



On-Track to Success: The Third Year Evaluation of Congreso's Éxito Program

May 2012



Prepared for Congreso de Latinos Unidos

About Research for Action

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.

About Congreso de Latinos Unidos

Founded in 1977, Congreso's mission is to strengthen Latino communities through social, economic, education and health services, leadership development and advocacy. Its vision is to transform the lives of Latinos in Eastern North Philadelphia, by moving them up the economic ladder, and, ultimately, out of poverty. The agency accomplishes this by assisting clients in achieving education credentials and employment, while providing support to remove social and health barriers and emphasizing cultural identity. Congreso served more than 15,000 individuals in Fiscal Year 2011 through its education, employment, health and safety programs.

Acknowledgments

Research for Action would like to thank the staff of the Éxito program, particularly Joseph Lively, for participating in and helping to coordinate Year Three research. We would also like to thank staff at Congreso de Latinos Unidos for providing participation data and the School District of Philadelphia for allowing the research and providing student outcomes data. The authors of this report would like to acknowledge the work of their colleagues at RFA who assisted with the completion of this report, particularly Nikki Johnson and Michael Norton who were responsible for cleaning and constructing the longitudinal datafile, and Communications Director, Alison Murawski, who edited and formatted the report. Finally, we are grateful to intern, Alison Marcus, for her assistance with data collection and analysis in the early phase of the research.

**On-Track to Success:
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

Introduction.....1

Program Implementation 2

 Program Development 3

 Consistent Strengths 5

Ongoing Challenges 8

Program Impact in Year Three15

 Éxito’s After-School Program15

 Case Management Services (Students with PCM staff) 20

Conclusion21

Recommendations 22

Research Questions for Year Four 23

Appendix A: Qualitative Methodology 24

Appendix B: Quantitative Methodology 25

CONGRESO ÉXITO PROGRAM

Éxito, a Spanish word meaning “success,” is an out-of-school-time (OST) program designed to address the needs of 9th and 10th graders who display early warning indicators (EWIs) for dropping out of high school. Since its inception in 2008, Research for Action has followed the development of the program, tracking the outcomes of Éxito’s first two cohorts of students.

This report is the third in a series of reports on the Éxito program. RFA’s longitudinal research has followed the first two cohorts of students in the program, which included all students who entered 9th grade in 2008 (Cohort 1) or 2009 (Cohort 2) and participated in Éxito at any point during their freshmen and/or sophomore years. In previous years, both cohorts were active participants in the program. In Year Three, Cohort 1 was no longer eligible to participate while Cohort 2 was in its last year of involvement.

Cohort 1: First-time 9th grade students in 2008-09

- Participated in 2008-09 and/or 2009-10¹
- Most were juniors in 2010-11

Cohort 2: First time 9th grade students in 2009-10

- Participated in 2009-10 and/or 2010-11
- Most were sophomores in 2010-11

RFA also continued to track the program’s strengths and challenges in Year Three. The table below outlines the qualitative and quantitative data gathered during Year Three and analyzed for this report. For more detail on methodology, see the Appendices.

DATA SOURCES

Interviews and focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Éxito staff, beginning and end of year (n=10)• 10th and 11th grade students (n=13)• School staff (n=2)• Tutors (n=1)
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students (n=41)• Tutors (n=5)
Program observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on Homework Help sessions (n=8)
Éxito participation data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After-School attendance data• Primary Client Manager (PCM™) service data
Participant characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student grades, attendance and behavior prior to entering the program
Participant outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student grades, attendance and suspensions as of 2010-11• Student grade retention and dropout rates

¹ A handful also participated in 2010-11.



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Introduction

The Éxito program, sponsored by Congreso de Latinos Unidos, has partnered with Edison High School since 2008-09 with the goal of reducing the school's high dropout rate. The program has received support from a variety of funders in its three-year history, including Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS), The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Philadelphia Youth Network, the United Way of SEPA, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and the Comcast Corporation.

The Éxito model has three distinguishing characteristics:

- 1) The program intentionally recruits 9th and 10th grade students who have exhibited one or more of the "Early Warning Indicators" for dropping out of school.

Research-Based EWIs for High School Dropout²

- Failing English or math
 - Attending school less than 80% of the time
 - Acquiring two or more suspensions
-

- 2) The program is run by Congreso, a neighborhood-based multi-service organization, but takes place at Edison High School. Edison is one of the lowest performing high schools in Philadelphia. In 2011, more than 80% of students were reported as chronically truant and only 46% of students were on-track to graduation.³ The model requires that Congreso staff work closely with school administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors to identify participants and to run the after-school program on school grounds.

² Neild, R. & Balfanz, R. (2006). Unfulfilled Promise. Project U-Turn, Philadelphia Youth Network: Philadelphia.

³ School District of Philadelphia Annual School Report, 2011

- 3) In addition to the after-school program, which offers project-based learning activities in conjunction with Homework Help, Éxito employs Primary Client Managers (PCM™) who provide case management supports to students with higher needs.

Since the program's inception in 2008, Research for Action (RFA) has followed its development, tracking the outcomes of Éxito's first two cohorts of students. In previous years, the first two cohorts were active participants in the program. In Year Three, Cohort 1 was no longer eligible, as juniors, to participate while Cohort 2 students, as sophomores, were still eligible to participate. In this report, we examine student outcomes in Year Three for all students who entered 9th grade in 2008 (Cohort 1) or 2009 (Cohort 2) and participated in Éxito at any point during their freshmen and/or sophomore years.

Research Methods

RFA conducted a mixed methods study in Year Three, including an implementation study and a student outcomes study. In Year Three, RFA's program implementation study targeted two components of the model that were among the least developed and most challenging in the previous two years:

- Academic support
- Roles for upperclassmen

In addition, the implementation research continued to follow more general indicators of program development:

- Staff and student perceptions of the program's strengths and challenges in Year Three
- Participant characteristics, specifically EWIs
- Program participation

The outcomes analysis examined several variables:

- Dropout/near-dropouts
- Course passage
- School attendance
- Credits earned
- Suspensions

Summary of Findings

Consistent Strengths

Éxito has built on its strengths since Year One:

- As intended, participants have included a significant number of students with EWIs – students at higher risk for dropout.

- The program has successfully attracted and retained students by offering project-based learning activities that engage students' interests, and providing the support of positive adult-student and student-student relationships.
- An ongoing relationship with Edison High School administrators and staff has benefited the program.

Ongoing Challenges

Despite improvements, a number of challenges have continued from year to year:

- The collaboration between after-school and PCM staff has continued to be challenged by gaps in communication and role confusion.
- Efforts to provide students with high-quality Homework Help are challenged in part because after-school is a difficult time of day to engage students to complete schoolwork. Congreso made strides in strengthening this component of the program in Year Three; however, the level of participation in Homework Help continued to be low.
- Overall participation rates declined in Year Three as compared to Year Two, while at the same time, a group of upperclassmen wished for continued involvement in the program.
- Staff turnover has continued to occur, although the program successfully weathered the transition to a new program director in Year Three.

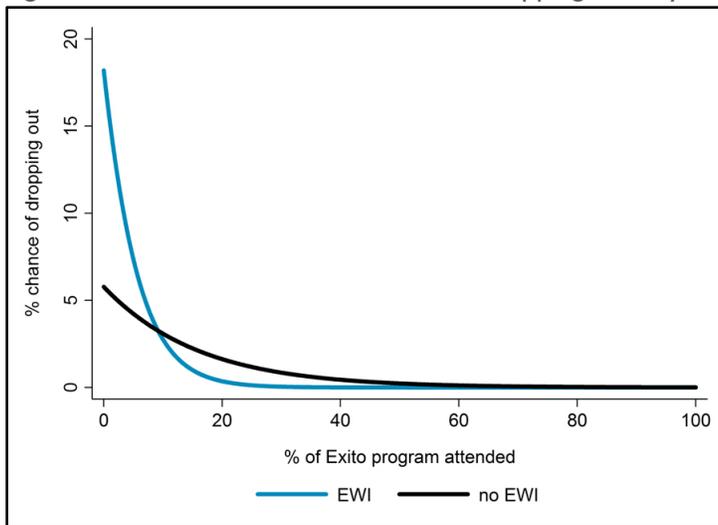
Outcomes

Our quantitative models were constructed to determine the effect of OST attendance for students with EWIs while accounting for other student-level demographics. Outcomes of interest included student dropout, school attendance, failing math, failing English, being on credit level, and having two or more suspensions.

Overall, Éxito is having its desired impact on students, particularly those who enter the program with a prior EWI. Specifically, we found that:

- Attending the program at least 15% of the time reduced the likelihood that students would drop out of high school (see Figure 1).

Figure I. Effect of Éxito Attendance on Dropping Out, by EWI



- Zero “% of Éxito program attended” represents non- Éxito students.
- Non- Éxito students with an EWI have a 18% chance of dropping out.
- At 15% of Éxito attendance, Éxito students with an EWI only have a 1% of dropping out.

- Although the relationships are less certain, it also appears that high levels of Éxito attendance reduced the likelihood that students would fail English or math, and/or would be off-track with credits needed to graduate.
- The model for two or more suspensions finds the opposite relationship, predicting that, as Éxito attendance increases, students with a previous EWI become *more likely* to be suspended. This is a counterintuitive finding for which we propose several potential explanations (see full report).

Recommendations

The findings from this research suggest several recommendations for the Éxito program:

Attendance targets: Éxito staff should make strong efforts to obtain a 15% attendance rate in the after school program. Our analysis predicts that this is a critical threshold for dropout prevention.

Continued refinement of Homework Help: While high levels of Éxito participation appear to have some benefit for students in terms of course passage, participation in Homework Help activities remains low. Éxito should continue to strengthen its Homework Help activities, including targeting students in danger of failing and incentivizing their participation in Homework Help. In addition, volunteers may need additional training to enable them to be effective tutors for Éxito students, and Éxito staff should continue to foster communication with Edison teachers.

Expanding project-based learning: Given the strong relationship between participation in the OST program and school outcomes, future program design should attempt to maximize attendance. The overwhelming popularity of the project-based learning days could be leveraged to increase OST attendance.

Addressing collaboration challenges between PCM staff and after-school program staff: For two consecutive years, in spite of staff turnover, PCM and after-school program staff have found it challenging to collaborate with each other. Staff members work with the same groups of students, and

role confusions and communication gaps contribute to these collaboration challenges. It is important that these on-the-ground staff receive support in resolving these obstacles from higher level managers.

Focus on staff retention: A strength of the *Éxito* program is the relationship between staff and students. Given the context of high staff turnover in OST programs in general, retention of *Éxito* staff would strengthen this key element of the program.

Research Questions for Year Four

RFA will continue its study of *Éxito* in Year Four following the outcomes of Cohort 1 and 2. The research will continue to examine the same outcomes, but will focus on whether the benefits of participation in *Éxito* continue even after students are no longer participating in the program. For Cohort 1, we will examine whether students participating in the *Éxito* program are more likely to graduate than the comparison group. In addition, the research will take a closer look at the puzzling findings regarding program suspensions by examining suspensions in monthly intervals and in reference to students' point of entry to the program.



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Introduction

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⁴ Neild, R. & Balfanz, R. (2006). Unfulfilled Promise. Project U-Turn, Philadelphia Youth Network: Philadelphia.

⁵ School District of Philadelphia Annual School Report, 2011

- 3) In addition to the after-school program, which offers project-based learning activities in conjunction with Homework Help, Éxito employs Primary Client Managers (PCMs) who provide case management supports to students with higher needs.

The Éxito program is pioneering; few community-based strategies for addressing the dropout problem have been documented.

Research for Action (RFA) has followed the development of the program since its inception and has documented student outcomes for the first two cohorts to enter the program in 2008 and 2009 respectively. RFA has consistently found promising outcomes for Éxito students in terms of their attendance and academic outcomes. This year's report examines these outcomes for the 2010-2011 school year and also looks at whether Éxito students were more likely to stay in school and be on-track to graduation. The report has two components:

- 1) Program Implementation: An overview of program development over the three years since its inception.
- 2) Program Impact: An examination of student academic and behavioral outcomes as of the end of the 2010-11 school year for the first two cohorts of program participants.

Program Implementation

In Year Three, RFA's program implementation study targeted two components of the model that were among the least developed and most challenging in the previous two years:

- Academic support
- Roles for upperclassmen

In addition, the implementation research continued to follow more general indicators of program development:

- Staff and student perceptions of the program's strengths and challenges in Year Three
- Participant characteristics, specifically EWIs
- Program participation

This section provides an overview of program development across the three years of the evaluation, with a more in-depth look at the areas targeted by the research in Year Three. The goal of the implementation research was to provide ongoing formative feedback to inform the development of program components during Year Three and the planning for Year Four. These implementation findings provide context for the discussion of student outcomes and program impact that follow. More detailed descriptions of program implementation issues are available in RFA's Year One and Year Two reports on Éxito.⁶

⁶ Hartmann, T., Good, D., Edmunds, K. (2010). On-Track to Success: The Second Year Evaluation of Congreso's Éxito Program; Hartmann, T., Good, D., Edmunds, K., Evans, S., Allard, E. (2009). Getting On-Track: Lessons from Éxito's First Year.

Program Development

The Éxito program model has evolved over time. The primary program components of the Éxito program were constant across the three years. However, the after-school program model changed slightly each year. Table 1 illustrates how Éxito expanded project-based learning activities in Year Two, and then scaled these back in Year Three, when staff added programming focused on socio-emotional themes and college preparation. Meanwhile, Congreso reduced the resources dedicated to its Homework Help component in Year Two, after finding these were not sufficiently engaging in the first year, and then worked to increase the structure and number of volunteer tutors in Year Three.

Table I. Program Components by Year

Component	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Rationale for Change
Transition from school day	None	Gathering/ socializing time	Gathering/ socializing time	To better differentiate the program from the school day.
After-School Enrichment activities	<p>Enrichment activities two days/week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurship • Dance • Art 	<p>Project-based learning groups four days/week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurship • Culinary arts • Latin percussion • Graphic arts • Storytelling • Robotics 	<p>Project-based learning groups two days/week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurship • Culinary arts • Latin percussion • Graphic arts • Theater <p>Gender-separate groups one day/week</p> <p>College and career visits one day/week</p>	<p>Project-based learning was added to increase program engagement.</p> <p>Project-based learning was cut back in Year Three to allow for other career-focused and socio-emotional activities.</p> <p>Reduction in PBL also reduced the cost of the program by reducing hours of instruction. The program lost 60% of its DHS funding in December 2011.</p>
After-School Homework Help	Mandatory tutoring in Math & English two days/week for the entire session, provided by paid Edison teachers	Optional Homework Help supported by few Éxito staff	Optional Homework Help supported by Éxito staff and volunteer tutors	<p>Homework Help was made optional because of low student engagement when it was mandatory.</p> <p>Tutors were recruited in Year Three to provide more individual support.</p>
Socio-emotional supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management services for a subset of students • Informal supports from after-school staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management services for a subset of students • Informal supports from after-school staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management services for a subset of students • Informal supports from after-school staff 	Gender-separate groups and college and career visits were added in Year Three to offer more alternative activities to students.

Consistent Strengths

RFA has reported on several consistent strengths of the *Éxito* program over the three years of the program. These include:

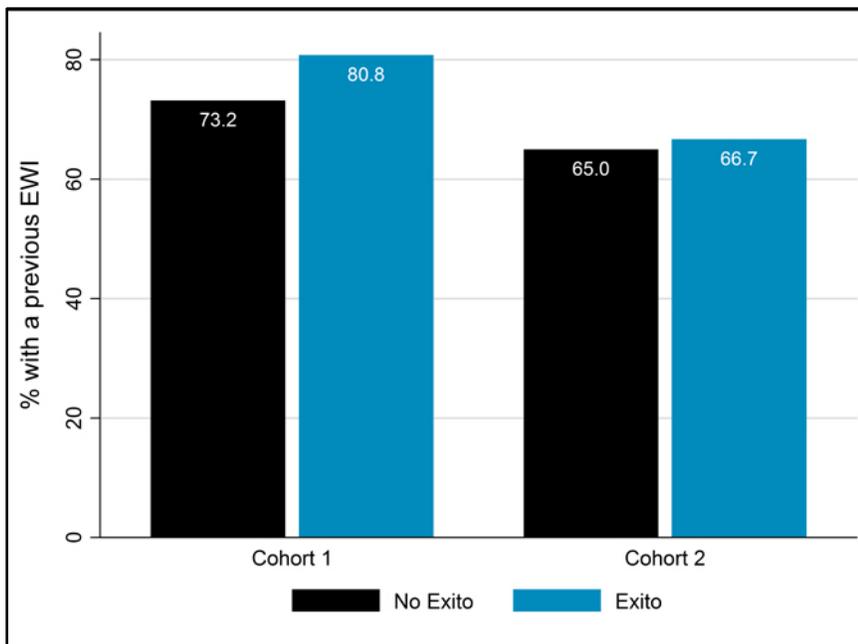
- Recruiting and serving students with EWIs;
- Meeting program enrollment goals;
- Fostering positive adult-student and peer relationships;
- Developing a viable partnership with Edison;
- Engaging students in project-based-learning activities; and
- Providing case management services to a subset of students.

These six strengths are described in more detail below. In most cases, the findings reported here have been consistently true of the *Éxito* program since it began. In a few cases, we report that the program has seen notable improvements in one of these areas.

Strength 1. *Éxito* has consistently served its target population: students with EWIs.

As Figure 1 shows, the vast majority of program participants in Cohorts 1 and 2 displayed the EWIs for dropping out of school when they entered the program. *Éxito* participants were more likely to have EWIs than the comparison group of other Edison students who had entered 9th grade in the same year. Rates of EWIs were lower in Cohort 2 than in Cohort 1—for both *Éxito* participants and the comparison group.

Figure 1. EWIs by cohort and *Éxito* Participation



Strength 2. Éxito exceeded its after-school program enrollment goal each year.

Table 2 compares the number of program participants each year with the enrollment goal determined in conjunction with program funders. In all three years, the program met its enrollment goals and was able to provide case management services for between 33-45% of after-school participants.⁷

Table 2. After-School and PCM™ Enrollment

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Enrollment goal	140	129	124
Enrolled participants	181	134	151
Attended at least one after-school session	174	121	132
Received PCM™ services	58	53	60
PCM™ services only (no after-school services)	7	13	19

Strength 3. Éxito maintained strong relationships within Edison High School.

Each year, Congreso has worked to foster collegial relationships with Edison administrators and staff and received the following supports from the school:

- 1) Space to run the after-school program including the school's cafeteria and multiple classrooms, as well as use of the school's auditorium and library when necessary;
- 2) Office space in the Student Success Center for staff to use during the school day;
- 3) Referrals from guidance counselors for students who could benefit from the program;
- 4) Support from the Student Success Center in navigating school systems; and
- 5) Support from the school in promoting the program among students and teachers.

After some initial challenges in Year One, after-school program staff and PCM staff reported a strong relationship with Edison on multiple levels, including administration, guidance counselors and teachers. While Éxito's relationship with the principal was positive from the beginning, relationships with guidance counselors and teachers were slower to develop. However, in Year Two, after-school program staff and PCM staff reported that their relationships with counselors improved. In Year Three, Éxito's new program coordinator developed more connections with Edison teachers. For example, one teacher reported asking the program coordinator to provide support in her classroom with two male Éxito students who were frequently disruptive. However, this same teacher expressed that Éxito's contact with teachers could still be improved:

⁷ The case management component of the program was able to serve about 15 students/case manager at any given time but did not set overall targets for students served because students may need supports for varying amounts of time.

We [teachers] are all aware of the program; we're all aware that it's there to help kids. But I don't think we're aware of everything that they do for the kids... It's a nice little secret... [Éxito should] actually have a meeting with all of the teachers. And not just where they get introduced, but tell us about the program.

However, relationships with teachers remained a challenge. This issue will be discussed in more detail later in the report. In Year Three, Éxito staff worked to develop a relationship with Edison's new principal. The principal thought highly of Éxito and endeavored, even more than the previous administrator, to integrate Éxito into the life of the school.

Strength 4. Trusting staff-student relationships created a supportive and welcoming climate in the after-school program.

In previous years, RFA's qualitative research found Éxito to offer a supportive and welcoming program climate, which was characterized by positive staff-youth relationships and positive peer relationships.⁸ This climate was sustained despite program staff changes in Year Three. It was not uncommon to observe students hugging staff or having one-to-one conversations with staff about personal issues. There was consensus in student focus groups that Éxito staff were caring and supportive. Comments from two students below were representative of what we heard in focus groups:

They make us feel like we are a huge family... (10th grade student)

Nataly [Éxito's assistant director] is like our mom...Joseph [Éxito's director] is like our big brother... (10th grade student)

In addition, Éxito staff and students in both focus groups reported that students had positive relationships with project instructors, particularly the theater and music instructor. As one student commented, *"I like the music program, especially the teacher. He's a really good teacher. And...I'm learning a lot from there."*

Although students and PCM staff reported occasional disruptive student behavior, students felt peer relationships were better during Éxito than during the school day. They described enjoying time spent with peers in the program and reported making new friends or coming with friends to the program. As one staff member observed:

We have a lot of really good friends, a lot of good close groups. I think there also are some loners, but in that case I'll just tell a tutor or a volunteer to go up, talk to them, see how their day was.

Strength 5. Project-based learning activities attracted students to the after-school program.

As in Year Two, Year Three interviews revealed that project-based learning activities were a primary draw for students, even though projects had been reduced from four to two days per week. Almost 90% of our focus group students reported that Tuesdays and Thursdays were their favorite days of the program – the days on which projects took place. Students reported that the projects tapped into their

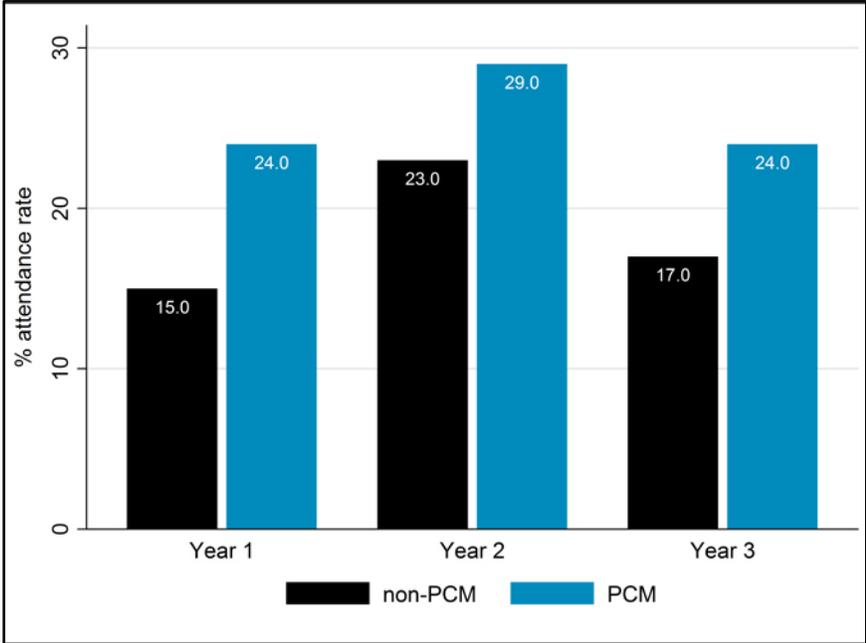
⁸ Such a relationships are characteristic of successful youth development programs. See, for example: Arbreton, A. J. A., Bradshaw, M., Metz, R., & Sheldon, J. P. S. (2008). *More Time for Teens: Understanding Teen Participation - Frequency, Duration, Intensity - in Boys & Girls Clubs*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures; 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.

interests and helped them think about future careers. As one 10th grade student commented, “I picked culinary because I like to cook and I wanna work in a restaurant.” Another stated, “I picked theatre because I wanna be an actor and director when I grow up.” The music and theater projects received the most praise from staff and students in Year Three.

Strength 6. Case Management supports were associated with higher rates of participation in the after-school program.

Case management services were not the focus of our research in Year Three. However, this component of the program emerged as a strength in each of the two previous years. Students were referred to case management based on recommendations by after-school program staff as well as school guidance counselors. While there was some lack of clarity in the referral process and collaboration between after-school program staff and PCM staff (an issue that will be discussed in more detail later), in each year, students’ relationships with their PCM staff were associated with higher engagement in the after-school program. Figure 2 shows that, as in Years One and Two, PCMTM-assigned students attended the after-school program more frequently than those who did not have a PCM staff member assigned to them. (Figure 2 also displays Year Three’s decrease in attendance rates, a finding that is discussed in more detail in the challenges section).

Figure 2. After-School Attendance for PCM and Non-PCM Students



Ongoing Challenges

Éxito has also experienced several persistent challenges in program implementation that have existed throughout its operation, and it has also encountered several new challenges in Year Three. Some of

these challenges are not unusual for programs serving high school students but may be magnified because Éxito targets students with EWIs.⁹

Key areas in which Congreso experienced challenges included:

- Implementing Homework Help
- Challenging collaboration between PCM staff and after-school staff
- Staff turnover
- Declining participation rates
- Ambiguous role for upperclassman

Each is discussed in more detail below.

Challenge 1. Providing students with academic supports continued to be the most challenging component of the program, even as these supports improved in Year Three.

One of Éxito's goals is to improve students' grades in core subjects, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will graduate from high school. RFA's outcomes analysis in Year Two¹⁰ suggested that the Éxito after-school program may play a role in boosting students' academic performance. While the project-based learning and PCM™ components of the program could contribute to improved academic performance, the Homework Help component of the Éxito program has the most direct link to academic outcomes. This component of the after-school program has been difficult to implement in all three years because it is difficult to engage students in academic work after-school. This quote from an Éxito staff member illustrates the tension that exists between offering Homework Help and keeping students engaged:

When you put more structure in tutoring you start losing engagement. The kids say, "Eh, I just finished school. I got to go to tutoring class now?" . . . So sometimes you need to balance engagement with the academic piece and that is very challenging.

To provide Homework Help support in the after-school setting, then, supports needed to be perceived as engaging. In both Year One and Year Two, students reported that they were interested in individual support that often wasn't available in their classrooms. In addition, some complained that the space for Homework Help in Year Two, the cafeteria, was often too noisy to concentrate. In Year Three, program staff made important strides toward strengthening the Homework Help to address these concerns. Table 3 illustrates changes to the Homework Help component over the three years of the program.

⁹ See, for example: 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; 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.

¹⁰ Hartmann, T., Good, D., Edmunds, K. (2011). On-Track to Success; The Second Year Evaluation of Congreso's Exito Program. Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action.

Table 3. Changes in Homework Help over Time

Homework Help	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Rationale for Change
How often was it offered and for whom?	Twice a week for all students, alternating with enrichment activities on the other two days	Every day/optional	Every day/optional	In Year One, student engagement was more difficult on the two days/week that students were required to spend in tutoring classes because classes were taught by Edison teachers and perceived as "too much like school."
Was it in the program design for the year?	Yes	No, but re-introduced in February	Yes	In Years Two and Three, students attended PBL classes every day, and Homework Help was intended only for those who needed or wanted it.
When was it offered?	For the full after-school period	During snack time and longer if needed	After snack time, concurrent with project groups	Homework Help was eliminated when project-based learning was introduced in Year Two. However, partly in response to PCM staff concerns that students' academic needs were not being met, Éxito hired a tutor coordinator and added time for Homework Help midway through that year. Staff found that students were resistant to doing homework during snack, which was important time for socializing and winding down from the school day.
How was it staffed?	Edison teachers	Éxito Staff including an academic coordinator and peer tutors	Éxito staff, academic coordinator and volunteer adult tutors	Éxito expanded the number of adults available to provide more individual support.

These improvements in Year Three contributed to positive student-adult relationships. As one student said, “They try to help you with everything they can. And if you need help with the homework or something, they help you.” In addition, moving Homework Help from the cafeteria to a classroom resulted in students being more productive with their time. RFA’s observations of the program reinforced what we heard in interviews with students and program staff—that having a Homework Help classroom provided a smaller and quieter environment with fewer distractions than in the cafeteria. Access to laptops and iPads, as well as the assistance of bilingual staff, were also important strengths of the Homework Help component.

In spite of the improvements, challenges remained, the most important of which were:

- **Inconsistent volunteers:** Staff devoted considerable time to recruiting volunteers and experienced some success, but volunteer tutors varied in their consistency. Staff reported that volunteers did not always show up, or came inconsistently. This made it hard to plan, and meant that there was sometimes insufficient help available to students in the Homework Help room.
- **Variation in the quality of volunteer support:** Additionally, volunteers differed in their approach and the quality of the help they offered. They received a cursory orientation but no significant training.
- **Decreasing student participation:** Table 4 shows that Homework Help participation declined after Year One, when tutoring was required for all participants twice per week. While required tutoring was not the optimal approach--student engagement was low in Year One and RFA's analysis of student outcomes did not find a statistically significant relationship between overall program attendance and course passage--increasing participation in Homework Help should be a goal for *Éxito*. Year Three's end of year participation data showed that while over 50% of student took advantage of Homework Help at some point throughout the year, they attended an average of 2-3 sessions, suggesting that students did not regularly utilize *Éxito*'s homework supports. Like participation in the after-school program, students in PCM™ were more likely to take advantage of Homework Help. At the same time, a significant number of *Éxito* participants in Year Two (43%) and Year Three (35%) still ended the school year with failing grades in Math or English, and the combined Math and English grade of participants was between 67-69%, or a "D," in Year Two and Year Three.

The process for getting a student into the Homework Help room relied heavily on students’ self-motivation. As students gathered in the cafeteria after school for socializing and snack, *Éxito* staff would recruit for Homework Help, asking if anyone had homework they needed assistance with, and occasionally targeted students whom they knew had a school project coming up. Occasionally students would request help on their own. Many times, however, students resisted going to Homework Help—because they didn’t have homework, wanted to do it at home, and/or wanted to go to their project group instead. *Éxito* considered conducting report card conferences with participants to determine which students were in danger of failing and to incentivize their involvement in Homework Help. This is a promising strategy that should be explored as the program continues.

Table 4. Percent of Students using Homework Help and Rate, by PCM™

		Year One	Year Two	Year Three
% receiving Homework Help	PCM	88%	85%	68%
	Non-PCM	73%	79%	53%
Average sessions attended	PCM	15.8	4.7	2.6
	Non-PCM	9	4.6	2

- Relationships with teachers:** In Year Two and Year Three, Éxito staff expressed the belief that a stronger relationship with Edison teachers could improve Homework Help because teachers would know which students to target and could brief Éxito staff on what the students are doing in their classes. There was some evidence to suggest that Year Three saw more contact with teachers, but we, again, heard that there is room for improvement. As one Edison teacher explained, “We’re all aware of the program. We’re all aware that it’s there to help kids. But I don’t think we’re aware of everything that they do for the kids.”

Challenge 2. Collaboration between the case management and after-school staff was inconsistent in Year Two and Year Three.

Collaboration between after-school program staff and the case managers has been essential to the Éxito model. Yet in Years Two and Three challenges emerged regarding (1) boundaries between roles and (2) communication. These challenges remained even after staff transitions, suggesting that these conflicts may be rooted in structures, not in personality conflicts.

- Boundaries between the roles and responsibilities of the two components:** There were disagreements, at times, over what should be done to help a client, and the role of each staff member in addressing a client's needs. Specifically, there was confusion in terms of contacting parents, making referrals, and giving advice or counseling support. Staff on both sides conducted these activities and sometimes disagreed in their approach.
- Communication—sharing information about individual students and making referrals:** After-school staff and PCM staff had different sources of information about the students and neither group felt that the other was as forthcoming with this information as they would have liked. PCM staff in particular were concerned about breaking student or family confidentiality agreements. Even though monthly meetings were created to facilitate communication, neither the after-school staff nor the PCM staff found this time useful. In addition, both groups reported delays in the process of referring after-school participants for PCM™ services, but neither was certain what was causing these delays. PCM™ caseloads were often not full as they awaited referrals from after-school staff; other times after-school staff felt an urgent need for a student to have a case manager and perceived delays in the PCM staff picking up the case.

Challenge 3. Staff turnover continued to be a concern.

The program experienced staff turnover for the second year in a row, replacing its program coordinator and one of two case workers at the end of Year Two, as well as its academic coordinator, mid-way through Year Three. Large scale staff transitions, while not unusual, are concerning because student-staff relationships are an important part of the *Éxito* intervention. Staff reported that the new coordinator was able to facilitate a fast start-up to the program – an issue that had challenged the program in previous years – and was able to maintain and deepen the positive relationship with the school.

Challenge 4. Program participation rates were lower in Year Three.

Research on after-school program participation for high school students has consistently documented the challenges of maintaining consistent program attendance.¹¹ High school students have the autonomy to do a number of activities after school, and programs must allow flexibility in attendance policies to maintain connections with high school students.¹² For a program like *Éxito*, which seeks to serve students who may already be disengaging from school, ensuring consistent program attendance could be even more difficult.

Nonetheless, as Table 5 indicates, in Year Two, almost one third of students attended the program more than 50% of the time, and students averaged 25% of program days, or 32 days attendance. However, program participation dropped in Year Three: Only 16% of students were attending at least half the time, and students averaged 19% of program days or 21 days.

Table 5. Program Participation by Year

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Average % of program days attended (average days)	16% 23 days	25% 32 days	19% 21 days
% of students who attended at least 50% of the time	17%	28%	16%

One explanation for the drop in program attendance may be the reduction in the number of days per week that project-based learning was offered. In our focus groups from Year Two and Three, the majority of students indicated that project-based learning was a primary draw to the program.

¹¹ 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*. Public/Private Ventures.

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.

Walker, K. E. & Arbreton, A. J. A. (2001).

¹² To account for students entering the program in the middle of the school year, in this study we calculate “*Éxito* attendance rate” as the ratio of number of days attended to the number of possible days attended. Beyond normalizing the dosage across students within years, it also enables us to make cross-year comparisons.

Challenge 5. Students and some staff believed the program design should change to include upperclassmen.

Éxito was designed to support 9th and 10th grade students. In its third year, Éxito had to wrestle with the question of whether to continue to involve prior participants who are now juniors or seniors. Staff were conflicted about this question. While some believed that the program could not serve everyone and should maintain its focus on students transitioning to high school, others questioned this approach and wanted older students to participate.

In Year Three, the program created a somewhat ambiguous role for 11th and 12th graders that was not tracked in participation data. Only a few 11th graders show up in the attendance data, but as of November, we learned from staff that 10 juniors and seniors were attending the program, and at the end of the year, staff reported that at least 17 upperclassmen were in the program. Éxito staff referred to the 11th and 12th graders as “mentors.” They were expected to take a leadership role, and were also given more freedom to come and go as they wanted. Upperclassmen “mentors” participated in the following ways:

- Provided Homework Help and/or help with, as one mentor put it, “school problems, friend problems, that kind of stuff, ‘cause I have a lot of experience with that. So I can tell ‘em what to do, what not to do.”
- Received tutoring help, especially with senior projects and SAT preparation.
- Helped in project-based learning classrooms, often projects in which they had participated in previous years.
- Attended college and enrichment field trips.
- Participated in an Éxito-sponsored mock trial activity on Fridays (this was true for at least one upperclassman).

From students’ perspectives, it was important that the program have a role for upperclassmen. In focus groups, 10th graders said they hoped to be involved the following year. All five 11th graders who we interviewed—all of whom had participated in 9th and 10th grades—were interested in continuing to have contact with Éxito because they valued the support they received from staff, enjoyed their project-based activity in previous years or felt a general commitment to the program. In addition, 11th graders continued to need academic and other supports. Three of the five 11th grade interviewees stated that their course work was much harder in 11th grade. Finally, the upperclassmen were beginning to think about their postsecondary plans and needed support gathering and interpreting information about the options available to them.

Program Impact in Year Three

RFA's outcome study examined whether a student who participated in the *Éxito* program was more likely to see improvement on six outcomes, while accounting for demographic variables that the literature suggests influence student success.¹³ In particular, we focused on the *Éxito* program's effect on students entering with at least one EWI – a group with an increased risk of dropout. To understand the relationship between participation on the *Éxito* program and outcomes, RFA compared *Éxito* participants in Cohorts 1 and 2 with all other Edison High School students entering ninth grade in the same year.¹⁴ The six outcomes of interest are:¹⁵

- Dropout;
- School attendance;
- Failing English;
- Failing math;
- On credit level;
- Two or more suspensions.

In addition to our school-wide analysis, we examined similar outcomes for a sub-set of students receiving case management services from a PCM staff member. As relatively few students received intensive case management, the comparison group for these analyses was all students participating in the *Éxito* program. The following graphics are visual representations of the findings from our quantitative models. Appendix B provides our methodology for estimating the models, generating the simulations for the graphics, and the results of our quantitative analyses.

Éxito's After-School Program

Outcome I. As students' *Éxito* attendance increased, their likelihood of dropping out of high school decreased.

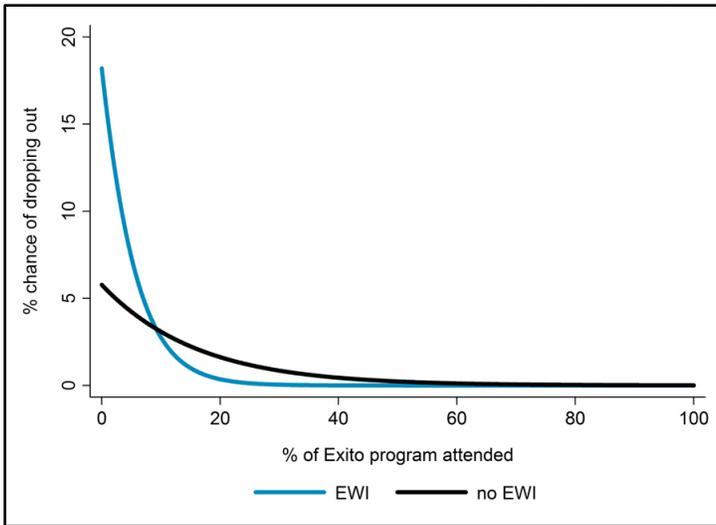
This analysis adopts the definition of student dropout from Nield and Balfanz, which includes students who meet the School District of Philadelphia's dropout designation and students whose attendance rate fell below 50%, referred to as "near-dropouts." For this outcome, non- *Éxito* students with a previous EWI are at an increased risk of dropping out, an effect that also exists for students who infrequently attend the program. However, as *Éxito* attendance increases this risk declines and the relationship eventually reverses: Once participation passes the 15% threshold, the benefits of the after-school program take hold and this group becomes *less likely* to dropout. Figure 3 illustrates this relationship for students with and without an EWI.

¹³ These variables, their definitions, and impacts on the six outcomes can be found in Appendix B.

¹⁴ Initially we assumed the need to create a matched comparison group for our statistical models. After using two matching strategies, we found no substantive difference from analyses using the full population. A further discussion of this and other technical issues can be found in Appendix B.

¹⁵ Our specifications for all dependent and independent variables are also found in Appendix B.

Figure 3. Effect of Éxito Attendance on Dropping Out, by EWI



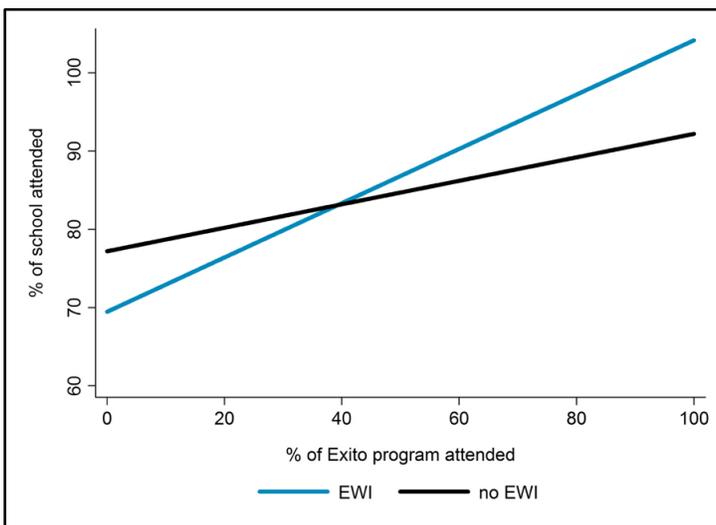
- Zero “% of Éxito program attended” represents non- Éxito students.
- Non- Éxito students with an EWI have a 18% chance of dropping out.
- At 15% of Éxito attendance, Éxito students with an EWI only have a 1% of dropping out.

As shown in Figure 3, for Edison students not attending the after-school program, the risk of dropping-out was higher for those with an EWI. Yet as participation in the program increases, the probability of dropping out is reduced, and students with EWIs eventually become indistinguishable from their non-EWI peers.

Outcome 2. As students’ Éxito program attendance increases, so does their school attendance.

Figure 4 shows the relationship between Éxito participation and school attendance, again for students with and without an EWI. While having an EWI at Edison decreases school attendance, when Éxito attendance is above 34% for EWI students, this relationship reverses and becomes positive.

Figure 4. Effect of Éxito Attendance on School Attendance, by EWI



- Zero “% of Éxito program attended” represents non- Éxito students.
- Non- Éxito students with an EWI have are predicted to attend school 69% of the time.
- At 34% of Éxito attendance, Éxito students with an EWI are predicted to attend school 81% of the time.

Outcome 3. The effect of Éxito participation dampens the negative influence of having an EWI on passing English and Math.

Figures 5 and 6 show the combined effect of Éxito attendance and having a previous EWI on the likelihood that a student would fail English or Math, respectively. Whereas Figures 3 and 4 contrast

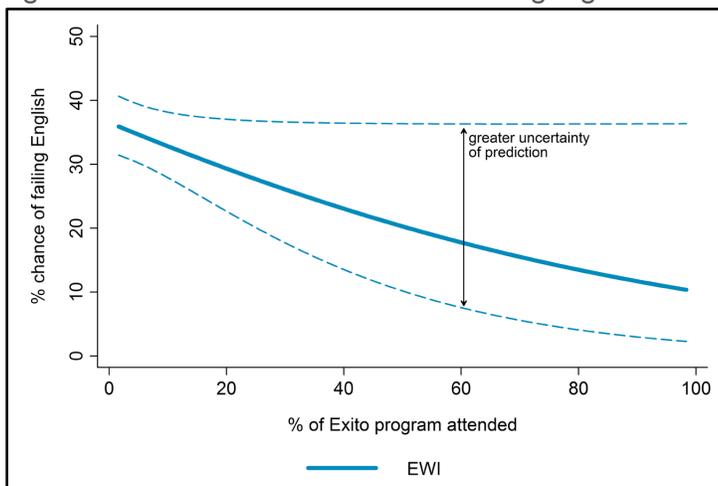
EWI students with non-EWI students, these figures only show the effect for students with EWIs but include the “range of uncertainty” with dashed lines.¹⁶

Figure 5 shows that for Edison students with an EWI were at a statistically significant increased risk of failing English. However, as Éxito attendance increased, the negative effect of having an EWI on failing English diminished. The probability of failing English for EWI students was no longer statistically significant when they attended Éxito more than 45% of the time. In other words, as Éxito attendance increased past 45%, ability to accurately predict that the student will fail English is diminished.

How to read Figures 5-7

In Figures 5-7, the solid line represents students with an EWI. Our modeling suggests that students with an EWI who do not attend Éxito, or attend infrequently, are more likely to fail English or math, or are less likely to be “on course level.” However, as attendance increases, our ability to predict whether students will fail English/math or be on course level becomes less certain. As seen in our figures, the “range of uncertainty” of course failure, represented by the dashed lines, gets wider as students attend more Éxito programming.

Figure 5. Effect of Éxito Attendance on Failing English for Students with an EWI

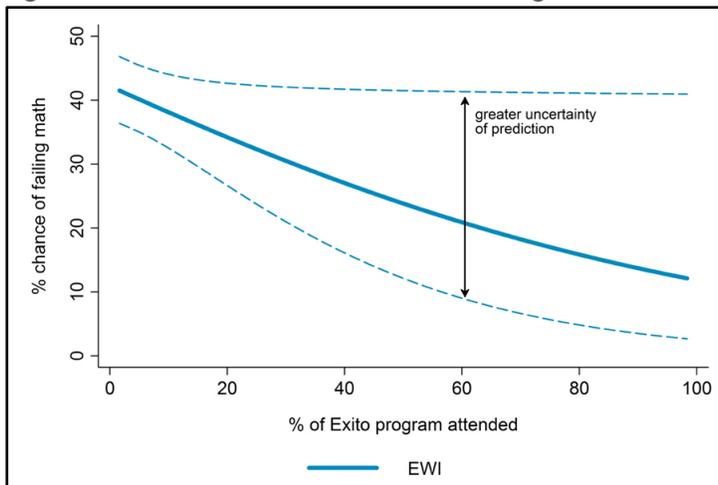


- Zero “% of Éxito program attended” represents non- Éxito students.
- Non- Éxito students with an EWI have a 36% chance of failing English.
- At 45% of Éxito attendance, having an EWI is no longer a statistically significant predictor.

Figure 6 shows a similar relationship between EWI and Éxito attendance, but presents the likelihood of failing math. Again, students with an EWI who did not attend the after-school program and those who attended infrequently were more likely to fail a math course. For this outcome, the relationship was no longer significant when a student attended the Éxito program over 28% of the time.

¹⁶ The dashed lines represent the “95% confidence intervals,” which are a critical measure for determining the effect of an independent variable. These are included as a measure of uncertainty since, as they expand, the negative effect of having an EWI becomes unknown. The effect on non-EWI students was not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. The associated estimates and corresponding levels of significance can be found in Table 3 of Appendix B.

Figure 6. Effect of Éxito Attendance on Failing Math for Students with an EWI



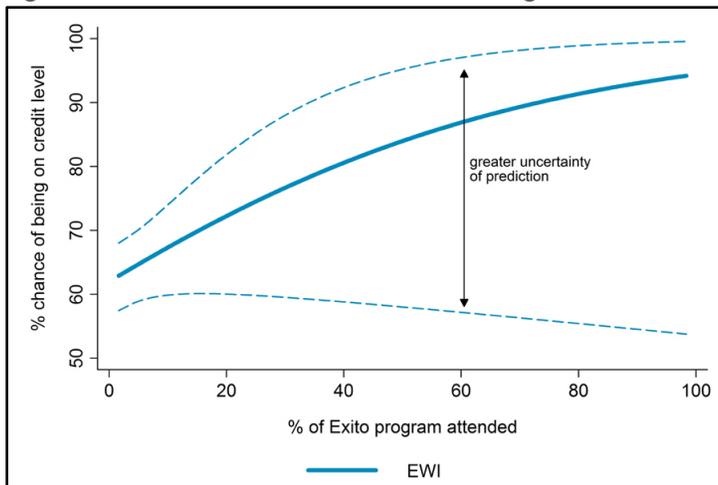
- Zero “% of Éxito program attended” represents non- Éxito students.
- Non- Éxito students with an EWI have a 42% chance of failing Math.
- At 28% of Éxito attendance, having an EWI is no longer a statistically significant predictor.

Figures 5 and 6 suggest that a relationship exists between high levels of Éxito attendance and course passage in math and English. However, because students’ higher levels of attendance also correspond to higher levels of uncertainty about whether they will fail, the inferences we can make are limited. Though research has found numerous factors—both measurable and immeasurable—associated with improved classroom performance, our findings begin to point toward a relationship between a targeted OST program and academic improvement at Edison. Additional mixed-method investigation could provide additional insights. It is possible that continued improvements to the Homework Help component of the program in future years would yield a clearer relationship between students’ Éxito participation and the likelihood that they pass their core subjects. While our models do not account for the frequency that students attended Homework Help, given the low rates of attendance at the tutoring sessions, it is possible that improvements in students’ school attendance are responsible for this mitigating effect on students’ grades.

Outcome 4. Among students with EWIs, those who rarely or never attended were less likely to be on credit level, though the effect is unknown at high levels of Éxito attendance. This relationship is less certain than the program’s effect on school attendance and dropout.

Being on credit level, an indicator related to both academic success and a student’s progression to graduation, is also subject to Éxito’s mitigating effect. Figure 7 shows that students not attending Éxito are less likely to be “on credit level.” Like the two academic indicators, this relationship becomes unknown as Éxito attendance becomes more than 30%.

Figure 7. Effect of Éxito Attendance on Being “On Credit Level” for Students with an EWI



- Zero “% of Éxito program attended” represents non- Éxito students.
- Non- Éxito students with an EWI have a 61% chance of being “On Credit Level.”
- At 30% of Éxito attendance, having an EWI is no longer a statistically significant predictor.

Outcome 5. Among students with EWIs, attending Éxito increases the likelihood of suspension—contrary to program goals.

The program’s relationship with suspensions is the most curious. For students *without* EWIs, there is no relationship between Éxito attendance and the likelihood of suspension. Students with EWIs are more likely to have two or more suspensions. Further, as Éxito attendance increases, so does the probability that an EWI student will receive more than two suspensions that year.

We offer two potential explanations for this finding:

- First, our discrete measure of time—the academic year—is not ideal for this outcome; suspensions can occur anytime in the school year. It is likely that some students were suspended two or more times before they were referred to the Éxito program. Because our data does not take into account the sequence of events, it may be that being suspended increased the likelihood that a student would be referred to Éxito, not that attending Éxito increased the likelihood that a student would be suspended. The data request that RFA has already submitted to the School District for the final evaluation of the Éxito program includes monthly reports of student suspensions, which may help untangle this issue.
- Second, our other quantitative models indicate that Éxito attendance improves school attendance and reduces the likelihood of dropping-out. In light of this, by increasing school-going, the Éxito program brings to school students who would otherwise be absent, thus increasing their opportunities to be suspended.

Case Management Services (Students with PCM staff)

Since the program's beginning in the fall of 2008, over 130 students in Cohorts 1 and 2 received PCM™ services. RFA's analyses of this subset of students examines the effect of receiving PCM™ services and attending the Éxito after-school program on the following outcomes:¹⁷

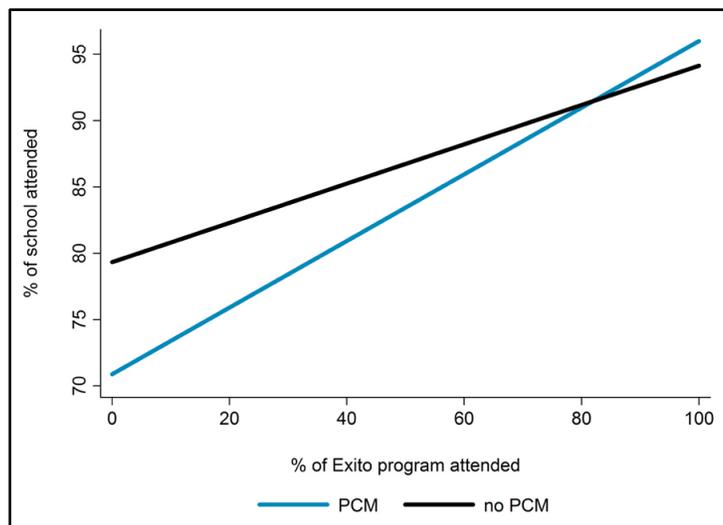
- School attendance
- Average English grade
- Average math grade
- Two or more suspensions.

Outcome 6. Having a PCM™ intensifies the effect of Éxito on school attendance for students who attend the program regularly.

Figure 8 illustrates the relationship between Éxito attendance and school attendance for PCM and non-PCM students. For both groups, as students' participation in the Éxito program increased, so did their school attendance. Among students who attended the program infrequently, PCM students' school attendance was *lower* than that of students who did not have a PCM™. At 49% program attendance, this relationship reverses and becomes positive.¹⁸

For PCM students, this is the only statistically significant relationship among the four outcome measures we examined.

Figure 8. Effect of Éxito Attendance on School Attendance, for PCM and non-PCM students



- In this figure, all students attended the Éxito program.
- Students receiving PCM but attending Éxito at a low level (i.e. 1%) are predicted to attend school 70% of the time.
- At 49% of Éxito attendance, Éxito students receiving PCM™ are predicted to attend school 83% of the time.

In sum, our analysis of the Éxito after-school program and PCM™ services supports the positive impact of the program. We find consistent evidence that the after-school program is associated with positive outcomes for the population at large and, importantly, that this relationship holds true for students who enter with an EWI that would otherwise make them more likely than their peers to drop out of high school. Despite these positive outcomes, the impact of the program on student suspensions remains

¹⁷ We were unable to conduct an analysis of dropout because of issues relating to model convergence. For the same reason we used the continuous Math and English grades instead of the specifications for "failing." We created a model for On Credit Level, but due to a small sample size and lack of statistical power, we removed it from this report.

¹⁸ See Table 5 in Appendix B for more details.

unresolved. In our final report we hope to illuminate this phenomenon through both alternative measures of time in our quantitative work and through additional qualitative work.

Conclusion

The *Éxito* program, an OST program with the goal of reducing high school dropout, has established a place for itself at a large neighborhood high school in Philadelphia. As of this writing, the program is well into its fourth school year at Edison High School, providing students with after-school activities and case management services. The program has learned lessons each year and adapted to meet challenges and changes in context.

Drawing on three years of qualitative and quantitative data, this report documents strengths, challenges, and outcomes for the program:

STRENGTHS

Éxito has build on its strengths since Year One:

- As intended, participants have included a significant number of students who have EWIs, meaning they are at higher risk for dropout.
- The program has successfully attracted and retained students by offering project-based learning activities that engage students' interests, and providing the support of positive adult-student and student-student relationships.
- An ongoing relationship with Edison administrators and staff has benefited the program in multiple ways

CHALLENGES

Despite improvements, a number of challenges have perpetuated from year to year:

- The collaboration between after-school and PCM staff has continued to be challenged by gaps in communication and role confusion.
- Efforts to provide students with high-quality Homework Help are challenged because, among other things, after school is a hard time of day to engage students in schoolwork.
- Overall participation declined, while at the same time, a group of upperclassmen wished for continued involvement.

OUTCOMES

Overall, *Éxito* is having its desired impact on students, particularly those who enter the program with a prior EWI:

- Attending the program reduced the likelihood that students would have poor school attendance or dropout of high school altogether.
- Although the relationships are less certain, it also appears that high levels of *Éxito* attendance reduced the likelihood that students would fail English, fail math, and/or be off-track in terms of credits needed to graduate.
- The model for two or more suspensions finds the opposite relationship, predicting that, as *Éxito* attendance increases, students with a previous EWI become more likely to be suspended, a counterintuitive finding for which we propose several potential explanations.

Recommendations

The findings from this research suggest several recommendations for the *Éxito* program:

Attendance targets: Beyond the promising findings of our quantitative models, they also point to the need for staff to set clear program attendance targets for participating students. Program effects on reducing dropout begin to take hold for EWI students when they attend the after-school program more than 15% of the time. Of the EWI students attending *Éxito*, approximately one-third attend less than this threshold. *Éxito* staff should target this population and work to increase participation rates to exceed the 15% threshold.

Continued refinement of Homework Help: While high levels of *Éxito* participation appear to have some benefit for students in terms of course passage, *Éxito* should continue to strengthen its Homework Help activities. Strategies adopted mid-way through Year Three, including recruitment of tutors, and a separate classroom for Homework Help activities appeared promising. However, *Éxito* should continue to consider ways to identify students in danger of failing--such as report card conferences--and incentivize participation in homework help for those who need it. In addition, volunteer tutors may need additional training to enable them to be effective tutors for *Éxito* students, and *Éxito* staff should continue to foster communication with Edison teachers.

Expanding project-based learning: We observed a drop in program attendance rates in Year Three. Our data do not allow us to definitively identify the reasons for this drop; however, one possible explanation may be the reduction in project-based learning days from four days/week in Year Two to two days/week in Year Three. In addition, the number of project-based learning options decreased from six in Year Two to five in Year Three. Students consistently report that project-based learning was a draw to the program. The reported popularity of these programs may be an avenue to increasing students' attendance rates in the after-school program.

Addressing collaboration challenges between PCM staff and after-school program staff: For two consecutive years, in spite of staff turnover, PCM and after-school program staff have found it challenging to collaborate with each other. Staff members work with the same groups of students, and role confusion and communication gaps contribute to these collaboration challenges. It is important that these on-the-ground staff receive support in resolving these obstacles from higher level managers.

Focus on staff retention: Staff turnover is a commonly recognized challenge in OST programs, due to the lower salaries often paid to OST personnel.¹⁹ Congreso de Latinos should prioritize staff retention as it seeks to sustain *Éxito*. Adult-student relationships are a key strength of the *Éxito* program and an important factor in retaining students in the program and these relationships can take time to mature. Staff turnover, therefore, undermines *Éxito*'s ability to influence student outcomes over time.

¹⁹ Breslin, T. (2003). Workforce development in out-of-school time: Lessons learned and innovative strategies. Rhode Island KIDS Count: Providence, RI. Retrieved from: http://mypasa.org/failid/OST_Workforce_Dev.pdf

Research Questions for Year Four

RFA will continue its study of *Éxito* in Year Four following the outcomes of Cohort 1 and 2. The research will continue to examine the same outcomes, but will focus on whether the benefits of participation in *Éxito* continue even after students are no longer participating in the program. For Cohort 1, we will examine whether students participating in the *Éxito* program are more likely to graduate than the comparison group. In addition, the research will take a closer look at the puzzling findings regarding program suspensions by examining suspensions in monthly intervals and in reference to students' point of entry to the program.

Appendix A: Qualitative Methodology

Research for Action conducted interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders (See Data Sources table), as well as program observations, particularly focused on the academic support component of the program. The data was transcribed and entered into *Atlas.ti* for analysis. A set of 25 codes were developed using the research questions, as well as emerging themes. Data were coded and analytic memos were developed by code. Analytic memos were used to draw out themes within codes and data supporting those themes. In addition, interviews with five 11th grade students were analyzed individually as well as across interviews. Analytic memos were developed for each student, drawing on interview and participation data for these students from previous years. Themes were then identified across student memos. Analyses across all analytic memos was then conducted to identify overall qualitative findings.

Appendix B: Quantitative Methodology

The following appendix describes the techniques used to evaluate the impact of Congreso’s Éxito program and provides tables of the covariates and associated levels of significance for the two models employed in our analyses.

Except for the School Attendance models, all models use a time-series cross sectional [TSCS] logit with “random effects.” Random effects may be thought of as allowing all units – in this case, students – to have a varying slope. This correction is needed in order to measure the same units at various points in time and. The models for attendance use the corresponding random effects estimator but include a normal distribution as the link function.

Initially, we believed that there would be a need to create a “matched” comparison group to aid in issues of identification and endogeneity. To do this we used the variable for School Attendance and ran two different matching routines: Propensity Score Matching and Coarsened Exact Matching. After creating the sub-sample using these techniques, it was found that there was *no substantive difference* from inference that used the entire population of Edison High School. In light of this, we conducted our analyses using the full population.

To assess the impact of Éxito attendance for students who entered the program with an EWI, we interact the variables “Éxito attendance” and “Previous EWI.” Because our models rely on Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE), we account for the non-linear combinations of these parameter estimates. Because MLE effects and their standard errors depend on the level at which the independent variables are evaluated, cases of interactions require a subsequent estimation. These estimations are found following the table estimates. We run simulation holding all non-interacted variables at their mean and allowing the interacted variable to vary across all possible combinations. These estimates and their 95% confidence intervals are then plotted using a median-spline smoother.

Table 1B gives the descriptive statics and definitions for the variables included in the analysis. While our report only highlights the influence Éxito attendance and EWIs, other demographic characteristics are found below. Our sample was restricted to first-time 9th graders at Edison High School. Figure 1B is a histogram displaying the Éxito attendance – our primary independent variable of interest – for students involved in the program.

In addition to our school-wide analysis, we examined similar outcomes for a sub-set of students receiving case management services from a PCM staff member. As relatively few students received intensive case management, the comparison group for these analyses was all students participating in the Éxito program. The following graphics are visual representations of the findings from our quantitative models. Appendix B provides our methodology for estimating the models, generating the simulations for the graphics, and the results of our quantitative analyses.

How to interpret the graphics

The figures represent the result of our statistical, regression analyses. To present the interaction of Éxito attendance and EWIs we used simulated data to demonstrate the relationship while accounting for all other independent variables in our model. A few notes:

- The value of zero on the horizontal axis compares EWI and EWI students not participating in the after-school program.
 - The vertical axis is the probability – or the predicted effect – of the combination of EWI status and that level of Éxito attendance.
 - The predictions include the effect of other, demographic characteristics, which may also influence the following outcomes. These are the full models are found in Appendix B.
-

Table 1B. Variable Descriptions

<u>variable</u>	<u>mean</u>	<u>std.dev.</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Description</u>
Near dropout	0.169	0.375	2251	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student's attendance < 50%
Failing English	0.270	0.444	1714	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student's English grade is <65
Failing Math	0.350	0.477	1717	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student's Math grade is < 65
Student attendance	0.749	0.225	2251	Student's attendance rate (.50=50%; 1=100% attendance)
On credit level	0.685	0.465	620	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student is on credit level
2+ suspensions	0.152	0.359	2251	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student has two or more suspensions
Éxito attendance	0.040	0.131	2928	Student's Éxito attendance rate (1=100% attendance)
Previous EWI	0.540	0.499	2928	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student entered Éxito w/ an EWI
Éxito X EWI	0.022	0.097	2928	Interaction between Éxito attendance & EWI
Workready	0.036	0.187	2928	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student was in Congreso's Workready program
PCM	0.054	0.227	2928	Dummy variable (yes=1)if student received a PCM™
PCM summer	0.016	0.127	2928	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student received a PCM™ during the summer
Latino	0.670	0.470	2928	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student is Latino
Male	0.445	0.497	2928	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student is male
ELL status	0.259	0.438	2373	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student is an English language learner
Free lunch status	0.599	0.490	2373	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student receives Free or Reduced Price lunch
Special Ed. status	0.199	0.399	2373	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student is designated Special Education
Cohort 2	0.308	0.462	2928	Dummy variable (yes=1) if student is in the second cohort

Figure 1B. Histogram of Éxito attendance rate for participants in the program

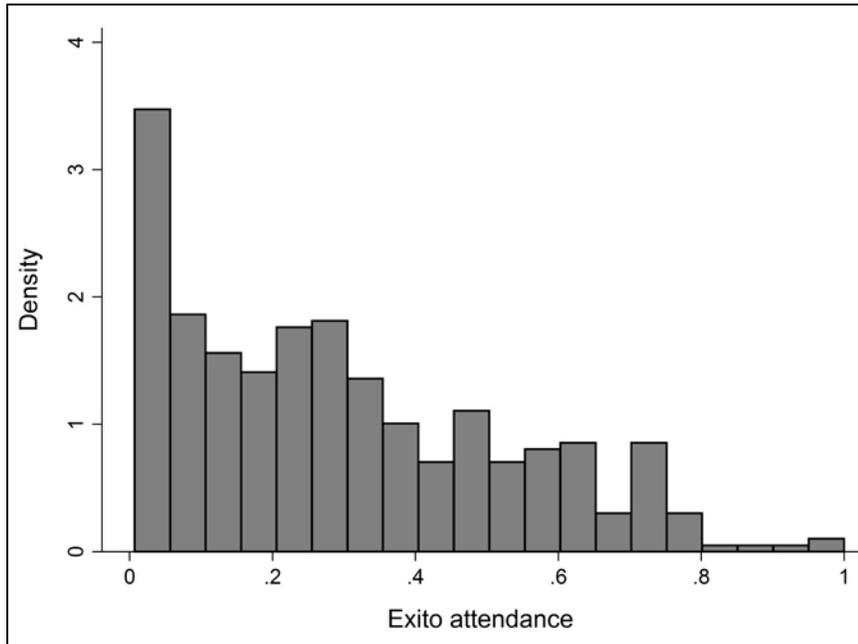


Table 2B presents the results of our full model that uses the entire population of Edison to ascertain the influence of the Éxito after-school program. We display the covariates as “logged odds ratios” in order to ease interpretation through the directional sign.

Table 2B. Full models

	<u>Attend-</u> <u>ance</u>	<u>Failing</u> <u>English</u>	<u>Failing</u> <u>Math</u>	<u>2+ Susp-</u> <u>ensions</u>	<u>On credit</u> <u>level</u>	<u>Near</u> <u>dropout</u>
Éxito attendance	0.150*	0.096	-1.324	-0.797	2.27	-6.530*
Previous EWI	-0.077*	1.486*	0.984*	0.668*	-1.579*	1.287*
Éxito X EWI	0.197*	-1.735	-0.372	1.919	0.068	-14.055*
Workready	0.045	-0.421	0.17	-0.267	15.193	-1.367
PCM™ summer	-0.086*	1.415*	0.166	0.355	-16.367	0.967
PCM™	-0.028	0.584	0.492	0.387	-0.353	0.94
Latino	-0.046*	0.398	0.032	-0.245	-0.496	0.484*
Male	0.039*	0.624*	0.522*	0.593*	-0.103	-0.468*
ELL	0.022	-0.187	0.068	0.043	0.056	-0.195
FRPL	0.026*	0.237	0.375*	0.429*	-0.286	-0.619*
Special Ed.	-0.039*	-0.104	-0.315	0.107	-0.017	0.456*
Cohort 2	0.035*	-0.056	0.136	0.807*	-0.449*	-0.722*
N	2251	1714	1717	2251	620	2251
chi2	149.440*	120.925*	74.781*	80.336*	98.587*	93.578*

Table 3B shows the combined effects for the interacted variables at meaningful levels of after-school attendance. Again, the relationship is presented in “logged odds ratios” so as to highlight the switch in directional effect.

Table 3B. Combined effect of *Éxito* attendance and EWI

<u>Level of <i>Éxito</i></u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Failing English</u>	<u>Failing Math</u>	<u>2+ Suspensions</u>	<u>On credit level</u>	<u>Near dropout</u>
No <i>Éxito</i>	-0.077*	1.486*	0.984*	0.668*	-1.579*	1.287*
10 percent	-0.043*	1.322*	0.814*	0.780*	-1.345*	-0.771
25 percent	0.009	1.076*	0.560*	0.948*	-0.994*	-3.859*
50 percent	0.096*	0.667	0.136	1.228*	-0.41	-9.005*
75 percent	0.183*	0.257	-0.288	1.509*	0.175	-14.151*
99 percent	0.266*	-0.136	-0.695	1.778*	0.736	-19.091*

Table 4B gives the results of the analysis focusing on the PCM™ population. Recall that these estimates would not converge, leading us to specify the models using the continuous analogs of failing math and English. Table 5B provides the corresponding disaggregation of the interactions.

Table 4B. Results of PCM™ extract

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Avg. Math Grade</u>	<u>Avg. Eng Grade</u>	<u>2+ Suspensions</u>
<i>Éxito</i> attendance	0.148***	8.585	12.297*	-4.745*
PCM™	-0.084***	-2.651	-5.306	-1.931
Previous EWI	-0.024	-7.042***	-3.816*	1.138*
<i>Éxito</i> XPCM™	0.103	0.918	-1.907	5.459
Workready	-0.027	-3.071	0.092	-0.782
Latino	-0.034	-1.678	-6.365*	-0.526
Male	-0.023	-0.72	-5.760**	0.456
ELL status	0.03	0.876	3.275	0.393
Free lunch status	0.036	-3.433	-2.032	1.407*
Special Ed. status	0.023	-4.858	-1.806	0.195
Cohort 2	0.004	-2.376	1.26	0.293
N	231	215	212	231
chi2	69.817***	34.449***	51.680***	9.221

Table 5B. Combined effect of Éxito and PCM™

<u>Level of Éxito</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Avg. Math Grade</u>	<u>Avg. Eng. Grade</u>	<u>2+ Suspensions</u>
No Éxito	-0.084*	-2.651	-5.306	-1.931
10 percent	-0.059*	-1.700	-4.267	-1.86
25 percent	-0.022	-0.275	-2.709	-1.753
50 percent	0.041*	2.101	-0.111	-1.574
75 percent	0.104*	4.476	2.487	-1.395
99 percent	0.164*	6.757	4.981	-1.224