math.
- Students who participated in the Éxito after-school program also were less likely to have attended school less than 80% of the time. For each day of Éxito attended, students were 3.4% less likely to have this risk indicator. This means that for students who attended the average number of days (32) were 67.4% less likely to have the attendance risk indicator.

When looking only at students who attended the after-school program but did not receive PCM services we found that:

- Students who only participated in the after-school program were still less likely to fail math and have the attendance risk indicator, although, the relationship was less strong. It neared but did not reach statistical significance.
- In addition, participants were also less likely to fail English. For every day of Éxito attended, they were 3% less likely to fail English. Again students who attended the average of 32 days were 61.7% less likely to fail English.
- Students who participated only in the after-school program were also more likely to be promoted. The likelihood of being promoted also increased with the number of days attended. For each day attended, students were 6% more likely to be promoted. Students who attended 32 days were 704% more likely to be promoted.

These findings differ from the findings of last year's research where no relationships were found between participation in the after-school program and student outcomes. The positive outcomes this year suggest that the modifications to the after-school program—increased focus on building staff-student relationships as well as positive peer relationships, homework help and project-based learning—appear to have been beneficial for students.

PCM Services

We also examined whether students who received PCM services in addition to the after-school program experienced any additional benefits from receiving those services. Last year we found that it was only the full model—PCM plus after-school program—which resulted in benefits for the students specifically in the area of attendance.

Figure 8.9 below shows that similar to last year, PCM participants improved more than their comparison students in the area of attendance. However, they were not more likely than the comparison group to have improved in Math & English, even though all but two PCM students also participated in the after-school program and had the opportunity to receive homework help. In addition, PCM students were much *more likely* to have two or more suspensions at the end of the school year than the comparison group.[35]

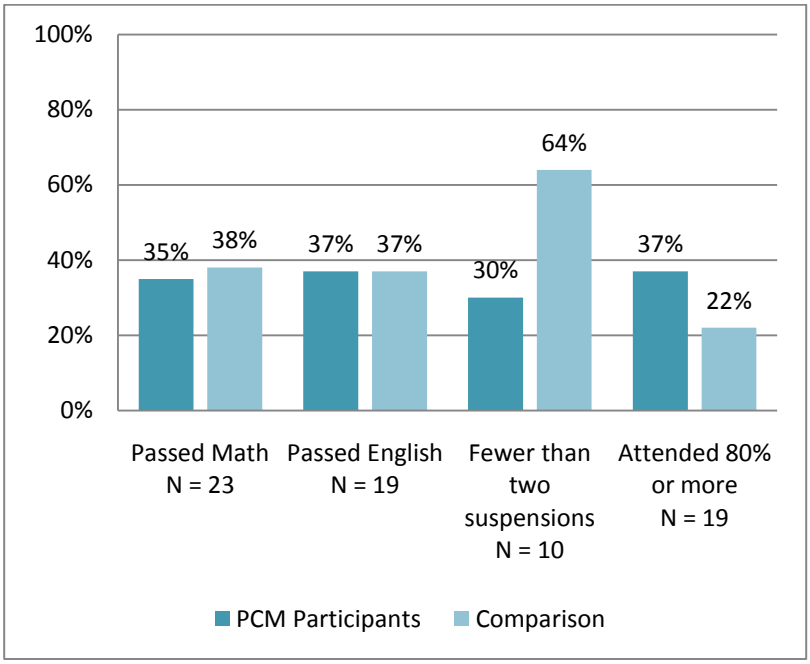
[35] Three PCM students had two or more suspensions before receiving PCM services that are included in the overall total number of suspensions. However, these three PCM students also earned two or more suspensions after starting PCM services.

PCM Regression Models

The PCM regression models controlled for students' grade levels, gender, ethnicity, special education and ELL statuses, as well as their prior risk factors. For PCM students, we examined participation in two ways. First, we examined whether simply having a PCM made a difference in terms of student impact. Second, we looked at PCM dosage, or the total number of hours spent with a PCM specialist to capture the amount of involvement the student had with the PCM services.

In the table, the results are display as an Odds-Ratio for which values over 1.0 mean that Exito participants are more likely to have that outcome, and values under 1.0 mean that Exito students are less likely to have that outcome. A P-value of .05 is considered a statistically significant impact and a strong relationship between Exito participation and outcome.

Figure 8.2: Percentage of After-School Students Improved at End of 2009-10 School Year, By Prior Risk Indicator: PCM Students v. Comparison Group



Source: Findings derived from data provided by The School District of Philadelphia.
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Again, we tested these differences to see if they were greater than chance. Table 8.3 displays the results. We observed several differences were statistically significant—one in a positive direction and two in a negative direction.

Table 8.3: Regression Results for PCM-Assigned Students

	PCM Participation		PCM Dosage	
	Odds-Ratio	**Sig.**	**Odds-Ratio**	**Sig.**
Failed Math	1.02	.978	.99	.707
Failed English	**2.96**	**.044***	*1.06*	*.060†*
Two or more suspensions	3.56	.060	**1.08**	**.018***
Attended less than 80%	.343	.087	.971	.302
Promoted	.80	.705	**.95**	**.044***

***p<.05 †p<.10**

The results show that students who had a PCM were:

- Less likely to have an attendance risk indicator. Simply having a PCM reduced students likelihood of having the attendance risk indicator by 66%. While this was not statistically significant, perhaps because of the small sample size, it neared significance and was large enough to report.

On the other hand, students who had a PCM were:

- Three times more likely than their comparison group to have been suspended two or more times. While this difference was not statistically significant it neared significance and is large enough to report.
- Three times more likely to have failed English.

These negative findings may simply be a limitation of our analysis. Even where the comparison students may look similar on paper, it was the PCM students who were deemed to be the most needy and hand selected by the staff familiar with them to receive the extra one-on-one services. This is an inherent dilemma in evaluation of the PCM component of Éxito because it is difficult to find a matched comparison group for these students.

The table also shows that:

- As the PCM spent more time with their client, their likelihood of being suspended increased and their likelihood of being promoted decreased. However, this is likely the result of PCMs providing more services to students with the greatest needs. When a student is suspended, their PCM will contact them to discuss the suspension.

Consequently, dosage may not be a useful variable in determining the outcomes of PCM supports.

While it is unlikely that PCM supports caused these negative outcomes, it is still the case that PCM supports, similar to last year, did not result in positive outcomes for grades and behavior over and above the after-school program. The primary source of academic support was the after-school program's homework help and throughout the year, PCM's were concerned this intervention was not adequately helping their students. PCM students signed in for homework help at a lower rate than other students averaging only 5 days of homework help.

It is more difficult to explain the PCM's lack of positive behavior outcomes. Among the PCM students we interviewed, all but one indicated that they received significant emotional support and guidance from their PCM as well as after-school program staff. Several students described ways in which their PCM or after-school staff had helped them make better decisions about their behavior with teachers and peers. Yet, at the end of the year, four of seven interviewees still had 2 or more suspensions. It may be that suspensions are not the best indicators of student behavior. Throughout the year, Éxito staff discussed their concerns that clients were being suspended for trivial issues such as uniform infractions.

However, Chapter 4 reported that it was a more challenging year for the PCMs. PCMs reported more difficulty in engaging Éxito participants in the PCM process. Among the PCM students included in this outcome analysis were 12 students who had limited contact with their PCM, receiving less than 4 hours of contact time. In addition, nine students were dismissed from PCM because of loss of interest or cooperation with their PCM and four clients refused services. Nonetheless, Éxito had the "intent to treat" these students and therefore, they are included in the outcomes analysis.

Summary

In sum, the Éxito program demonstrated positive outcomes in all areas, except behavior in year two. This is the second year in a row for demonstrated positive outcomes for attendance. However, this year, both the after-school program separately and combined with the PCM component demonstrated positive outcomes on student attendance. In addition, the after-school program also influenced academic improvements and grade promotion particularly for non-PCM students. In terms of behavior, students receiving the PCM supports were three times more likely to be suspended than a comparison group, however, this may be a by-product of the matching process rather than a result of the PCM supports. PCM students have other risk factors such as family challenges, depression, and pregnancy in addition to the early warning indicators that determined whether they would receive PCM supports. We do not have comparable data on the non-Éxito students at Edison to find an exact match. Nonetheless, impacting student behavior—as defined by suspensions--is one area in which Éxito has not demonstrated positive outcomes in either year and the program may want to consider whether there are either additional strategies PCMs should be using and/or identify other indicators of student behavior which could capture the benefits of PCM supports.

Chapter 9
Conclusions & Recommendations

Given the prevalence of high school dropout in Philadelphia and nationwide, identifying promising approaches to improving outcomes for students vulnerable to leaving school is crucial. For the second year in a row, this evaluation found evidence to suggest that Éxito is one such promising approach. The program made positive strides in Year Two, and, for the second year in a row, participation in the program was associated with positive outcomes for students. Students were more engaged in after-school activities, including project-based learning, and PCM services than they had been the previous year. The program also succeeded in cultivating positive adult and peer relationships for students, and some evidence pointed to its potential to increase motivation, persistence, and self-esteem. Ultimately, as had been true in Year One, students who participated in the Éxito program had better school attendance than their Edison classmates. In Year Two, Éxito students were also more likely than other students to pass their math and English courses and be promoted to the next grade level.

Program Strengths

In Year Two, Exito staff demonstrated a greater capacity to recruit students with EWIs and engage them in the after-school program through project-based learning and significant adult support.

- The program recruited a greater number of students with EWIs than in Year One. Two-thirds of participants had one or more EWIs.
- Changes to the after-school program, including project-based learning, and increased opportunities for adult and peer support, were well received by students and consequently, students' rates of participation were higher than in Year One. Even students with EWIs participated two times per week during the period of their enrollment.
- Project-based learning appeared to offer opportunities for students to learn "persistence," develop self-confidence and receive positive feedback in school.
- Students experienced high levels of adult support in both the after-school program and PCM activities and this was an invisible but critical component of the program in Year Two. In the context of caring relationships, students reported adults "pushed," motivated and guided them and this helped them improve their school attendance, grades and behavior.
- Participation in the after-school program was associated with a decreased likelihood of failing math and English or having poor attendance.
- As in Year One, PCM supports were associated with improved school attendance.

Program Challenges

Unlike Year One, the program experienced greater challenges with inter-departmental collaboration. Client managers also reported greater obstacles with the clients they served. An on-going challenge for the program continues to be the development of the academic

support component of the program as well as determining ways to both impact and measure the program's impact on student behavior.

- More inter-departmental tensions arose in Year Two, perhaps due to staff turnover and limited time to clarify roles and relationships at the beginning of the year. Consequently, the program did not fully realize its "collaborative advantage" in supporting students.
- The PCM component of the program may have suffered most from inter-departmental tensions. Lack of clarity regarding PCM roles, limited access to student information and delays in receiving referrals all hampered PCM's in year two.
- In addition, PCM's reported greater challenges in engaging students in PCM supports. More than half of the clients referred either refused services of lost interest in receiving services. PCM's also pondered the appropriate point for terminating services to a client.
- The academic component of the after-school program continued to need attention. While after-school students were more likely to pass math and English, it wasn't clear if students were receiving the type of academic support that would lead to proficiency.
- The program continues to struggle in documenting its impact on student behavior. While qualitative data points to ways in which the program could be altering student behavior, quantitative data has not observed positive impacts on behavior in either Year One or Year Two. In fact, PCM clients were found to have three times more suspensions than a comparison group. Rather than being a reflection on the PCM supports, however, this may be a limitation of our analysis. While PCM and comparison students look similar on paper PCM students experienced additional risk factors not captured by the available data. Behavior appears to be a challenging area for Éxito to both impact and document impact.
- PCM clients were also three times more likely to have failed English. Again, this may be a limitation of our ability to identify a truly similar comparison group. At the same time, PCM students were less likely to sign up for homework help when they attended the after-school program.
- Throughout the year, staff observed that the Éxito coordinator was carrying too much of the responsibility for the program. She resigned at the end of the school year resulting in yet another staff transition for the program at the start of Year Three. The strong relationships she had established with the students in the program will need to be carefully transitioned to the new coordinator.

Recommendations

As the Éxito program heads into its third year, these findings suggest several recommendations to further strengthen the program.

- Continue to utilize targeted, one-to-one recruitment strategies to attract students with the early warning indicators to their programs. Strong relationships with the school are critical to this effort.
- Continue to offer project-based learning in the after-school program, with more training for staff on how to incorporate more student voices.
- Continue to create opportunities for high levels of adult and peer support in the after school program.
- Consider building on the potential for the Éxito program to bring positive attention to Éxito students and thereby bolster their self-esteem and identity development.
- Integrate new staff members and clarify roles and relationships early in the year so that the collaborative advantage of the program model can be realized.
- Provide additional support to PCM in handling clients who are resistant to PCM services as well as determining appropriate termination points.
- Further develop the program's academic support component. The addition of more adult tutors as well as tutor training could be beneficial as could a greater connection with Edison teachers. In addition, the program should consider how to support students who are not attending class and do not seek academic assistance.

RFA's research will continue to follow the two cohorts that participated in the program this year, as well as the evolution of the program model. As the first cohort moves into 11th grade, future research can begin to examine Éxito's impact on both intermediate outcomes and the long-term outcome of high school graduation.

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Appendix A
Student EWIs and Demographics

	Attended At Least One After-School Session			Received PCM Services		
	All	**9th**	**10th**	**All**	**9th**	**10th**
Number of Students	**110**	**59**	**51**	**41**	**22**	**19**
Baseline Early Warning Indicators (EWIs)[36]						
Failed math	**58%** **(106)**	55% (55)	61% (51)	**68%** **(38)**	58% (19)	79% (19)
Failed English	**43%** **(106)**	44% (55)	43% (51)	**55%** **(38)**	58% (19)	53% (19)
Two or more suspensions	**21%** **(107)**	30% (56)	10% (51)	**26%** **(38)**	37% (19)	16% (19)
Attended less than 80%	**38%** **(106)**	47% (55)	27% (51)	**50%** **(38)**	68% (19)	32% (19)
No EWI	**26%** **(110)**	29% (59)	24% (51)	**15%** **(41)**	23% (22)	5% (19)
1 EWI	**26%** **(110)**	20% (59)	31% (51)	**27%** **(41)**	23% (22)	32% (19)
2 EWIs	**23%** **(110)**	19% (59)	28% (51)	**27%** **(41)**	14% (22)	42% (19)
3 EWIs	**19%** **(110)**	22% (59)	16% (51)	**22%** **(41)**	23% (22)	21% (19)
4 EWIs	**6%** **(110)**	10% (59)	2% (51)	**10%** **(41)**	18% (22)	0% (19)

[36] This table reflects the percentage of students who entered the Éxito program with EWIs based on eighth grade data, 2008-09 data and/or data from the 2009-10 quarter immediately prior to their joining the program.

	Attended At Least One After-School Session			Received PCM Services		
	All	**9th**	**10th**	**All**	**9th**	**10th**
Demographic Characteristics						
9th Grade Students	**54% (110)**	-	-	**54% (40)**	-	-
10th Grade Students	**46% (110)**	-	-	**46% (40)**	-	-
Female	**58% (107)**	54% (56)	63% (51)	**53% (38)**	53% (19)	53% (19)
Latino	**82% (107)**	86% (56)	78% (51)	**74% (38)**	74% (19)	74% (19)
African American	**16% (107)**	14% (56)	18% (51)	**26% (38)**	26% (19)	26% (19)
Caucasian	**1% (107)**	0% (56)	2% (51)	**0% (38)**	0% (19)	0% (19)
Asian	**1% (107)**	0% (56)	2% (51)	**0% (38)**	0% (19)	0% (19)
Students with Special Needs						
Repeating grade	**14% (110)**	24% (59)	2% (51)	**20% (41)**	36% (22)	0% (19)
Special education status	**19% (107)**	20% (56)	18% (51)	**24% (38)**	26% (19)	21% (19)
English Language Learner Status	**25% (107)**	27% (56)	24% (51)	**21% (38)**	26% (19)	16% (19)

Appendix B
Student End of Year EWIs

Figure B.1: End of Year EWIs 2009-10 – After School Session Students

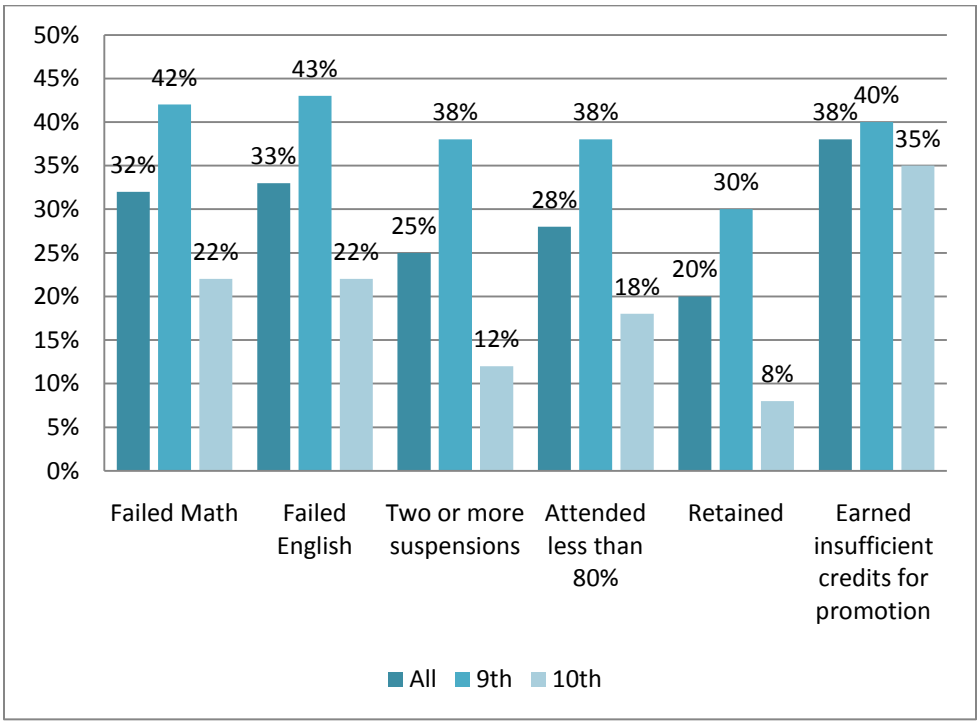
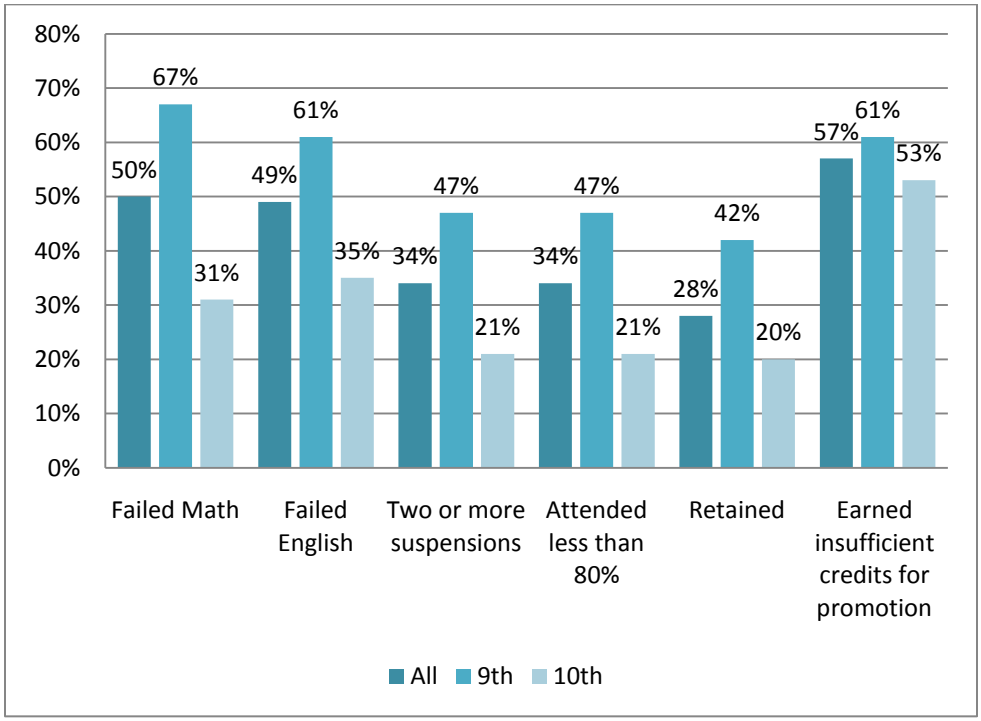


Figure B.2: End of Year EWIs 2009-10 – PCM Students



Appendix C
Comparison Group

These comparison students were selected and matched individual to each Éxito participant, based upon their grade level, gender, ethnicity, and the total number of risk factors they had previously exhibited (and where possible the students were also matched specifically on the types of risk indicators. By comparing outcomes from Éxito participants to this group of matched students, we are able to be more confident that any improvements made by Éxito students are due to their participation in the program and not due to their particular backgrounds. Table C below compares the demographic backgrounds and prior risk factors for the two groups of students and finds that they were equivalent across all categories. Data was available for 108 of the After-School participants, and 37 of the students who received PCM services.

Variable	Comparison Average	Congreso Average	Difference	P-Value
Female	57%	57%	0%	1.000
Spec. Ed.	19%	19%	0%	1.000
ESL	28%	26%	2%	.760
Grade	9.47	9.47	0.0	1.000
Hispanic	83%	82%	1%	.858
Black	16%	16%	0%	1.000
White	1%	1%	0%	1.000
Asian	0%	1%	1%	.320
Prior Math Risk	55%	57%	2%	.784
Prior English Risk	45%	43%	2%	.784
Prior Attendance Risk	38%	37%	1%	.889
Prior Suspension Risk	20%	20%	0%	.892
Total Prior Risk Factors	1.56	1.56	0.0	1.000

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