



# San José Learns Initiative Final Evaluation Report

**February 2018**

**Prepared For**  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation

**Prepared By**  
Learning for Action (LFA)



Learning for Action enhances the impact and sustainability of social sector organizations through highly customized research, strategy development, and evaluation services.

# Acknowledgements

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Alum Rock Union Elementary School District & THINK Together  
Evergreen Elementary School District & YMCA of Silicon Valley  
Franklin-McKinley School District & Catholic Charities/CORAL  
Oak Grove School District & Silicon Valley Education Foundation, Bay Area Tutoring Association  
San José Unified School District & Catholic Charities & Catholic Charities/CORAL (with other partners)

LFA would also like to acknowledge members of the San José Learns Advisory Committee and San José Learns Working Group who have donated their time and expertise to shape and guide the initiative.

## **San José Learns Advisory Committee:**

Elaine Curran\*, Shortino Foundation; Honorable Darcie Green\*, Santa Clara County Office of Education; Matt Hammer\*, Innovate Public Schools; Jeff Sunshine, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation; Kenji Treanor, Sobrato Family Foundation; Mara Wold, Monterey County Office of Education; Suzanne Wolf\*, City of San José, Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services

## **San José Learns Working Group:**

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*\*These Advisory Committee members also serve on the Working Group.*

## Student Success & Engagement Stories

*Our Kinder program was pretty phenomenal, based on what we heard from our after-school leaders about the dramatic changes they saw in the kindergartners in their **SEL [social and emotional learning] development**. For example, confidence, their ability to make friends, public speaking, ability to engage in critical thinking and discussion. [...] [The students] are shy [and] afraid when they first come in and then they blossom as a result of the engagement and connection with our staff.*

Evergreen program partner

*It's clear as an educator that **not all students learn the same way**. [...] We're giving opportunities for a lot of students to use their academic language in discussion, communicating through writing, and collaborating. Writing is a big deal. [...] We're purposely looking for structured ways for those two components of literacy to help students when they're reading.*

San José Unified program partner

*Our feeling was that **access to technology is important**, because it will give [students] access to thousands of books that their parents may not be able to afford. We think that aspect will be innovative as well.*

Oak Grove program partner

*The positive outcomes have been staff's **relationship-building with the kids** – and part of that is being with adults for such a long time during the day. It's also the SEL [social and emotional learning] strategies that we embed with our programs.*

Alum Rock program partner

*One student was always acting up, and they recently did an eyesight screening, and that student improved once he'd had the screening and got glasses. The **10:1 [student-to-staff] ratio** makes a huge difference.*

Franklin-McKinley program partner

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# Introduction

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## About the San José Learns Initiative

The San José Learns Extended Learning Initiative (“SJ Learns”) aimed to bolster academic achievement by expanding promising and innovative after-school programs for San José students in kindergarten through third grade. The two-year initiative, launched in 2015 by Mayor Sam Liccardo, was shaped by the SJ Learns Working Group and Advisory Committee – bodies composed of educational experts and stakeholders representing nonprofits, foundations, school districts, county offices of education, and the City of San José.

The Mayor’s Office partnered with Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) as the San José Learns Initiative Project Manager. As the largest community foundation in the world, SVCF brings both philanthropic and regional education expertise to the initiative. Through the work of local school districts and nonprofits, SVCF strategic grantmaking investments have helped teachers improve their skills and effectiveness in the classroom, while extended learning opportunities have helped thousands of students — particularly low-income students and students of color — outside of the classroom. As a valuable collaborator, SVCF supported an effective SJ Learns Request for Proposals (RFP) and grantmaking process, provided strong oversight of the programs and evaluation, and facilitated the development of a grantee learning community. SVCF’s stewardship and leadership were critical assets to the initiative.

### The Need

SJ Learns was a response to low academic performance among students in low-income communities in San José, where approximately half of third-graders are not proficient in English language arts (ELA)/reading and math.<sup>1</sup> High-quality extended learning programs provide crucial academic support for students who are struggling in the classroom, and these services are especially important for students from low-income families who cannot afford fee-based alternatives. With fewer than 10% of San José elementary school children participating in state-funded after school programs,<sup>2</sup> it is clear that there are insufficient high-quality and affordable extended learning opportunities to meet student need.<sup>3</sup>

Early intervention strategies will help prepare San José students to succeed in K-12 and beyond. Students who are not proficient in reading by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than those who *are* proficient.<sup>4</sup> Without a pathway to higher education, students cannot compete for good-paying jobs in the area. This is a special challenge in Silicon Valley, where the high cost of living<sup>5</sup> puts families with low-wage jobs (and un- or under-employment) in even greater jeopardy than in lower-cost regions. By focusing on students in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, SJ Learns was designed to catch struggling students early and set them on a path to succeed academically and in the workforce.

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<sup>1</sup> City of San José. (2015). *Mayor Liccardo Announces an Expansion of After-School Learning Programs in San José*. [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.sanjoseinfo.org/external/content/document/1914/2747066/1/SJ%20Learns%20Release%20Final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Silicon Valley Community Foundation. (2015). Request for Proposals: SJ Learns: Closing the K-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Achievement Gap through Extended Learning After the School Day.

<sup>3</sup> The need for additional extended learning programs in San José mirrors national trends: Afterschool Alliance. (2014). *America After 3PM: Afterschool Programs in Demand*. Washington, D.C.

<sup>4</sup> Hernandez, Donald J. 2012. *Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

<sup>5</sup> Because the housing supply has failed to match the rate of growth in Silicon Valley, increasing housing prices make the area unaffordable for many individuals and families. In 2015, only 41% of potential first-time home buyers in Santa Clara County and 27% in San Mateo County could afford to purchase a median-priced home. (Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies. Available at <http://siliconvalleyindicators.org/data/place/housing/home-affordability/>)



## The Investment

The City of San José's \$2 million investment, along with the participating districts' \$1.16 million<sup>6</sup> matching investment, supported five school districts to launch new or expand existing after-school programs in 16 schools during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years.

SJ Learns invested in programs that incorporated many of the following features:

- Served students in kindergarten to third grade
- Provided academic supports in reading and/or math
- Supported students who were below grade level, including English language learners
- Provided 10-15 hours per week of extended learning time
- Aligned with school-day curriculum
- Focused on developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity)
- Incorporated innovative strategies that promoted active engagement of students in hands-on learning
- Emphasized real-life applications for course content
- Were evidence-based
- Focused on quality
- Demonstrated potential for increased scale and replication
- Incorporated rigorous monitoring

In addition to providing funding, SJ Learns supported program partners' success by facilitating dialogue and learning among participating districts and with the broader extended learning community. District and provider staff from program partner sites came together during quarterly cohort convenings that were organized and hosted by SVCF. At these convenings, partners shared information about their program models, successes to celebrate, challenges faced, and lessons learned during program launch and implementation. The collaborative space was designed to provide valuable support and learning to programs and also to serve as a space for partners to develop and evolve strategies to sustain and scale their programs, thereby contributing to larger field-building objectives. The value of such collaborative learning spaces is well-known and documented in the field. For example, research has shown that a well-structured community of practice working together towards solving specific problems can lead to innovations in educational practice.<sup>7</sup>

## About this Report

This final evaluation report presents the comprehensive assessment of the two-year SJ Learns investment, including student outcomes. Specifically, this report addresses the following questions:

- What program models were implemented?
- What are the innovative approaches and practices of these programs?
- What level and types of service did students receive?
- With what degree of fidelity and consistency were interventions implemented?
- What outcomes have the programs achieved at the student, school, and system levels?
- What was the impact of these services?
- What are the initiative and programs learning about what it takes to meet young students' early learning needs in the extended learning space?
- What are the opportunities to strengthen this work?

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<sup>6</sup> For three programs, the matching contribution reported in the programs' interim reports were used to calculate this figure. For Franklin-McKinley and San José Unified, the projections from the grant budget proposal were used.

<sup>7</sup> Bryk, Anthony, Gomez, Louis, and Grunow, Alicia (2011), *Getting Ideas into Action: Building Networked Improvement Communities in Education*. *Frontiers in Sociology of Education*, [https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/bryk-gomez\\_building-nics-education.pdf](https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/bryk-gomez_building-nics-education.pdf)

An interim report documenting early initiative learnings from the first year of implementation was released in February 2017.

### **Data Sources Informing the Report**

Six main data sources inform the findings in this report:

1. Grant and program materials (e.g., grant proposals, interim progress reports, and final reports);
2. Midterm interviews with 18 program partners (including 13 district/school staff, and five provider staff) and five initiative partners from the City of San José and the SJ Learns Advisory Committee, and follow-up interviews (toward the end of the initiative) with 12 program partners (7 district/school staff, five provider staff) and two initiative partners from the City of San José;
3. Site observations at seven program sites, including at least one in each district;
4. A reflection-gathering survey to select members of the SJ Learns Advisory Committee;
5. Individual-level student data from treatment and comparison groups, including demographics, school attendance, local assessments (baseline and follow-up), and standardized test scores from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and programs providers; and
6. Reflections from evaluators' engagements with program partners and other stakeholders during cohort convenings and evaluation activities.

### **Structure of the Evaluation Report**

The report is organized into five main sections and one appendix:

1. **Programs and Services:** Provides an overview of the five program models and the services that each provides.
2. **Program Implementation Findings**
3. **Student Outcomes:** Summarizes student learning outcomes based on the results of local assessments and SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) scores, and compares them with the outcomes of matched comparison groups.
4. **Initiative Reflections and Recommendations:** Reflects on what partners learned about the initiative as a whole.
5. **Conclusion:** Summarizes the report's key findings and offers several reflections and recommendations for the programs and the initiative.
6. **Appendix A:** A methods appendix explaining how the evaluation team developed matched comparison groups for each district and grade.

# Programs and Services

This section provides a brief overview of the five SJ Learns programs, including the services that each provided.

## Overview of Programs

SJ Learns funded programs in five school districts: Alum Rock, Evergreen, Franklin-McKinley, Oak Grove, and San José Unified. Each of these districts partnered with local program providers to deliver a variety of programs (see Exhibit 1 for a description of each program).

**Exhibit 1. Overview of Program Models<sup>8</sup>**

District	Provider	Grade(s) Served	Program Description
Alum Rock Union Elementary (ARUESD)	THINK Together	K	Alum Rock and THINK Together's model focuses on developing students' ability to read grade-level sight words and perform basic number operations with increased automaticity. THINK Together piloted the "success folder" model, which uses daily assessments to progressively challenge students to increase their reading and math knowledge.
Evergreen Elementary (EESD)	YMCA of Silicon Valley	K-3	YMCA capitalizes on its experience with Four Blocks, a comprehensive language arts model that focuses on reading but allows for integration between and among all of the language arts areas and other curricular content areas. Project-Based Learning, a method in which students work for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge, is also a core component of the model.
Franklin-McKinley (FMSD)	Catholic Charities/CORAL	3	Franklin McKinley has built on the success of the Catholic Charities' CORAL program with CORAL Learns, a curriculum that is aligned with Common Core Standards during the school day. The program focuses on increasing reading ability through Balanced Literacy. The program components include one-on-one academic support, parent engagement, and home visits.
Oak Grove (OGSD)	Silicon Valley Education Foundation, Bay Area Tutoring Association	3	Oak Grove partnered with the Silicon Valley Education Foundation to design and implement a math-focused extended learning program and summer intensive that is closely aligned with Common Core Standards and individual classroom and student performance. The program focuses on math, but also integrates content literacy strategies and literacy strategies for English language learners (ELL), with the understanding that literacy and English comprehension are closely connected to math performance.
San José Unified (SJUSD)	Catholic Charities/CORAL (with other partners)	K-3	San José Unified's STE@M Enrichment program extends daily learning through project-based, multidisciplinary learning units. Each 6-8 week unit is led by a different partner provider and explores a topic ranging from science to technology to the arts, with a focus on building literacy and math skills. Intervention specialists work with classroom teachers and program providers to ensure the curricula for the program is linked and supportive of school-day curricula.

<sup>8</sup> These descriptions characterize the programs as they were operating during the SJ Learns initiative. Since the initiative's end, each of the programs continues to operate in a similar format, though some components may have changed.

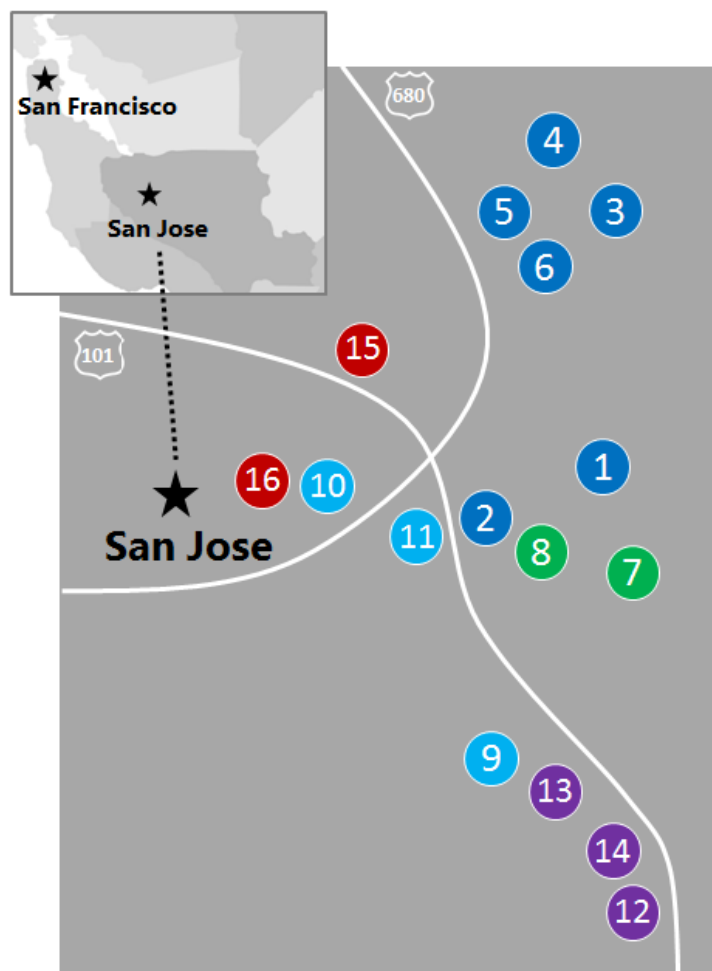


## Districts and Schools Served

SJ Learns programs served 16 schools throughout San José (Exhibit 2). All of the schools served have high-need student populations, based on the rate of students receiving free and reduced-priced lunch, and of students who are English language learners. In 12 of the 16 schools served by SJ Learns, 75% or more of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. In 10 of the 16 schools, 50% or more of the students are English language learners. Based on these two indicators, most of the schools have a higher level of need than the district average (Exhibit 3).

State-level performance indicators are included in Exhibit 4 to show how SJ Learns districts perform on specific measures of student success, such as suspension rates and test scores. With the exception of Evergreen Elementary School District, districts served by SJ Learns show low to moderate levels of performance across the board in ELA and math, suggesting the need for programmatic support in those areas. The low to moderate performance in suspension rates – meaning *more* suspensions – at Alum Rock Union Elementary School District, Franklin-McKinley School District, and Oak Grove School District impacts school attendance– and may mean that students are not necessarily getting the academic support that they need during school hours and potentially afterschool.

**Exhibit 2. Geographic Distribution of Program Sites by District**



### **THINK Together Kinder Academies**

**Provider: THINK Together**

**School District: Alum Rock Elementary**

- 1: Adelante Dual Language Academy
- 2: Hubbard Elementary School
- 3: Linda Vista Elementary School
- 4: Millard McCollam Elementary School
- 5: Ben Painter Elementary School
- 6: Russo-McEntee Academy

### **After School Extended Learning Expansion**

**Provider: YMCA of Silicon Valley**

**School District: Evergreen Elementary**

- 7: Holly Oak Elementary School
- 8: Katherine Smith Elementary School

### **FMSD Reading Intensive**

**Provider: Catholic Charities/CORAL**

**School District: Franklin-McKinley**

- 9: Los Arboles Literacy & Technology Academy
- 10: McKinley Elementary School
- 11: Santee Elementary School

### **Integrating Math Extended Time and Professional Development in Grade 3**

**Provider: Bay Area Tutoring Association**

**School District: Oak Grove**

- 12: Edenvale Elementary School
- 13: Christopher Elementary School
- 14: Samuel Stipe Elementary School

### **Program: STE@M Enrichment Program**

**Provider: Catholic Charities/CORAL (with other partners)**

**School District: San Jose Unified**





















- 15: Anne Darling Elementary School
- 16: Olinder Elementary School


Exhibit 3. Indicators of Need for Districts and Schools Served by SJ Learns (2016-17)

	Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	English Language Learners	Total Enrollment
<b>Alum Rock Union Elementary School District<sup>a</sup></b>	85%	44%	11,624
Adelante Dual Language Academy	66%	40%	603
Hubbard Elementary School	94%	59%	588
Linda Vista Elementary School	79%	44%	546
Millard McCollam Elementary School	62%	36%	434
Ben Painter Elementary School	89%	46%	379
Russo-McEntee Academy	84%	48%	558
<b>Evergreen Elementary School District</b>	29%	23%	11,794
Holly Oak Elementary School	43%	32%	582
Katherine Smith Elementary School	79%	54%	593
<b>Franklin-McKinley School District</b>	75%	47%	10,735
Los Arboles Literacy & Technology Academy	88%	69%	399
McKinley Elementary School	90%	72%	348
Santee Elementary School	90%	72%	443
<b>Oak Grove School District</b>	40%	29%	10,362
Edenvale Elementary School	85%	73%	483
Christopher Elementary School	77%	50%	409
Samuel Stipe Elementary School	71%	61%	346
<b>San José Unified School District</b>	45%	22%	32,004
Anne Darling Elementary School	83%	54%	415
Olinder Elementary School	86%	61%	395

<sup>a</sup>In the grey rows, indicators of need are reported as a district average, and total enrollment includes all schools in the district. These figures include but are not exclusive to the SJ Learns schools listed in the white rows.

Exhibit 4. Performance Levels on State Indicators by District

District	Chronic Absenteeism	Suspension Rate (K-12)	English Learner Progress (1-12)	English Language Arts (3-8)	Mathematics (3-8)
Alum Rock Union Elementary	N/A*				
Evergreen Elementary	N/A*				
Franklin-McKinley	N/A*				
Oak Grove	N/A*				
San José Unified	N/A*				

**Performance Levels:**  Red (lowest performance)  Orange  Yellow  Green  Blue (highest performance)

Source: Fall 2017 data from California Department of Education School Dashboards (<https://caschooldashboard.org/#!/Details/43696250000000/3/EquityReport>)

\*N/A = Data not currently available.

## Grades Served

With all of the programs focusing on kindergarten and/or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, the majority of students served were in these two grades (Exhibit 5). Of the total students served during the entire grant period (1,141), 47% were in kindergarten and 41% were in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Evergreen Elementary School District and San José Unified School District also served 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students.

SJ Learns served only a small percentage of the total students who would have benefited from extended learning. For example, in 2016-17, 73 third grade students in Franklin-McKinley School District were enrolled in SJ Learns, representing less than 6% of the total third grade students in the district. Compare that 6% figure with the level of need: 75% of the students receive free or reduced lunch, and 47% are English language learners. These statistics highlight the gap between need and available services.

**Exhibit 5. Number of Students Served, by District and Grade Level**

	Kindergarten		1 <sup>st</sup> grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> grade		3 <sup>rd</sup> grade		Total	
	2015-16	2016-17	2015-16	2016-17	2015-16	2016-17	2015-16	2016-17	2015-16	2016-17
Alum Rock Union Elementary School District	207	227	0	0	0	0	0	0	207	227
Evergreen Elementary School District	45	20	14	39	14	19	12	14	85	92
Franklin-McKinley School District	0	0	0	0	0	0	90	73	90	73
Oak Grove School District	0	0	0	0	0	0	174*	66	174	66
San José Unified School District	16	18	16	13	18	12	13	21	63	64
<b>One-Year Total</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>522</b>
<b>Two-Year Total</b>	<b>533</b>		<b>82</b>		<b>63</b>		<b>463</b>		<b>1,141</b>	
<b>Two-Year Total (As % of students served in all grades)</b>	<b>47%</b>		<b>7%</b>		<b>6%</b>		<b>41%</b>			

\*The number of Oak Grove third graders served in 2015-16 differs from the figure reported in the Interim Learning Brief, as the Learning Brief did not un-duplicate students who took part in multiple sessions.

The results are mixed as to whether SJ Learns programs recruited students with the highest need. Students enrolled in the SJ Learns program at ARUESD generally had higher baseline reading and math scores, though none of the differences between the two groups are statistically significant. FMUSD, and at McKinley Elementary and Santee Elementary in particular, did a good job of enrolling students who needed additional language and math support. OGSD data show that SJ Learns participants were more likely to be English Language Learners than their matched comparison counterparts. Edenvale Elementary in OGSD did a particularly good job of serving students who needed additional support in math, notable as the program had a math focus. At SJUSD, Anne Darling Elementary third grade students in the SJ Learns programs were more likely to be English Language Learners, though the trend is flipped for Olinder Elementary.

It should be noted that most of the differences between program participants and matched comparison groups are not statistically significant. In addition, there may be other reasons that SJ Learns was not able to capture students who most needed additional support – parent interest may not have been there or students may have been enrolled in other afterschool programs.

## Student Selection

All SJ Learns programs intend to enroll students who are most in need of additional reading and/or math support. Exhibit 6 shows how students taking part in SJ Learns programs compare to a matched comparison group of students at the same school on baseline test scores and ELL status.

**Exhibit 6. ELL Status and Baseline Assessment Scores of Program Participants and Matched Comparison Groups, 2016-17**

District/School (Grade Level of Students in Dataset)	ELL Status		ELA/Reading Mean Placement Level		Math Mean Placement Level		Assessment Tool
	Program Participants	Matched Comparison	Program Participants	Matched Comparison	Program Participants	Matched Comparison	
<b>Alum Rock Union Elementary School District (Kinder)</b>							
Adelante Dual Language Academy <sup>a</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Hubbard Elementary School	74%	65%	1.1 (n=35)	1.0 (n=37)	1.1 (n=35)	1.0 (N=37)	iReady
Linda Vista Elementary School	46%	54%	1.5 (n=28)	1.2 (n=41)	1.5 (n=27)	1.3 (n=40)	iReady
Millard McCollam Elementary School	41%	46%	1.4 (n=17)	1.3 (n=24)	1.4 (n=17)	1.4 (n=24)	iReady
Ben Painter Elementary School	53%	60%	1.4 (n=17)	1.2 (n=10)	1.5 (n=17)	1.3 (n=10)	iReady
Russo-McEntee Academy	72%	64%	1.4 (n=29)	1.1 (n=25)	1.2 (n=29)	1.1 (n=25)	iReady
<b>Evergreen Elementary School District (Third)</b>							
Holly Oak Elementary School	28%	26%	2.8 (n=18)	2.4 (n=70)	--	--	STAR
Katherine Smith Elementary School <sup>b</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--	
<b>Franklin-McKinley School District (Third)</b>							
Los Arboles Literacy & Technology Academy	69%	83%	1.5 (n=13)	1.5 (n=40)	2.5 (n=13)	2.7 (n=40)	STAR
McKinley Elementary School	89%	62%	1.3 (n=18)*	2.0 (n=21)*	1.8 (n=18)***	3.0 (n=21)***	STAR
Santee Elementary School	85%*	53%*	1.5 (n=20)*	2.3 (n=32)*	2.2 (n=20)*	3.2 (n=32)*	STAR
<b>Oak Grove School District (Third)</b>							
Edenvale Elementary School	92%	76%	0.8 (n=12)	1.4 (n=38)	0.8 (n=12)**	1.6 (n=38)**	iReady
Christopher Elementary School	67%**	25%**	1.9 (n=30)	1.8 (n=20)	1.7 (n=30)	1.5 (n=20)	iReady
Samuel Stipe Elementary School	50%	45%	1.6 (n=18)	1.5 (n=20)	1.8 (n=18)	1.5 (n=20)	iReady
<b>San José Unified School District (Kinder)</b>							
Anne Darling Elementary School	69%	62%	1.6 (n=13)	1.3 (n=21)	--	--	WPA
			2.1 (n=13)	1.9 (n=21)	--	--	CPAA
Olinder Elementary School	60%	59%	1.7 (n=3)	1.3 (n=38)	--	--	WPA
			1.8 (n=4)	2.1 (n=36)	--	--	CPAA
<b>San José Unified School District (Third)</b>							
Anne Darling Elementary School	64%*	35%*	2.0 (n=14)	2.1 (n=50)	--	--	WPA
Olinder Elementary School	29%	49%	1.7 (n=7)	1.8 (n=57)	--	--	WPA

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.005; \*\*\*p<.001

-- = Data unavailable or assessments of that type were not performed

<sup>a</sup>All students in the dataset were served by SJ Learns

<sup>b</sup>The program at Katherine Smith served kindergartners, but the evaluation team did not receive enough student data to run analyses on their assessment results (data were received for only three students)

## Overview of Services

All five SJ Learns programs operate after the school day during the academic year, and programs at two districts (Franklin-McKinley and Oak Grove) also operate summer programs.<sup>9</sup> Most programs operate from school dismissal until 6:00 pm (over three hours per day). ELA/reading is the key focus of four programs, and three of these programs also include math instruction. At Oak Grove, math is the primary focus, with a secondary focus on ELA/reading. Most programs also include enrichment activities in areas such as arts, wellness, and physical fitness, and some incorporate a social and emotional learning (SEL) approach. Family and parent engagement – in the form of home visits and calls, monthly parents meetings, or events to showcase student work – is a key component of many of the programs and serve to build families' investment in and tools to support their children's success at school. All programs also include various forms of training or professional development for staff and teachers, including foundational training in curriculum and support with classroom management. While all programs demonstrate a commitment to assessing program quality, two used a validated quality assessment instrument during the 2016-17 school year. All programs were designed to intentionally align their curricula with what students were learning during the school day. Exhibit 7 indicates which of these elements were included in each of the five programs.

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<sup>9</sup> At Franklin-McKinley, the summer program met for four hours a day, five days per week, for three weeks. At Oak Grove, the summer program met for 3.5 hours a day for 12 days over a three-week period.

### Exhibit 7. Program Design

District	Instruction Time		Academics		Additional Program Components			Program Approaches		
	During the School Year	During School Breaks	English Language Arts/ Reading	Math	Enrichment*	Training/ Professional Development for Staff/ Teachers*	Family/Parent Engagement*	Social and Emotional Learning*	Quality Assessments**	Alignment with the School Day
Alum Rock Union Elementary School District	5 hours/day, 5 days/week	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evergreen Elementary School District	3 hours/day, 5 days/week	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Franklin-McKinley School District	Minimum 3 hours/day, 5 days/week	Summer: 4 hours/day, 5 days/week for 4 weeks total	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Oak Grove School District	1.5 hours/day†, 4 days/week	Summer: 3.5 hours/day for 12 days for 3 weeks	✓	✓		✓				✓
San José Unified School District	Minimum 1.5 hours/day, 4 days/week	N/A	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓

\*Denotes a program component not specifically outlined in the SJ Learns RFP.

\*\*Evergreen and Franklin-McKinley used a validated quality assessment tool, and Alum Rock used a home-grown tool.

†Oak Grove condensed the afterschool program duration from 2.5 hours/day in 2015-16 to 1.5 hours/day in 2016-17 in response to teacher feedback.



# Program Implementation Findings

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This first section of this chapter, Promising Program Practices and Approaches, highlights promising practices that surfaced from the programs' efforts to align with the school day, to focus on program quality, to monitor student assessment data, to engage parents, and to integrate technology. The findings were previously reported as part of the Year One Learning Brief and are intended to support learning among the SJ Learns programs – and other afterschool programs – by documenting practical ideas that programs may be able to borrow from each other to enhance their programming. The section concludes with reflections and recommendations to inform the design and supports provided in future after-school investment by the City of San José or other investors.

The second half of this chapter, Quality Assessment Observation Findings, reports on site observation visits that the evaluation team conducted to select program sites in order to collect information about the quality of program implementation. Some providers already use a quality assessment tool to assess and document if the afterschool programs are being implemented as intended. For the purposes of having a common framework to assess each site, the evaluation team used the Quick CASP Assessment Tool (QCASP).<sup>10</sup> The intent of using a common tool was to gather comparable information on best practices in early learning across the program sites.

## Promising Program Practices and Approaches

### Program Alignment with the School Day

#### *The importance of alignment with the school day*

Program alignment with the school day happens through purposeful linkages designed to strengthen student learning. Examples of alignment are continuity of academic objectives, there is communication among teachers and program staff, and academic content is presented through non-traditional means.<sup>11</sup> Aligning after-school programs with classroom activities can be a powerful way to support children's learning and development: students consolidate their learning when after-school programs reinforce what is taught during the school day.

#### *Promising Practices and Approaches*

The SJ Learns programs' experiences point to two promising practices and approaches to create purposeful alignment with the school day:

1. Having a **dedicated program liaison** to promote regular communication between the school and program provider staff; and
2. Hosting **regular coordination meetings** between teachers and program staff to discuss alignment and students who need additional support.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.summermatters.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Quick-CASP-Interactive.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Harvard Family Research Project. Promising Strategies for Connecting Out-of-School Time Programs to Schools: Learning What Works. The Evaluation Exchange, Volume XII, Number 1 & 2, Fall 2006

The table below details what each of these practices and approaches has looked like in action.

Promising Practice/Approach	What this practice/approach looked like in action?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having a <b>dedicated program liaison</b> to promote regular communication between the school and program provider staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A school staff member acts as an intervention specialist for the SJUSD STE@M program. The intervention specialist coordinates on a regular basis with teachers and program providers to ensure that the after-school project-based programming aligns with the literacy and math units taught during the school day.</li> <li>At Oak Grove, the after-school tutoring program integrates classroom teachers in the program's delivery. Seeing the benefit of pairing teachers with tutors over the summer, Silicon Valley Education Foundation adapted the program to incorporate teacher "leads" from every school. The teacher leads act as advocates for the students and a bridge to other teachers who work with the students.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hosting <b>regular coordination meetings</b> between teachers and program staff to discuss alignment and students who need additional support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the Evergreen and Alum Rock school sites, program staff and school staff meet and communicate regularly to ensure that all parties are on the same page about lesson plans and how to best support struggling students.</li> <li>The Kinder Academy providers at Alum Rock coordinate regularly with school partners to modify lessons plans so that those plans match the school day instruction. This coordination helps strengthen what students are learning during the school day.</li> </ul>

### *What are other practices and approaches worth watching?*

At SJUSD, the STE@M Enrichment program uses project-based learning units centered on topics such as cooking, dance, and engineering, while at the same time integrating the literacy and math content that students are working on in the classroom. Program providers report that students are excited to come to the after-school program because it does not look and feel like their in-school experience. At the same time, students are building and reinforcing classroom learning. The STE@M Enrichment program also has the opportunity to build upon the strong foundation of technology-based learning that is present in SJUSD classrooms. Because students use technology regularly as part of their in-school curriculum, they are well-positioned to demonstrate success with technology in the after-school program. This opens the door for the program to experiment with innovative uses of technology in the after-school space. Kinder Academy at Alum Rock has a similar opportunity to leverage technology. Blended learning (which combines online digital media with traditional classroom methods) has been a focus of the Alum Rock district. Kinder Academy has been able to use the SJ Learns grant to essentially beta test an approach in which students use iPads and tailored software to increase their number and letter recognition. The grant paid for 12 licenses, allowing Kinder Academy to access the app. The lessons that Kinder Academy is learning about how to best implement this blended learning approach lays the groundwork for more effective replication when there is additional investment to use for scaling within the district.

# Program Quality Assessment

## *The Importance of Program Quality Assessment*

The quality of service delivery is critical to the capacity of programs to support academic achievement. After-school programs benefit youth *most* when they are of high quality; programs that are not of high quality tend to show small or no effect on academic outcomes, and may even *harm* youth.<sup>12</sup> With the growing recognition of the importance of quality, providers are increasingly implementing program quality assessment: collecting quality data, reflecting on that data, and systematically implementing program quality improvement plans. They use program quality assessment as a way to continuously reinforce and expand their ability to provide youth with services that will provide the most benefit.

Program quality assessment tools range from homegrown check-lists to well-researched and validated instruments. The majority of validated program quality assessment tools involve an observation process in which a program staff member, volunteer, or other trained individual observes the program in action. During and after the observation, the individual takes notes and uses the assessment tool to assess how well the program is fulfilling predetermined goals for quality. These goals may differ slightly by instrument, but most include: program design; physical and emotional safety; student engagement; student and staff interaction; expectations for students and staff; and accessibility of the program for youth and families. After conducting the observation and assessing the program according to these domains, the observer typically shares notes with the staff member(s) leading the program. Observers share what they saw and where they believe program quality could be improved. Programs are often encouraged to share and compare program quality assessment data across different sessions of the same program in order to understand how different sites and instructors can learn from one another to improve program quality.

## *Promising Practices and Approaches*

The SJ Learns programs' experiences point to three promising practices and approaches in assessing program quality:

1. Using a **validated, field-tested quality assessment tool** to understand program performance and to facilitate knowledge-sharing between sites;
2. Engaging in a **team-based assessment process** to support individual and cross-site learning; and
3. Creating a **safe learning space** to build staff buy-in and engagement.

The table below details what each of these practices and approaches has looked like in action.

Promising Practice/Approach	What this practice/approach looked like in action?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Using a <b>validated, field-tested quality assessment tool</b> to understand program performance and facilitate knowledge-sharing across sites</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Evergreen uses the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) to assess program quality. The YPQA is a validated instrument designed to measure the quality of youth programs in seven domains: safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, engagement, youth-centered policies and practices, high expectations for youth and staff, and access. Evergreen's process for collecting and reflecting on program quality data entails an observation and debrief process that is integrated into other program activities and meetings.</li></ul>

<sup>12</sup> Durlak, Joseph, Weissberg, Roger, and Pachan, Molly (2010). A Meta-Analysis of After-School Programs That Seek to Promote Personal and Social Skills in Children and Adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45(3-4):294-309. [http://www.flume.com.br/pdf/Durlak\\_A\\_meta-analysisof\\_after\\_school.pdf](http://www.flume.com.br/pdf/Durlak_A_meta-analysisof_after_school.pdf)

Promising Practice/Approach	What this practice/approach looked like in action?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Franklin-McKinley measures program quality using a modified version of the California Quality Self-Assessment Tool (QSA Tool). The QSA is a versatile, validated instrument designed to assess the quality of youth programs in eleven program quality elements: program design and assessment, program administration and finance, community partnerships and collaboration, alignment and linkages with the school day, program environment and safety, youth development, staff recruitment and professional development, family involvement, nutrition and physical activity, promoting diversity, access, equity, and inclusion, and effectively supporting English learners. It is intended for self-assessment, and is designed to be adapted and condensed according to a program's needs. By using the same version of the tool consistently across sites, Franklin-McKinley site managers are able to track program implementation holistically – understanding how it is progressing across locations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging in a <b>team-based assessment process</b> to support individual and cross-site learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Franklin-McKinley, Evergreen, and Alum Rock all incorporate team reflection processes to understand and learn from their data. At all sites, once staff have either observed one another or engaged in self-assessment, they meet to compare their results and discuss what did and did not work well. These conversations happen among staff members at one site or across multiple sites, and help staff to gain new ideas and insights for their programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a <b>safe learning space</b> to build staff buy-in and engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At Franklin-McKinley, site managers continually reinforce the goal of the assessment process: to support overall program quality, rather than to judge individual teacher performance. Having clarity about the purpose of the assessments makes hesitant teachers more comfortable with the program observation process.</li> </ul>

### *What are other practices and approaches worth watching?*

- Alum Rock assesses several aspects of program quality and fidelity using a home-grown tool they call the Core Program Checklist. The site supervisor at each site and a quality improvement coach complete the tool, assessing domains that include compliance with legislative requirements, student safety and program preparedness, youth behavior support system, staff support system, relationship development, communication, youth development, arts and enrichment, and academic areas including homework, ELA, math, and STEM. Using the data collected using the checklist, the quality improvement coach works collaboratively with program sites to use the data for program improvement. While this tool is not a validated instrument, it provides the program a way to consistently assess program quality and program compliance elements across sites and is tailored to their specific program needs.

# Student Assessment

## *The Importance of Student Assessment*

Using student assessments to monitor student improvement is critical for programs to understand how well they are achieving desired outcomes. Collecting baseline data helps programs gauge how much assistance new students may need to meet their goals, and enables programs to measure student progress during and after the program (by comparing new data with the baseline information). Once programs have this full data picture for the students in the aggregate, they can determine the extent to which their program supported student growth overall. This information will enable programs to tweak the intervention, and iterate to make sure that the curriculum and instruction are meeting their students' learning needs.

In addition to using assessment data to reflect on overall program effectiveness, providers can also use these data to better support *individual* students. By collecting data frequently during a program period and focusing on the results for each specific student, programs can watch student progress on an individual level. For example, students who are struggling in a particular subject may have a different learning style or learning need. If instructors are able to learn about individual students' needs through their data and by working with them in person, providers will be able to adjust instruction to meet those needs and help the student improve.<sup>13</sup>

## *Promising Practices and Approaches*

The SJ Learns programs' experiences point to three promising practices and approaches in monitoring student assessment data:

1. **Collecting student assessment data** to understand how the program is meeting student needs and making their desired impact;
2. Using student assessment data to **identify and serve students most in need** of the programming; and
3. Using student assessment data to **tailor programming** to individual students' learning needs.

## **SJ Learns Student Assessments**

SJ Learns programs are using two types of student assessments: formative and summative.

- SJ Learns programs are able to choose what types of formative assessments they use to understand their students' progress. These assessments are used to collect data on an ongoing basis to understand how best to support individual students. They also provide staff with real-time data that they can use to learn about what's working well and less well, and continuously improve their programs.
- The formative assessments used by SJ Learns programs include computer adaptive skills assessments, such as Accelerated Reader and Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA), as well as lower tech assessments such as the "success folders" used at the Kinder Academy.
- Programs also capitalize on summative assessments available as part of statewide standardized testing: the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test. The SBAC is administered to all students at California public schools, in grades 3-8 and high school, to measure student achievement and growth in English and math. Staff can use SBAC scores as an additional data source providing insight into how much students have learned at the end of the year.

<sup>13</sup> Tomlinson, C. A. (August, 2000). Differentiation of Instruction in the Elementary Grades. *ERIC Digest*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Promising Practice/Approach	What this practice/approach looked like in action?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collecting student assessment data to understand how the program is meeting student needs and making their desired impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evergreen uses several assessment tools to monitor student reading skills, including Accelerated Reader (AR), California English Language Development Test (CELDT), Basic Phonic Skills Test (BPST), and A Developmental English Proficiency Test (ADEPT). Evergreen also uses the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) to evaluate areas of students' social-emotional wellbeing.</li> <li>Franklin-McKinley assesses student reading skills using the STAR Renaissance Reading Assessment and Lexia, an online measurement system that reveals gaps in student reading level.</li> <li>Alum Rock uses the Educational Software for Guiding Instruction (ESGI) to monitor student academic progress in math and reading. ESGI is a customizable digital assessment tool specifically designed for pre-K through first grade students, appropriate for Alum Rock's kindergarten program. Alum Rock takes advantage of the opportunities for learning that the tool offers, such as printing flash cards for home use included in letters to parents (flash cards are generated by the software based on assessment data, and contain the words and math facts that students need to learn next).</li> <li>Alum Rock also uses "success folders" to track students' work in three specific areas: letter recognition, sight word identification, and number recognition. These folders support reading and math fact fluency through documenting the expectations and successes of each student in these areas.</li> <li>San José Unified assesses student progress in math and reading using three tools: Smart Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA), and the Writing Performance Assessment (WPA). The program plans to use data from these assessments along with other school data, such as attendance, to understand student outcomes.</li> <li>Oak Grove assesses student math and reading skills using SBAC and iReady, a reading and math assessment tool created specifically for the Common Core.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using student assessment data to <b>identify and serve students most in need</b> of the programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oak Grove used student assessment data from 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to invite incoming 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students not performing at grade level to join the summer and fall programs. In addition to determining student eligibility and need for the program using assessment data, Oak Grove also consulted the assessment data to determine the focus of the program's math curriculum.</li> </ul>



Promising Practice/Approach	What this practice/approach looked like in action?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using student assessment data to <b>tailor programming</b> to individual students' learning needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oak Grove uses student assessment data to understand how to tailor programming in order to meet student needs. While Oak Grove knew that they had a high population of English language learners, they did not anticipate the effect that students' struggle with English comprehension has on their understanding of math. As the program got off the ground, program staff determined that many ELL students were having difficulty understanding word problems and math vocabulary, and this language barrier resulted in lower test scores. To address this challenge, staff tailored the program to emphasize vocabulary and language use with math, and integrated an ELL-specific instruction method into teaching math.</li> </ul>

## Parent Engagement

### *The importance of parent involvement*

Parents play a central role in nearly all areas of their children's development. In the context of education and enrichment opportunities, family involvement is effective in advancing children's learning and social-emotional development.<sup>14</sup> Parent engagement in creating supportive home learning environments and in school-based environments, therefore, should be an important approach of after-school programs.

### *Promising Practices and Approaches*

The SJ Learns programs' experiences point to two promising practices and approaches in parent engagement:

1. Providing **take-home learning resources** to help parents create supportive at-home learning environments; and
2. Planning **structured parent check-ins** (e.g., as part of the end-of-day sign out process, home visits, and culminating events) to facilitate parent engagement.

The table below details what each of these practices and approaches has looked like in action.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, S., Robbins, T., Stagman, S. & Mahur, D. (2013). Parent engagement from preschool through grade 3: A guide for policymakers. Report. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.

Promising Practice/Approach	What this practice/approach looked like in practice?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing <b>take-home learning resources</b> to help parents create supportive at-home learning environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alum Rock's Kinder Academies provide parents with tailored vocabulary and math facts flash cards. Using the ESGI assessment program, program staff generate and print individual reports that include a sheet of the words and math facts that the child is having trouble with. The report is sent home as a parent letter, and parents can cut up the sheet to create flash cards, which they can then use to reinforce learning at home.</li> <li>At Evergreen, YMCA program staff lend books to the parents. Parents who may not have many books are then able to read together with their children at home.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning <b>structured parent check-ins</b> (e.g., as part of the end-of-day sign out process, home visits, and culminating events) to facilitate parent engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Franklin-McKinley's CORAL program engages parents through monthly meetings and biannual home visits. The monthly meetings provide parents with resources, information, and strategies to support their children's learning. Home visits allow staff to get to know their students' families and to gain a better understanding of students' home environments.</li> <li>The programs at Alum Rock and San José Unified hold special culminating events at the end of each learning unit. During these events students demonstrate what they learned in front of their families, and program providers have an opportunity to connect with parents.</li> <li>At Evergreen, parents are required to sign their children out. Staff use sign-out time as an opportunity to check in with parents on a regular basis and to engage parents more deeply than teachers are usually able to.</li> </ul>

## Reflections and Recommendations

### *Alignment with School Day*

- Creating alignment between the school day and enrichment programs takes continuous collaboration and time.** It is encouraging to see that SJ Learns programs are actively creating linkages to bridge classroom and after-school activities, despite the fact that doing so requires resources and time beyond what is generally expected of teachers and after-school staff. SVCF should encourage programs to share with each other promising practices and approaches for building purposeful alignment in an efficient and effective manner.
- Good alignment practices should be codified to ensure that coordination between program and school staff becomes part of standard routine,** remaining in place beyond any changes in staff or administration. Systematizing alignment practices will also aid in making such practices replicable in other programs and schools in San José.
- SJ Learns programs that are not already doing so should institute regular, structured meetings between teachers and program staff as a time for sharing and reflection.** Alignment meetings are most effective when they are well-structured by using an agenda with clearly-stated objectives and assigning an "owner" to any action items generated during the meeting. Agenda items could include updates on curriculum and student progress, a review of any data to discuss continuous program refinement, and sharing what staff are learning about what works and what does not work.

## Quality Assessment

- **Programs can benefit from using a validated quality assessment tool.** Program quality assessments are well-known in the out-of-school field as a tool for improving programs, and the SJ Learns programs that used quality assessments experienced positive results. Validated tools, such as California After-School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool and the Youth Program Quality Assessment, offer to programs a quality assessment that has been extensively tested and revised for optimal results. For example, the Youth Program Quality Assessment Validation Study involved a four-year effort that brought together expert practitioners and experts to develop and test the instrument across 300 observations and interviews.<sup>15</sup> This testing process ensures that the tool is well-designed and appropriate for use with a variety of after-school program types. An assessment tool that has undergone such rigorous analysis and scrutiny is more likely to help programs achieve their desired outcome: improved program quality.

## Student Assessment

- **Programs should be encouraged to use student assessment data to inform program planning, implementation, and improvement.** Using student assessment data helps programs to tailor services to individual student needs, to understand the rate at which students are improving, and to help programs identify service gaps and areas for improvement.

## Parent Engagement

- **Schools can deepen their engagement with parents by capitalizing on the connection that after-school programs have with parents.** SJ Learns program staff shared that they have an easier time connecting with working parents because, unlike their school-day counterparts, after-school staff are more readily available after the work day. One program provider voiced that parents are more drawn to after-school programming because it is perceived as “fun” and less focused on grades and test scores. The opening that after-school programs have with parents is an opportunity that schools could capitalize on to deepen their engagement with parents. For example, schools could work with after-school staff to raise academic concerns (as Evergreen has done) and share in-class progress to get parents excited about their children’s learning.
- **All SJ Learns programs should incorporate parent involvement in their program design.** There are different ways that parent participation can look, and each program should design an approach that works within their resources. Ideally, parent engagement with after-school programs includes face-time with program staff (through home visits or in-person student sign-outs), plus individualized learning resources (such as flash cards and books) that parents can use to create a learning environment at home.

## Other Opportunities

- Programs should think about how they might support students beyond the school year. Some of the SJ Learns programs already provide summer programming. Other program partners in the SJ Learns Initiative might consider what supports they can provide before and during the summer months to prevent summer learning loss. One idea is to ensure that parents are set up with resources after the school-year ends to give continuity and/or deepen learning that happened during the academic year.

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, Charles, Hohmann, Charles (2005). Full Findings from the Youth PQA Validation Study. *High/Scope Educational Research Foundation*. <http://cypq.org/content/full-findings-youth-pqa-validation-study>.

## Technology Integration in SJ Learns programs

Technology opens the door to immense opportunities to support student learning. If integrated well, technology and digital media in the after-school space – through the use of computers and tablets to access the internet, apps, and more – can foster deeper learning and content engagement than with traditional media alone.<sup>16</sup> Dynamic, modern apps can be tailored to individual students' needs, helping students at varying levels to increase their knowledge and skills. SJ Learns is committed to supporting programs to use technology in the after-school space to advance students' learning and prepare them for a digital future.

### *How programs are using technology*

Two SJ Learns programs are using technology regularly to support student learning. At Franklin-McKinley, staff regularly use Lexia Reading Core, a computer program that provides personalized reading instruction. Students look forward to using this game-based program, and staff are able to monitor students' performance with the progress-monitoring data generated. At Alum Rock, staff provide kinders with iPads loaded with Education Software for Guiding Instruction (ESGI). With this blended learning approach, staff work with the kinders on the iPad so that the students can increase their letter and number recognition.

Several ways in which Alum Rock and Franklin-McKinley are using technology in their programs align with field research findings about what supports successful integration of technology in the classroom. Research shows the importance of **students playing an active role in their learning** and **receiving frequent, personalized feedback**.<sup>16</sup> With Lexia Reading Core, Franklin-McKinley students actively engage in reading exercises and activities. The program provides real-time feedback by indicating when students have responded to a question correctly or not. The programs also understand the importance of providing program staff with **high quality professional development** opportunities to equip them to effectively use digital tools in the afterschool space.<sup>15</sup> Both programs train staff to use their respective technology-based programs and integrate them into the curriculum.

### *Opportunities to optimize technology*

SJ Learns programs are continuing to explore innovative ways to integrate technology into their programs by sharing their experiences and ideas with one another in cohort meetings and learning about emerging models in the field. Programs can also capitalize on case studies and field research, including the following:

- Student engagement increases when teachers **connect classroom activities to real-world scenarios**.<sup>17</sup> SJ Learns programs might consider integrating current events, history lessons, or science content into existing curricula.
- Technology can be a powerful and effective way to **communicate with parents**. Olinder Elementary uses the ParentLink app to share administrative information (e.g. school calendar updates) with parents. Programs could use a similar app to send parents friendly reminders to read to their children, schedule a library visit, or ask their children about what they are learning at school.

### *Challenges facing programs*

While integrating technology into extended learning programs offers many exciting opportunities, SJ Learns programs face several challenges and tensions:

- **Insufficient access to technology** – Many students and parents do not have access to technology at home. This limits the extent to which the after-school programs can use technology to engage with parents and to invite students to carry their learning beyond the school doors. Some students have been able to find creative ways to access technology, for example using their parents' mobile devices instead of a desktop or laptop. Programs can consider using cloud computing, open-source software, and free online resources to integrate technology inexpensively. PBS Kids (pbskids.org) is one of many organizations that offers downloadable content at no cost.
- **Too much screen time** – Program staff have voiced the concern that, in an increasingly digital world, students already spend too much time in front of a screen. Programs must balance the benefits of using technology to aid student learning with the potential drawbacks of increased time spent in front of a computer monitor, tablet, or mobile device. Programs may choose to rotate screen-based activities with silent reading, teacher-led lessons, and other traditional classroom activities.

<sup>16</sup> Vega, Vanessa (2013). Technology Integration Research Review. *Edutopia*. <https://www.edutopia.org/technology-integration-research-learning-outcomes>

<sup>17</sup> The After-School Corporation (2012). Where The Kids Are: Digital Learning in Class and Beyond. [www.expandschools.org/sites/default/files/digital\\_learning\\_beyond\\_class.pdf](http://www.expandschools.org/sites/default/files/digital_learning_beyond_class.pdf)

## Quality Assessment Observation Findings

Quality assessment tools support academic achievement by assessing service delivery. Site observations and corresponding documentation via a validated field-tested assessment instrument can help early learning programs improve program quality by providing a clear structure for observations and a rubric for measuring site activities that can identify areas for improvement.

In spring 2017, the San José Learns evaluation team visited seven program sites (out of a total of 16) to collect information about the quality of program implementation. For the purposes of having a common framework to assess each site, the team used the Quick CASP Assessment Tool (QCASP) Observation Assessment.<sup>18</sup>





The QCASP is a program quality self-assessment tool developed by the National Summer Learning Association, Summer Matters, and ASAP Connect. As the assessment was originally designed for summer programs, only relevant indicators were included for the SJ Learns observations. (For example, we did not score the “Arrival/Departure/Transitions” and “Program Spirit” indicators.)

The intent of using a common tool was to gather comparable information on best practices in early learning across the program sites and to help us tell the full story of SJ Learns programs and their practices. Programs were not asked to, nor were they necessarily designed to, address every domain listed below. Please note that scoring was based on a single observation at each site and may not be representative of each program as a whole.

Results from the site observations can be found in Exhibit 8. Each indicator is scored on a 4-point scale *specific to the indicator*, with “1” being the lowest score and “4” being the highest. Please refer to the QCASP tool for detailed indicator and scoring guidelines. Cells in the table are color-coded to provide an at-a-glance representation of quality.

Districts and schools are not identified in the table, as our intent was to share common themes, promising practices, and challenges across the cohort rather than singling out particular sites or programs. In addition, as mentioned above, one observation per site cannot necessarily be representative of the program as a whole. Therefore, programs were assured confidentiality in sharing out QCASP results. Individual results from the observations were shared back with program administrators.

### QCASP Observation Heat Map Guide

-  = 1.0 – 1.9
-  = 2.0 – 2.9
-  = 3.0 – 3.9
-  = 4.0

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.summermatters.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Quick-CASP-Interactive.pdf>

Exhibit 8. QCASP Observation Results

Indicators	District A		District B		District C	District D	District E	District Avg.
	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7	
Planning								
Adult to Youth Ratio	2.7	2.0	3.0	2.0	3.5	3.0	3.0	2.7
Individualized								
Multiple Grouping Strategies	2.7	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.2
Intentional								
Advance Planning	3.0	2.5	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.6
Clear Expectations	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.3
Debriefs/Checks for Understanding	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.4
Staff Engagement	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0	3.2
Skill Building	2.8	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.0	2.9
Integrated								
Integration of Academic & Developmental Focus	2.5	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.4
Positive Reinforcement	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.0	2.6
Inquiry-Based Learning	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	3.0	2.6
Collaborative Learning	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	1.7
Creative Thinking	2.5	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.5	1.0	3.0	2.3
Youth Produced Work	2.3	2.0	4.0	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	2.5
Behavior Management	2.7	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.3
Program Culture								
Physical Environment	2.8	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.8
Planning								
Food Service	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Physical Activity	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	2.9



## Site Observation Key Takeaways

While each SJ Learns program is distinct, there are some common themes that emerged during the site observations.

### *Areas of Strength*

There were a few domains in which the cohort, as a whole, performed well.

- All programs were strong in **staff engagement**. Program staff had a good understanding of their role for each activity and the majority of staff showed a high level of engagement with the students throughout the duration of the program.
- **Skill building** was also an area of strength across the programs. For the most part, staff designed program activities that were grade-appropriate and linked to academic and developmental skills, though not all activities hit the mark (e.g. using words too complex for the grade level or crafting activities that required too many steps for younger students to follow). Due to limited program time, there was also not always enough time devoted to any particular subject to achieve subject matter expertise or skill mastery.
- All programs aimed to provide a **physical environment** that was different from a traditional classroom and promote interactivity. Many of the programs varied the use of space depending on the activity, using tables arranged in groups for individual and small group activities, and having the children sit on the floor for full group instruction. Programs that had a dedicated classroom (i.e. not borrowing a school day classroom) often displayed a lot of student-produced art.

### *Areas of Growth*

There were some common areas for growth that emerged from the observations.

- Programs would benefit from strengthening the **collaborative learning** piece. The goal of this indicator is to encourage collaborative learning and interdependence among the students by having them work together on activities to reach an end goal or display their shared learning. Many activities, while done in group settings did not actually require students to interact with each other, or students who completed an assignment early would not necessarily share back and help their group members. Program staff should set up clear expectations of what it means to collaborate and intentionally design activities to require that students work together to produce a product. Program staff could also build in more opportunities for groups to share back what they learned and how they worked together to get to the end product.
- Many program activities involved **multiple grouping strategies** to an extent, e.g. full group instruction followed by individual or small group work. However, we observed that often, much of the group work ended up being done individually. Small group size could also differ quite vastly for the same activity, with some groups having four students and others having one or two students. Similar to the suggestion above, programs should build in more peer learning and group work opportunities. We also encourage program staff to think about how to break students into groups so that no one is left alone.

# Student Outcomes

This section of the report provides an analysis of student assessment data for kindergarteners and for third-graders<sup>19</sup> in order to deepen our understanding of the ways in which SJ Learns after-school programs contribute to bolstering academic achievement. The results suggest that program participation is indeed contributing to academic success in literacy and math. In every SJ Learns program, there were gains in reading and math over the course of the school year, based on their pre- and post-assessment scores. In addition, **in four out of the five SJ Learns districts, participating students outperformed a matched comparison group (a control group approximation)<sup>20</sup> in ELA/reading, math, or both:**

**Exhibit 9. Student Assessment Results Relative to Matched Comparison Group**

	Kindergarten		Third Grade			
	Pre/Post Improvement in Local Assessment		Pre/Post Improvement in Local Assessment		SBAC	
	ELA/Reading	Math	ELA/Reading	Math	ELA	Math
ARUESD	+	=	--	--	--	--
EESD	*	*	+	--	+	=
FMSD	--	--	-	-	=	=
OGSD	--	--	=	+	=	+
SJUSD	+ / - <sup>†</sup>	--	+	--	=	-

+ More improvement for participant group (local assessments), with a difference between participant group and comparison group greater than one percentage point; higher mean score for participant group (SBAC), with a difference greater than 0.1.

= Same improvement for participant group (local assessments) at or within one percentage point; same mean score for participant group (SBAC) with a difference at or within 0.1.

- Less improvement for participant group (local assessments) with a difference greater than one percentage point; lower mean score for participant group (SBAC) with a difference greater than 0.1.

-- = SJ Learns program did not serve that grade level or that assessments of that type were not performed.

\* Although the program at EESD served kindergarteners, there were not enough student data to conduct analyses on their assessment results.

† SJUSD has two ELA-related assessments for kindergarteners; CPAA for literacy and WPA for writing. Results for both assessments are presented here, as CPAA/WPA. Program participants did better than their matched comparison counterparts on the CPAA, while they did worse than their counterparts on the WPA.

The analysis performed looks at two types of student assessments:

- 1) **Local Assessments:** Assessments that each district or school chooses for the purpose of measuring student growth in literacy or math, and
- 2) **Assessments Common across All Districts:** Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) scores in ELA and math (end-of-school-year standardized tests administered starting in third grade).

The table below shows an overview of the analyses performed.

Analyses		Assessment Type	
		Local Assessments	SBAC
Over-time change for participants only		✓	
Comparison between participants and a matched comparison group of:	Over-time change (percent rising at least one level)	✓	
	Mean scores at one time-point		✓

<sup>19</sup> The analysis focuses on kinders and third-graders because the SJ Learns programs largely served these two grade-level groups.

<sup>20</sup> A matched comparison group is a way to approximate a true control group. The process by which the matched comparison group was constructed is discussed in more detail in the “Methods” section below.

After providing an overview of methods, this section of the report shows over-time change and comparative data separately for each district and grade.

## Methods

The analyses in this section examine:

- How local assessment test scores change for program participants from the first test administration to one at or near the end of the school year (pre/post changes in local assessments);
- How the pre/post changes in local assessment test scores differ between participants and a comparison group; and
- How SBAC scores differ between treatment and comparison group (for third-graders only).

### Why Compare Over-Time Change between Participants and a Comparison Group?

While it is certainly helpful to see change over time for program participants, it provides a circumscribed view into the extent to which program participation *supported* that over-time change. The truth is that there will always be change over time for students, and while *some* of that change is due to program participation, some of that change is also due to other factors (including growth that comes simply from natural maturation and from being in school). By comparing participants to non-participants, we can begin to tease out the extent to which any change we see was linked to program participation.

### Why Use SBAC Scores, and Why Compare Scores between Participants and a Comparison Group?

The design uses SBAC scores in addition to local assessments partly because it allows for a standardized way to look *across* the participating districts to see how students participating in SJ Learns programs did overall. In addition, the comparison of participants to a non-participating group – as with the comparison for over-time change in assessment scores – gives us additional insight into the extent to which the program may have contributed to achievement as measured by SBAC performance.

### Constructing the Comparison Groups

Working closely with district staff and program administrators in each SJ Learns district, the evaluation team collected demographic and assessment data from the 2016-17 academic year. Data were collected on program participants, as well as on students in the district *not* in the program.<sup>21</sup> Using data for non-participants, we developed *matched comparison groups* separately for each district. Since students were not randomly selected into treatment and control groups, the evaluation team used a technique called *propensity score matching* (PSM) to develop these comparison groups.

PSM, at its best, allows us to use a well-matched comparison group *to approximate a true control group*, and then compare results for the matched comparison group with the participant group to *estimate* what would have happened if students had *not* participated in SJ Learns programming. *We recommend caution when interpreting these comparative results!* While the comparison is indeed helpful, the data available for this analysis have several limitations:

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<sup>21</sup> Depending on the district, sometimes the data were available for all public schools in the district, and other times data were available only for the participating schools.

- A limited set of variables (data elements) was available to use for developing the comparison groups. We used gender, ethnicity, English learner status, special education status,<sup>22</sup> school day attendance, and baseline scores on reading and/or math assessment scores.
- Data were not available on programs that the comparison group students may have participated in – programs that may have supported their own academic growth.
- Some of the students participating in the programs were excluded from the comparative analyses. This was the case for one of these two reasons: (1) they did not have data on all of the variables used during the matching procedure; (2) there were so few students with their demographic characteristics that the propensity model would not do a good job of finding a good match for them (e.g. there may have been only one or two program participants who were not English learners).

For a more detailed discussion of the propensity score matching approach and its limitations, as well as additional information about how each district's comparison group was constructed, please see the Methods Appendix (Appendix B).

## Local Assessments<sup>23</sup>

SJ Learns programs use a variety of assessment tools to measure how students are progressing. Formative assessments are administered at least twice a year, and often multiple times a year to monitor student learning and understand how best to support individual students. They provide staff with data that they can use to learn about what is working well or not as well with individual students. These data can also, however, paint a summative picture: how are students progressing in general? Assessment results included in this analysis are based on baseline and final administration scores during the 2016-17 school year. The local assessment tools used by programs and included in our analysis are summarized below.

**Exhibit 10. Local Assessment Tool(s) Included in Analyses**

School District	Provider	Local Assessment Tool(s)
ARUESD	THINK Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• iReady: a dynamic diagnostic that adapts questions based on student responses to assess an individual's reading and mathematics levels</li> </ul>
EESD	YMCA of Silicon Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerated Reader STAR (AR STAR): a reading assessment that measures students' understanding of reading skills across a variety of domains</li> </ul>
FMSD	Catholic Charities/CORAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STAR Renaissance Reading and Math Assessments (STAR): standardized tests that assess student reading and math skills</li> </ul>
OGSD	Silicon Valley Education Foundation, Bay Area Tutoring Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• iReady</li> </ul>
SJUSD	Catholic Charities/CORAL (with other partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA): a formative, computer adaptive skills assessment for literacy and math</li> <li>• Writing Performance Assessment (WPA): Paper-pencil writing assignments scored by site coaches and administered three times a year</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> These data were not available for all districts.

<sup>23</sup> Data are for English language arts (or reading) and math assessment scores.

## Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)

The Smarter Balanced summative assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics are required standardized tests for all California public school students in grades three through eight and eleven. SBAC scores are categorized into four achievement levels: standard not met (level 1), standard nearly met (level 2), standard met (level 3), and standard exceeded (level 4).

### How do the Results of the Local Assessments and of the SBAC Compare?

Overall, the results of the local assessments and of the SBAC tell a very similar story about student outcomes in ELA and math. As seen in Exhibit 9, districts that demonstrated more improvement for the participant group than the matched comparison group in ELA or math on the local assessments typically also demonstrated a higher mean score on the SBAC. This trend is also seen in instances where the participants group showed the same or less improvement/lower mean score than the matched comparison group.<sup>24</sup> These findings suggest that the local assessment tools that districts are using serve as a useful complement to the SBAC.

### What is the Relationship Between Student Demographics and Performance?

Comparing local assessment and SBAC results of SJ Learns program participants by gender and race/ethnicity revealed that, in most cases, the differences in outcomes between boys versus girls, or across ethnicities, are not statistically significant. In general, girls in the program fared better in reading/ELA than boys, though only in Alum Rock was the difference statistically significant. (Results were close to significant in Oak Grove at  $p=0.6$ .) Comparing results across race/ethnicity yielded no statistically significant findings. The lack of meaningful differences is not surprising given the relatively small number of students in the dataset and the fact that most of the students served in the programs were of Hispanic/Latino decent, reflective of students in the SJ Learns districts.

## Assessment Results for Each District

Results are shared below for each district separately. For information on the degree to which participant and comparison groups are well-matched on key characteristics, see Appendix B.

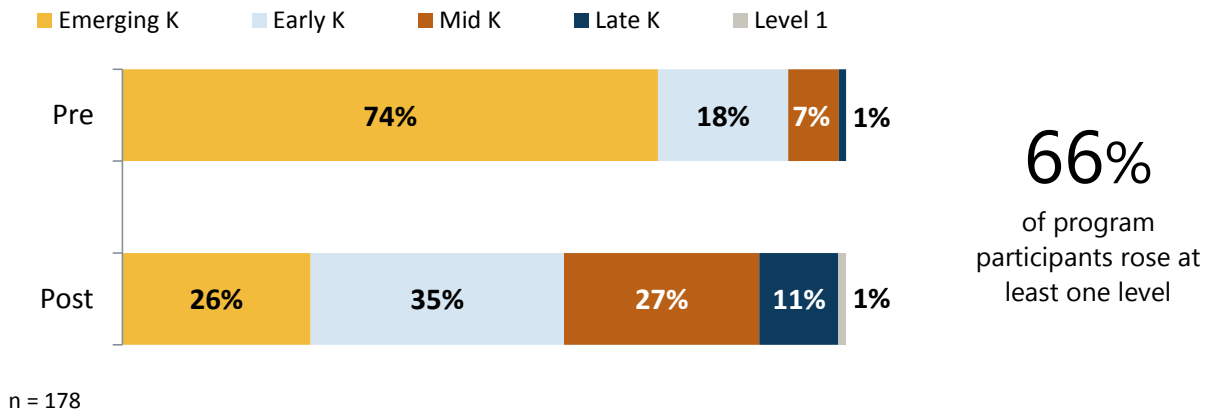
### Alum Rock Union Elementary School District: Kinder

Kindergarteners enrolled in THINK Together showed improvement in both reading and math. Two-thirds of program participants rose at least one reading placement level over the course of the school year, while nearly one half rose at least one math placement level. Impressively, the proportion receiving at least a “Mid K” rating in reading rose from 8% to 39%, and the proportion receiving at least a “Mid/Late K” rating in math rose from 12% to 37%.

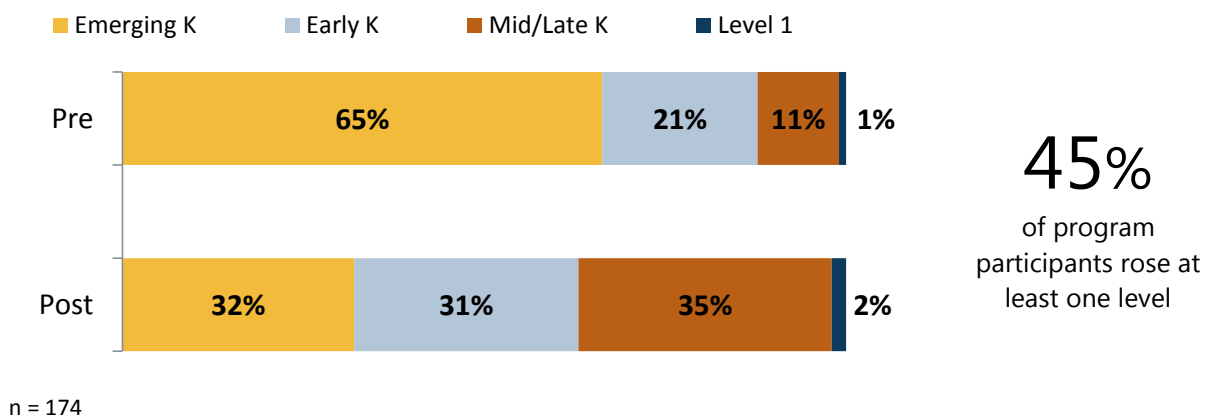
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<sup>24</sup> For SJUSD, the participant group showed more improvement than the matched comparison group for ELA on the local assessments and a lower mean score on the SBAC; however, the participant group and matched comparison group actually had very similar results on both the local assessment and the SBAC. See exhibits 44 and 46.

**Exhibit 11. iReady: Pre and Post Reading Placement Level (Kindergarten, ARUESD)**



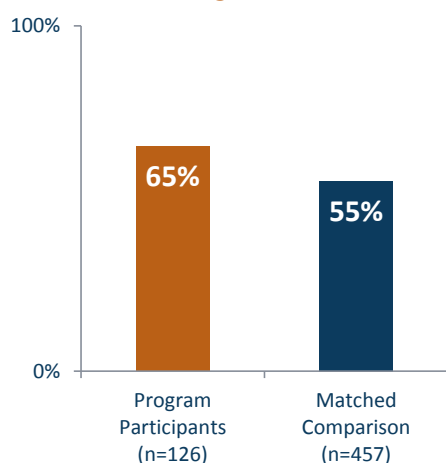
**Exhibit 12. iReady: Pre and Post Math Placement Levels (Kindergarten, ARUESD)**



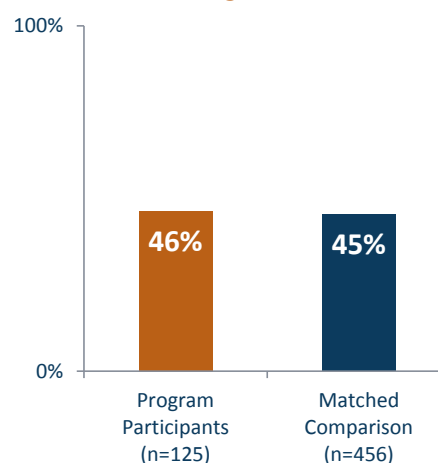
Not only is there improvement over time for the kindergarteners in the THINK Together program, but their improvement from pre-test to post-test outpaced improvement for a similar group of students in the district for the reading test: 65% of program participants rose at least one level, while 55% of the matched comparison group improved (and this difference was statistically significant). For the math test, results were similar, although a slightly greater proportion of program participants rose at least one level (46% compared with 45% for the matched comparison). The findings suggest that the THINK Together program at ARUESD may contribute to improved kindergarten reading proficiency.



**Exhibit 13. iReady: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Reading Placement Level (Kindergarten, ARUESD)\***



**Exhibit 14. iReady: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Math Placement Level (Kindergarten, ARUESD)**



\*  $p = < .05$

While we cannot pinpoint the specific program components that led to the positive outcomes, we can highlight aspects of THINK Together that likely contribute to its success. THINK Together, California's largest nonprofit provider of extended learning programs, and ARUESD had an existing summer partnership in place at another elementary school in East San José. The success of that program helped to refine the activities for SJ Learns programming.

THINK Together staff emphasize strong partnerships between program and school staff. THINK Together's Bay Area Director meets regularly with the district's Assistant Superintendent of Instruction to coordinate recruitment and develop program content. At each program site, a site supervisor works closely with school administrators to ensure that afterschool instruction is aligned with classroom priorities. In some cases, the program shared the afterschool space with a classroom teacher, thereby increasing opportunities for staff and teacher communication and coordination about students who may need additional support.

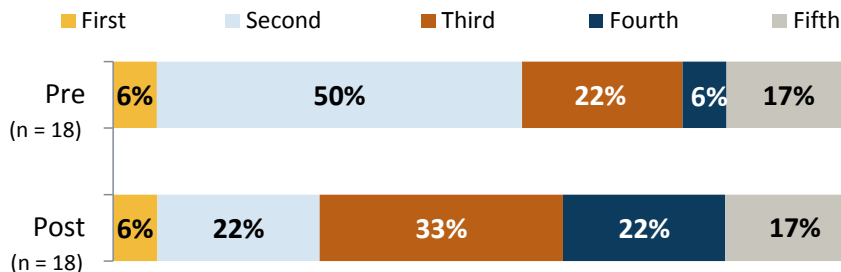
Another aspect of THINK Together's approach to highlight is its "success folders" model. Site staff use the folders to document and track the progress of each student in reading and math. The folders are customized for each student and contribute to differentiated instruction appropriate to each student's level.

## Evergreen Elementary School District: Third Grade<sup>25</sup>

Third-graders enrolled in the program funded through SJ Learns showed improvement in reading. While the proportion of students testing very low and very high was the same at pre-test and post-test, there was a dramatic shift upward in the grade 2-4 range. Those testing at the second-grade level dropped by more than half, and those at the third- and fourth-grade level rose from 28% to 55% (with those testing at the fourth-grade level rising from 6% to 22%).

<sup>25</sup> The program at EESD served kindergarteners, but the evaluation team did not receive enough student data to run analyses on their assessment results (data were received for only three students).

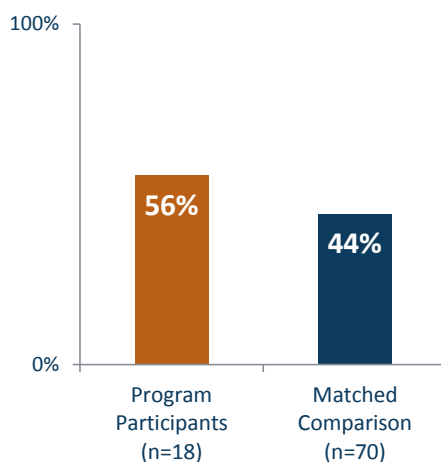
**Exhibit 15. Reading, Testing at Grade Level Equivalent  
(Third Grade, EESD)**



**56%**  
of program  
participants rose at  
least one level

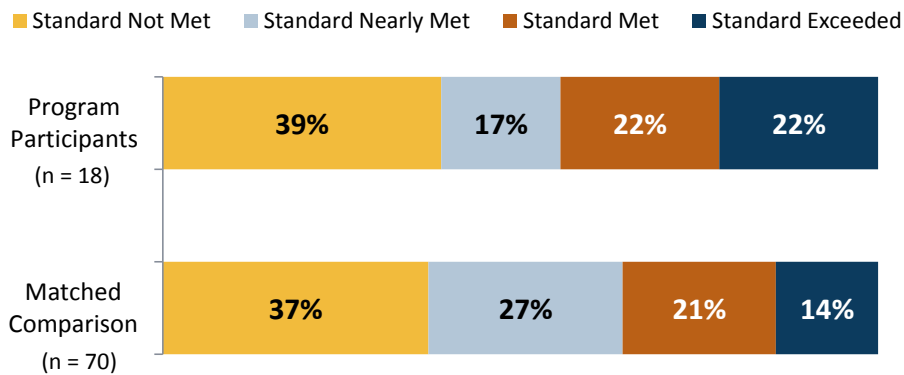
Kindergarteners participating in the YMCA program show greater improvement in reading and math compared to their counterparts who did not participate in the program. AR STAR results show that a higher percentage of program participants rose one level in reading proficiency than the matched comparison students: 56% of participants versus 44% in the comparison group (these results were not, however, statistically significant – and lack of significance is most likely due to a fairly small sample size).

**Exhibit 16. AR STAR: Percent of Students Rising at Least One Level in Reading Proficiency  
(Third Grade, EESD)**

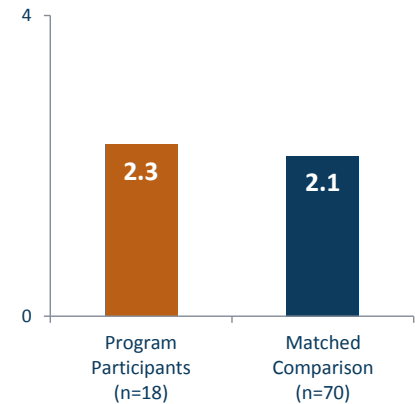


SBAC results likewise show better outcomes for program participants than for the comparison group. While the average ELA placement level score is only slightly higher for program participants (Exhibit 18), the distribution of placement levels (Exhibit 17) show that 44% of SJ Learns students met or exceeded ELA standards, compared to 35% for the matched comparison group. The difference between the groups was not statistically significant.

**Exhibit 17. SBAC English Language Arts (ELA) Placement Levels  
(Third Grade, EESD)**

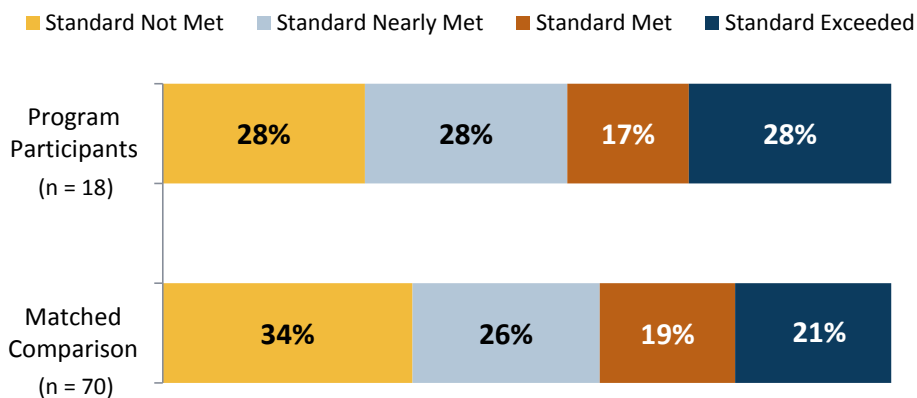


**Exhibit 18. SBAC ELA Mean Placement Level (EESD)**

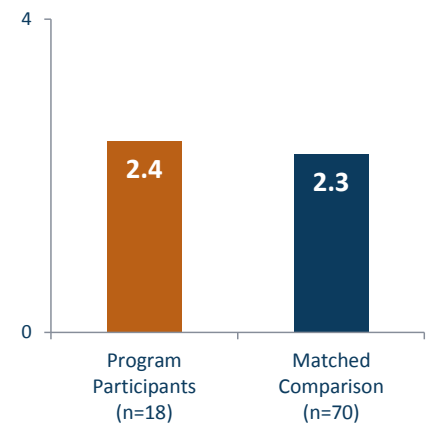


Math outcomes tell a similar story, with 45% of SJ Learns students meeting or exceeding standards compared to 40% of the comparison students (Exhibit 19), and only a small mean difference in scores overall (Exhibit 20). The difference was not statistically significant.

**Exhibit 19. SBAC Math Placement Levels  
(Third Grade, EESD)**



**Exhibit 20. SBAC Math Mean Placement Level (EESD)**



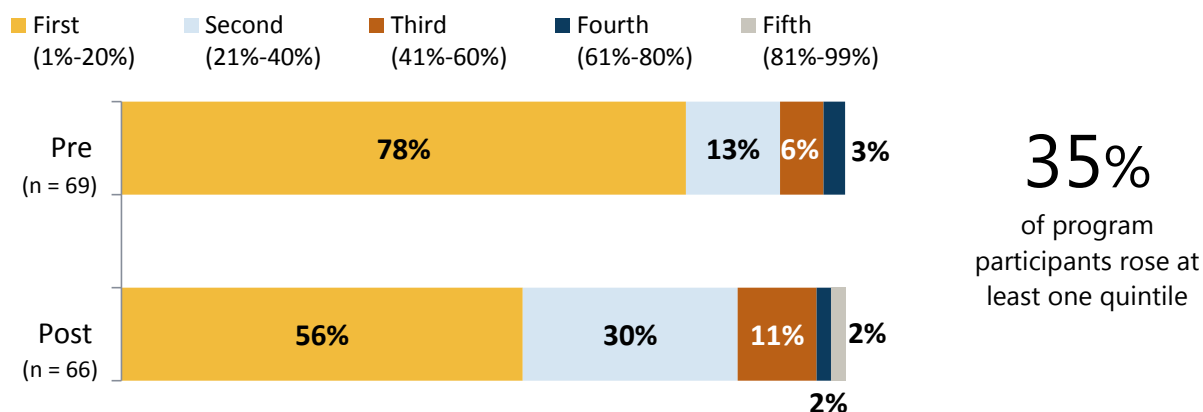
While this study did not test for the specific interventions and approaches that contributed to students' academic outcomes, we want to highlight aspects of Evergreen's approach that are promising. Evergreen supported students' reading and math skill development using two approaches: the Four Blocks literacy model and project-based learning (PBL). Four Blocks allows students to develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills towards becoming effective, literate communicators. Evergreen elected to use Four Blocks because of the research documenting its effectiveness. YMCA's experience using the model over the past 10 years also pointed to the model being highly effective. Evergreen also used a project-based learning (PBL) approach to support students' reading, writing, and math skill development. The district has been training its teachers in the PBL approach since 2011 and has found it to provide a successful structure for teaching students reading and math. Lastly, while not an academic intervention, Evergreen also focused on developing students' socio-emotional skills (such as confidence, self-management, etc.), which are critical to academic success and connection to school.

Evergreen’s implementation of these two approaches was also important to their success. Evergreen ensured that program staff received proper training to successfully implement these approaches. Throughout the year, program directors observed and provided feedback to program staff to ensure high-quality delivery and instruction. Coordination between the teacher liaisons and the teachers at each school was also critical to ensuring alignment between what students were learning during the school day and afterschool.

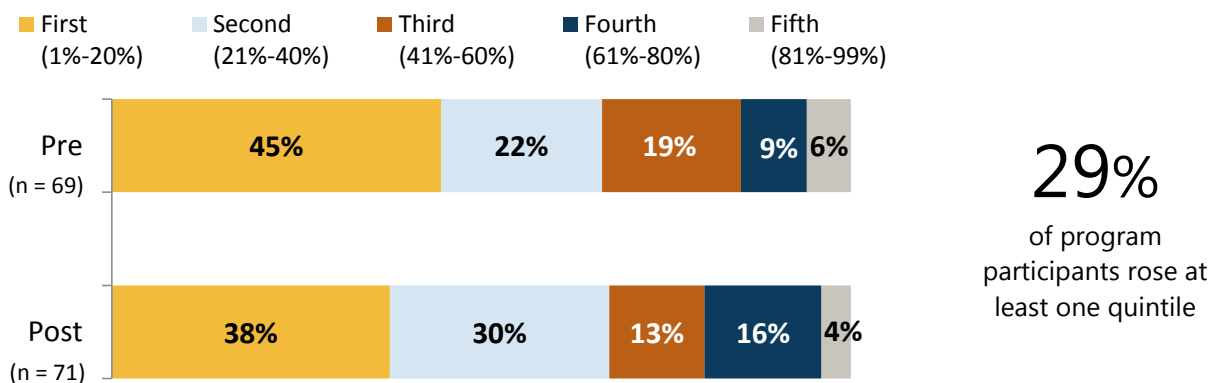
## Franklin-McKinley School District: Third Grade

FMSD students showed some gains between pre- and post-tests, with 35% of students rising one quintile<sup>26</sup> or more on reading, and 29% rising one quintile or more on math (see Exhibits 21 and 22).

**Exhibit 21. STAR: Pre- and Post- Reading Score Quintiles (Third Grade, FMSD)**



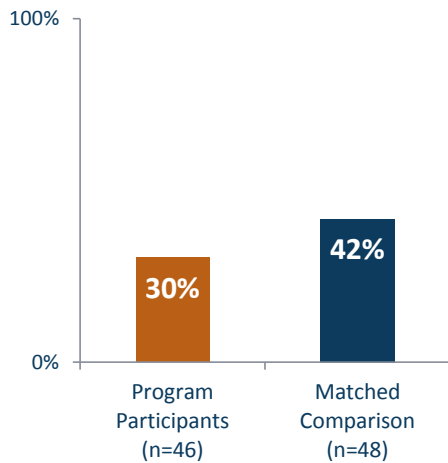
**Exhibit 22. STAR: Pre- and Post- Math Score Quintiles (Third Grade, FMSD)**



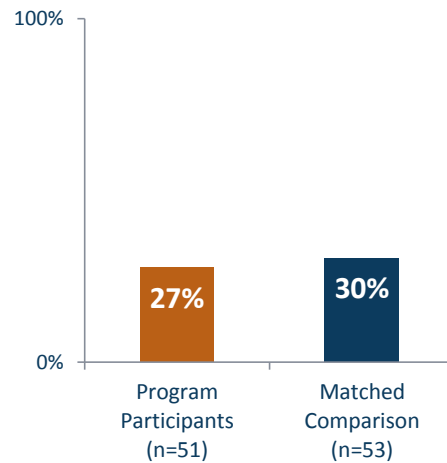
The comparison of program participants to a matched group of non-participants shows that the comparison group actually shows greater improvement over time. Looking only at the students who could be matched with comparison students, we see that 30% of them rose at least one quintile in reading, but 42% in the matched group rose. We see a similar pattern for math: 27% of the program participants improved, while 30% of the matched comparison improved. These comparisons (for reading and math), were nowhere close to statistical significance: the p-value for reading was .26 and for math it was .76.

<sup>26</sup> For Franklin-McKinley school district, the evaluation team did not receive data categorized by placement levels with a qualitative interpretation (e.g. “standard met,” “standard exceeded”). In lieu of using placement levels designated by the testing service, the team used the percentile rank data and divided it into quintiles.

**Exhibit 23. STAR: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Reading Quintile (Third Grade, FMSD)**

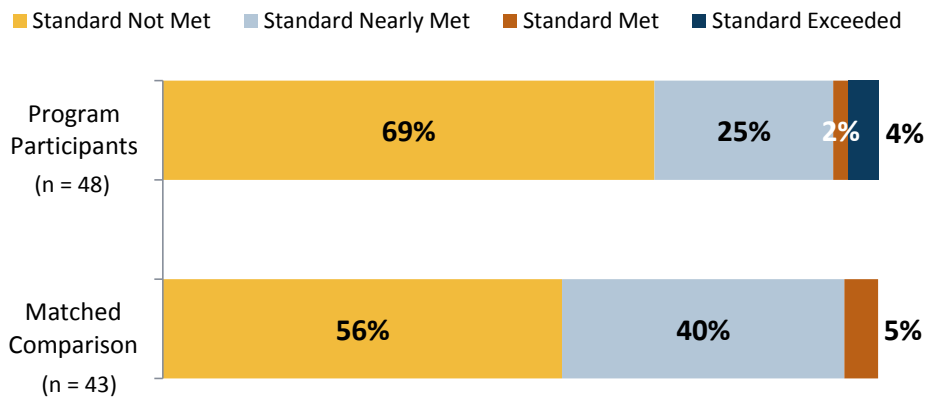


**Exhibit 24. STAR: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Math Quintile (Third Grade, FMSD)**

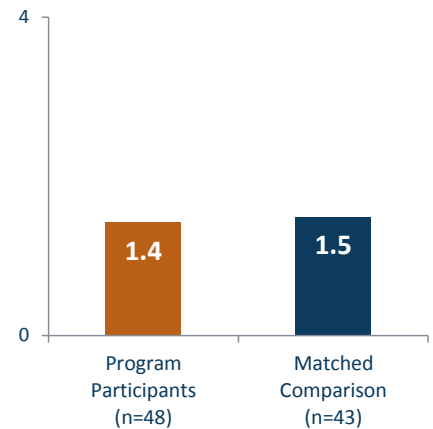


The SBAC results show a similar pattern. The average placement levels are slightly worse outcome for the program participants than for the comparison group, but the difference is very far from statistically significant. For the ELA results, the average placement level for both groups is about halfway between "standard not met" and "standard nearly met" (1.4 for the participants and 1.5 for the comparison students, with a p-value of .61).

**Exhibit 25. SBAC English Language Arts (ELA) Placement Levels (Third Grade, FMSD)**

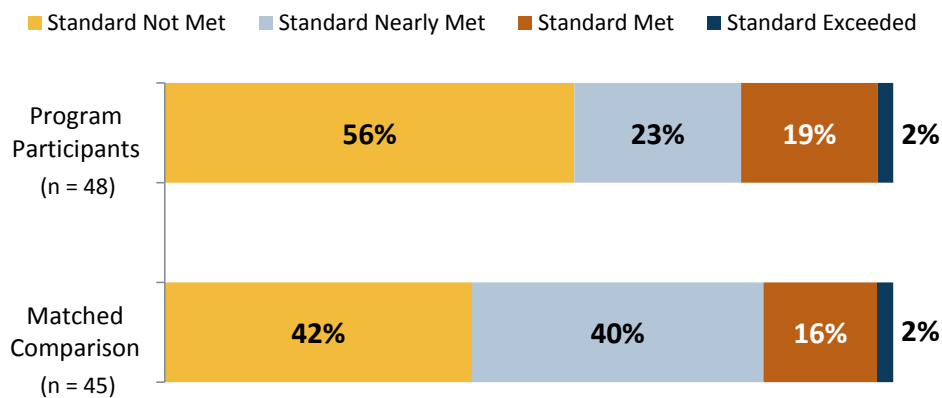


**Exhibit 26. SBAC ELA Mean Placement Level (FMSD)**

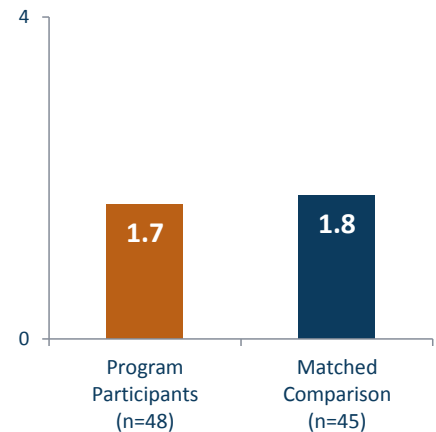


On average, both groups of students get close to the "standard nearly met" placement level for math (1.7 for the participants and 1.8 for the comparison). Again, the difference is very far from statistical significance ( $p = .52$ ).

**Exhibit 27. SBAC Math Placement Levels  
(Third Grade, FMSD)**



**Exhibit 28. SBAC Math Mean  
Placement Level (FMSD)**



These results do not tell a story that is consistent with program participation contributing to better outcomes. However, none of the results were anywhere close to statistically significant. Therefore – even assuming we have a perfect match between the treatment and the matched comparison group – we would not be able to confidently draw conclusions from these data about the program’s efficacy (or lack of efficacy). In addition, again we must emphasize that the between-group comparisons are not perfect, and even if the results were statistically significant, we should be careful when making inferences based on them.

Though we cannot isolate the impact of any specific program component to make conclusions about student outcomes, there are several positive aspects of FMSD’s program model that are important to note. First, FMSD and Catholic Charities have partnered to deliver afterschool programming for many years. Through SJ Learns, these partners were able to build on a strong foundation of existing relationships and a common understanding of their shared purpose and approach. This valuable opportunity also presents a major efficiency compared to launching a brand new program and partnership. The partners implemented the CORAL Learns curriculum, a balanced literacy model that they have used successfully for many years. The model includes a close reading session in which the instructor poses text-dependent questions orally and in writing, independent reading with books aligned to the students’ reading level, and homework assistance. In addition, program providers noted that continually monitoring student progress using the STAR Renaissance and Lexia assessment tools was key to continually adjusting lessons to match students’ learning needs.

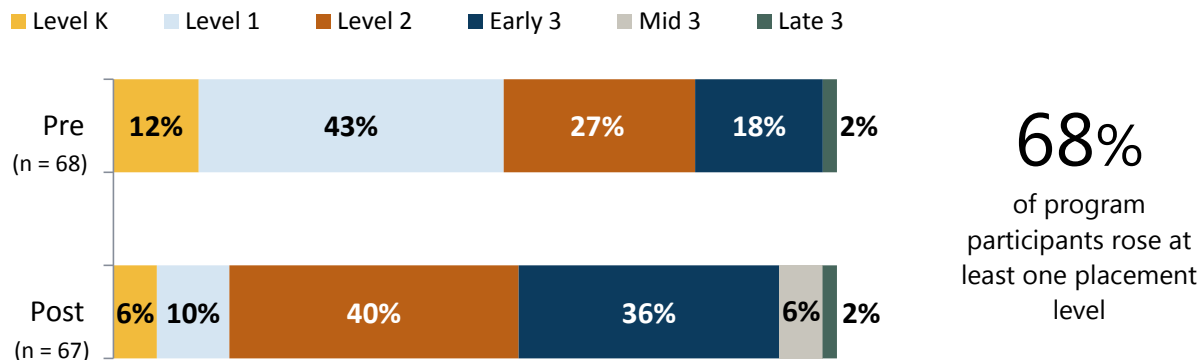
FMSD fostered a remarkable level of parent engagement for a subset of parents. Twelve parents successfully completed an intensive ELA class that met three times per week for the entire school year and were deeply proud of this achievement. The ELA class fostered a strong connection between parents and Catholic Charities, establishing a link between parent and student learning. By engaging in their own learning and working closely with their students’ afterschool learning provider, parents are more intimately connected to their students’ academic success.

Finally, FMSD implemented a three-week intensive summer bridge program for 30 students moving into 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This reading-focused academic program bolsters students’ lagging reading skills and also incorporates several fun enrichment activities (the curriculum had a baseball theme and included a trip to see a San José Giants game).

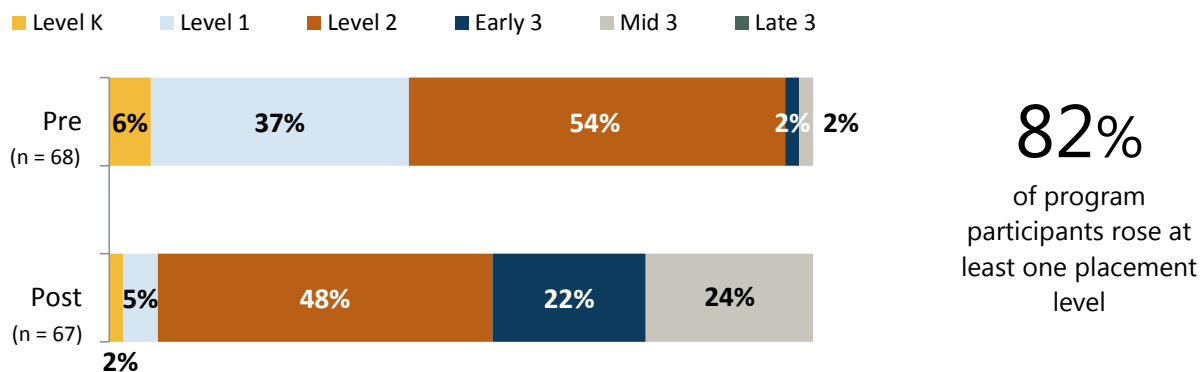
## Oak Grove School District: Third Grade

OGSD third grade students showed improvement between iReady pre- and post-tests, particularly in math: 68% of students rose at least one reading placement level, and 82% rose at least one math placement level.

**Exhibit 29. iReady: Pre- and Post- Reading Placement Level (Third Grade, OGSD)**



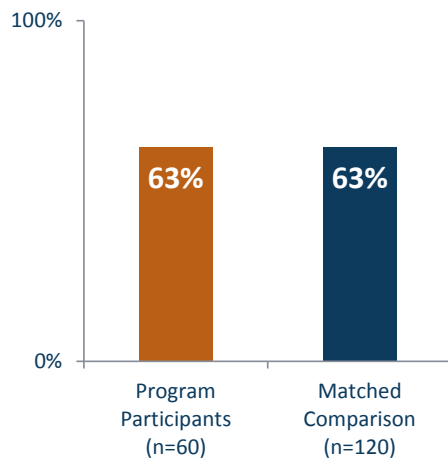
**Exhibit 30. iReady: Pre- and Post- Math Placement Level (Third Grade, OGSD)**



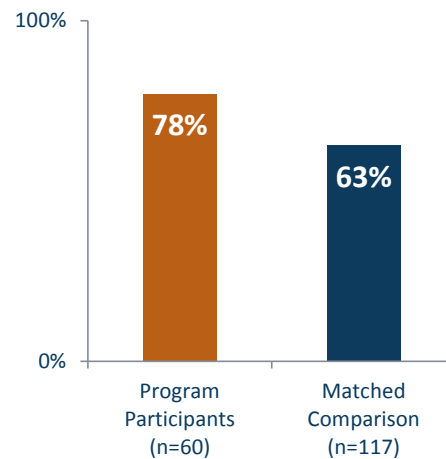
When looking at the results comparing program participants with a matched comparison group, we see that the percentage of students rising at least one reading placement level is the same for both groups (63%). Math results that compare the two groups are more promising: 78% of students rose at least one math placement level, while 63% of the matched comparison improved. The math results are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .



**Exhibit 31. iReady: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Reading Placement Level (Third Grade, OGSD)**



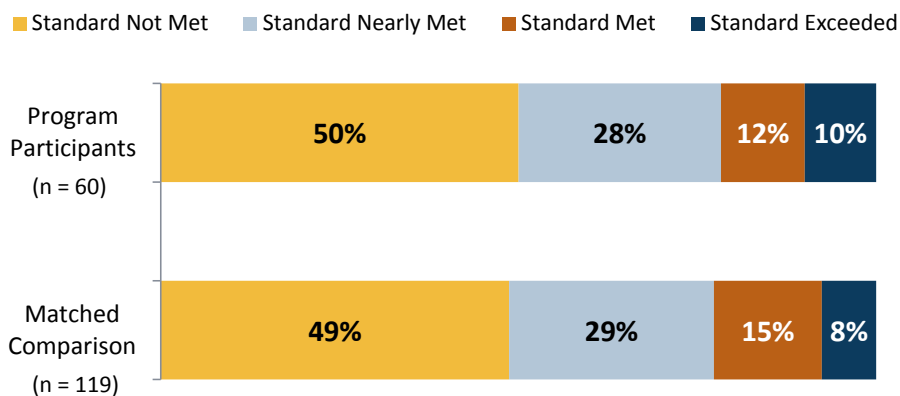
**Exhibit 32. iReady: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Math Placement Level (Third Grade, OGSD)\***



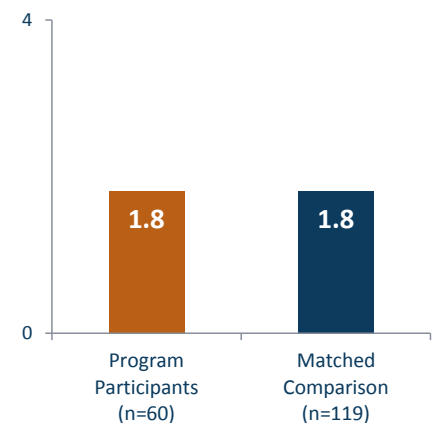
SBAC results show a similar pattern. ELA outcomes are very similar for participants and the matched comparison group, while SJ Learns students outperformed their counterparts in math (38% of program participants tested at the “standard met” level or above, compared to 32% in the matched comparison group). While the difference was not statistically significant, it was not so far from significance ( $p = .16$ ).

In fact the Oak Grove program had a particular focus on math, and results lend credence to the hypothesis that the program participation contributed to academic growth in math.

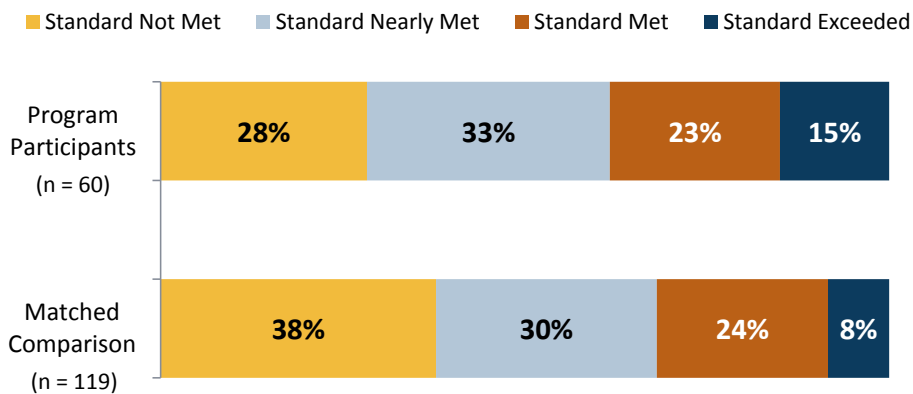
**Exhibit 33. SBAC English Language Arts (ELA) Placement Levels (Third Grade, OGSD)**



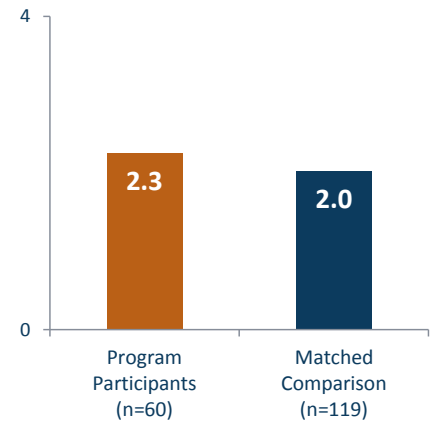
**Exhibit 34. SBAC ELA Mean Placement Level (OGSD)**



**Exhibit 35. SBAC Math Placement Levels  
(Third Grade, OGSD)**



**Exhibit 36. SBAC Math Mean  
Placement Level (OGSD)**



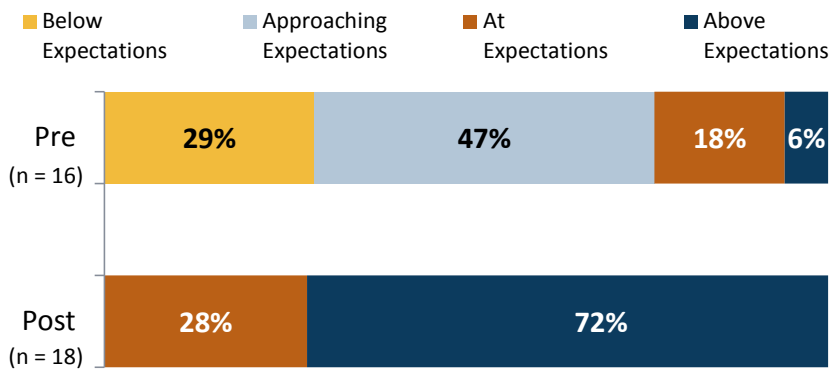
OGSD partnered with Silicon Valley Education Foundation to pilot a math-focused afterschool program for underperforming third graders. While the primary program focus was math, the curriculum was also designed to improve English Language Arts skills by integrating language development and math content strategies. For example, students were taught “chants,” or songs about math functions or number properties set to simple melodies. Students seemed to enjoy the chants, as it is a novel way to reinforce mathematical concepts.

Another program feature that may have contributed to student gains in math is that the program team collaborated to continually refine the program over the course of the initiative. Working from lessons learned in the first year of implementation, administrators, coaches, and teachers met to update curriculum and program design. In the first year, tutors or teacher’s aides led instruction. Program administrators recognized that credentialed teachers were more effective in leading instruction, and in the second year, all lead instructors were classroom teachers. Having classroom teachers lead afterschool instruction means stronger alignment with the school day. Program administrators also shortened the enrichment program from 2.5 hours to 1.5 hours in the second year, based on teacher feedback. This change allows for all students to stay for the full enrichment program dosage, whereas in some other programs, the enrichment piece comes later in the afternoon, after homework help or other activities. That program administrators were receptive to and encouraged program revisions is a positive aspect of the program to highlight.

## San José Unified School District: Kinder

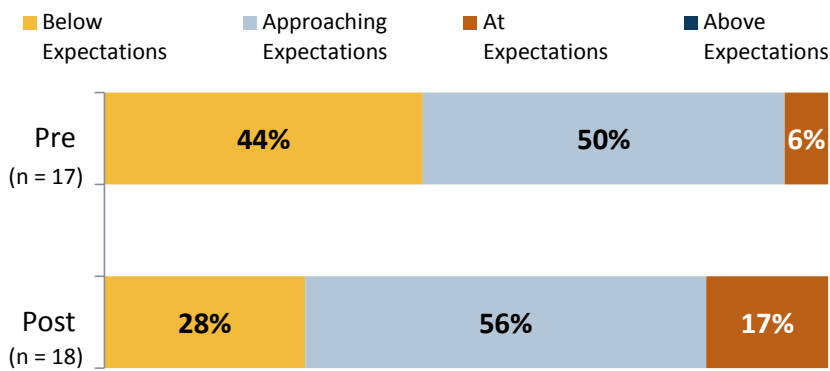
SJUSD kindergarteners showed phenomenal gains over time for the CPAA assessment: results show that by the end of the school year, all program participants were at or above expectations, with 88% rising at least one literacy level. SJ Learns students’ writing also improved, with 44% of participants rising at least one placement level on the WPA, with the percent testing at the “at expectations” level rising from 6% to 17% (no students tested at the “above expectations” at either time point).

**Exhibit 37. CPAA: Pre- and Post- Literacy Level (Kindergarten, SJUSD)**



**88%**  
of program  
participants rose at  
least one placement  
level

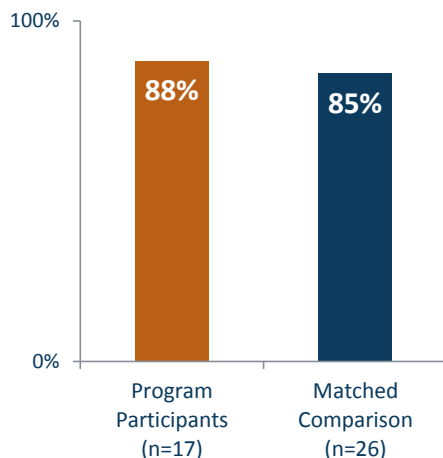
**Exhibit 38. WPA: Pre- and Post- Writing Level (Kindergarten, SJUSD)**



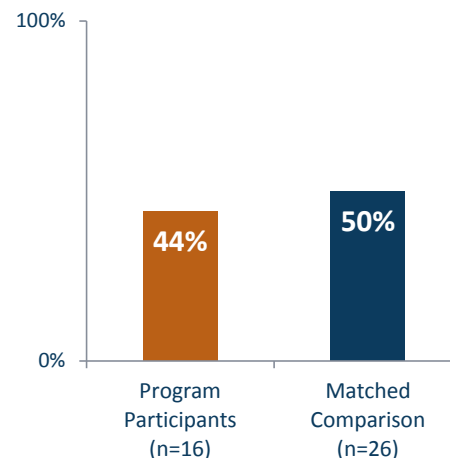
**44%**  
of program  
participants rose at  
least one placement  
level

Looking at how participants compare to a matched comparison group, again we see that the CPAA results are more positive than the WPA results (although results for neither comparison is statistically significant). For the CPAA, 88% of the participants rose at least one level, while 85% in the comparison group rose. For the WPA, a greater proportion of the comparison group rose at least one level (50% compared with 44%).

**Exhibit 39. CPAA: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Literacy Level (Kindergarten, SJUSD)**

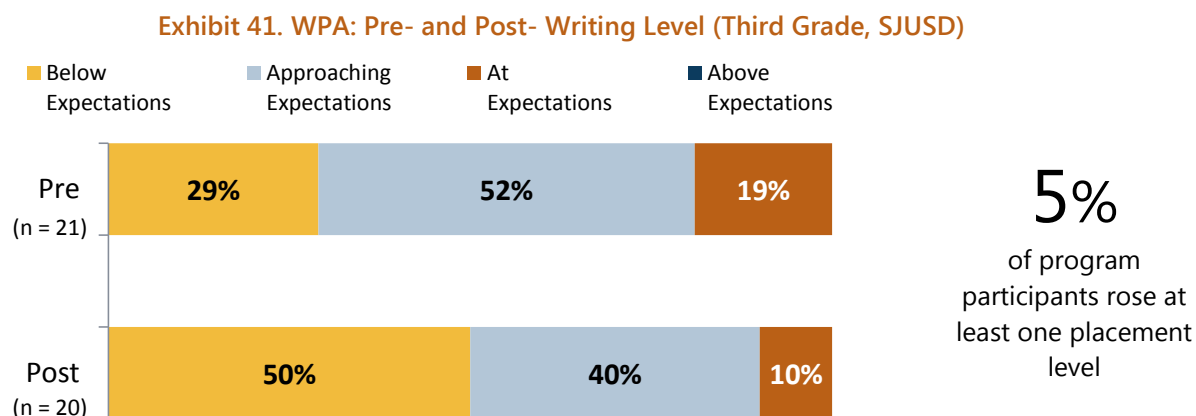


**Exhibit 40. WPA: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Writing Level (Kindergarten, SJUSD)**



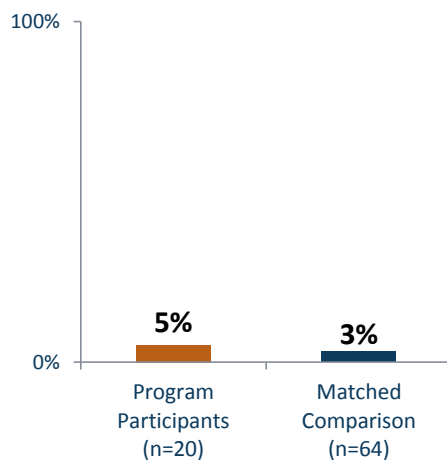
## San José Unified School District: Third Grade

Third graders in the program did not fare as well as did kindergarteners. WPA results show that participants as a whole actually performed worse on the post-test, and only 5% of participants rose one placement level.



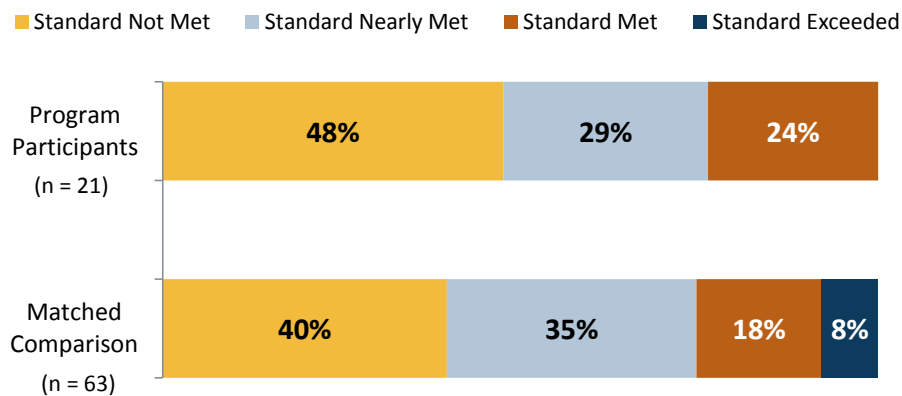
Improving on the WPA is clearly very challenging; the participant group improved at a slightly higher rate than did the comparison group (only 3% of the comparison group rose at least one level).

**Exhibit 42. WPA: Percentage of Students Rising at Least One Writing Level (Third Grade, SJUSD)**

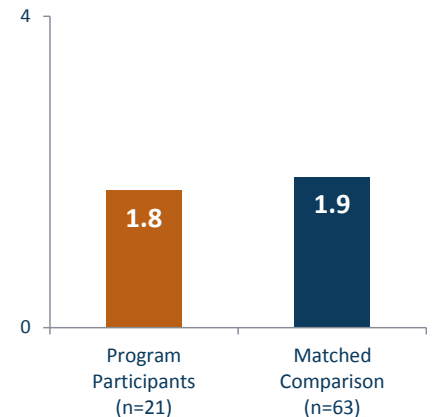


The SBAC results also show slightly worse outcomes for the third grade program participants than for the matched comparison group: a larger percentage of the comparison group met or exceeded ELA and math standards than program participants. Both groups of students are close (on average) to the “standard nearly met” placement levels for ELA and math, though the comparison group is slightly higher in both categories (1.8 for the participants and 1.9 for the comparison students in ELA; 1.7 for the participants and 1.9 for the comparison students in math). Neither difference is statistically significant.

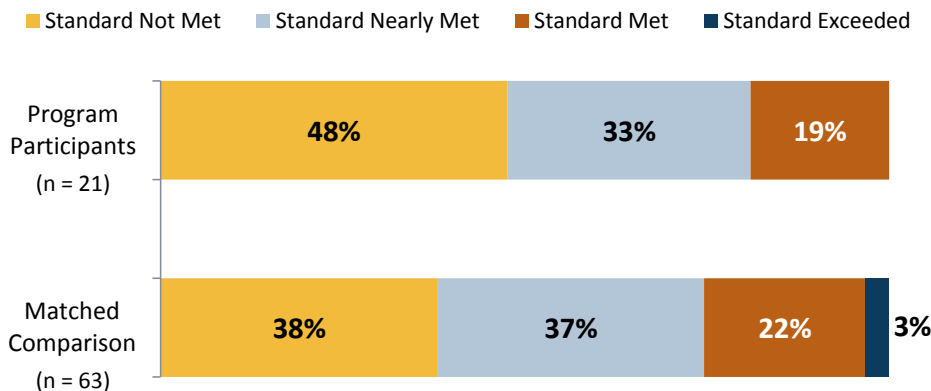
**Exhibit 43. SBAC English Language Arts (ELA) Placement Levels  
(Third Grade, SJUSD)**



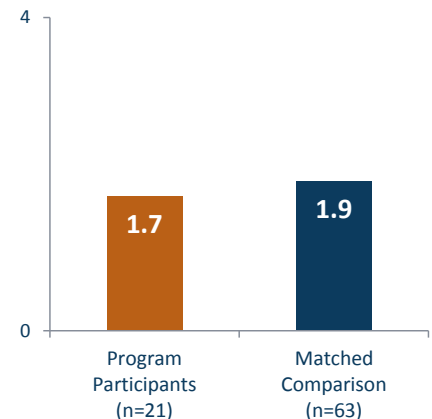
**Exhibit 44. SBAC ELA Mean Placement Level (SJUSD)**



**Exhibit 45. SBAC Math Placement Levels  
(Third Grade, SJUSD)**



**Exhibit 46. SBAC Math Mean Placement Level (SJUSD)**



Out of the programs in the SJ Learns cohort, SJUSD's STE@M program had perhaps the most non-traditional afterschool programming approach. The program incorporated a variety of educational components that were not directly math or ELA-focused, such as mariachi music, dance/theatre, and science/engineering, in order to promote 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and critical thinking. The various units were intended to engage students to explore learning in a complementary way to what is offered in the school day – the idea being that math and reading do not exist in isolation.

Outside providers administered the enrichment units, and they were supported by the principal and an on-site coordinator at each school. The complexity of sourcing and managing multiple providers over the course of a school year may have been a hindrance to program efficacy.

While academic gains are not apparent in the assessments results that compare program participants with their counterparts, administrators report that the program strengthened participating students' collaboration skills and social-emotional competencies. And, as underserved students have less access to enrichment opportunities than their middle-income peers, SJUSD was in fact able to provide its students with a special experience.

## SBAC Results: Looking across Districts

In addition to reporting SBAC results by program, we include a cross-district comparison of SBAC ELA and math results in order to show an overview of student outcomes across the SJ Learns cohort for each of the programs that serve third grade students: Evergreen Elementary, Franklin-McKinley, Oak Grove, and San José Unified. Results are shown in two ways, by average score (on a 1 through 4 scale<sup>27</sup>) and by the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards. Results are mixed. When we look at the percent that score at the top two levels, EESD and FMSD show an advantage in ELA, and EESD and OGSD show an advantage in math (and FMSD shows a very slight advantage). However, the comparison groups outperform the participant groups on ELA for OGSD and SJUSD, and on math for SJUSD.

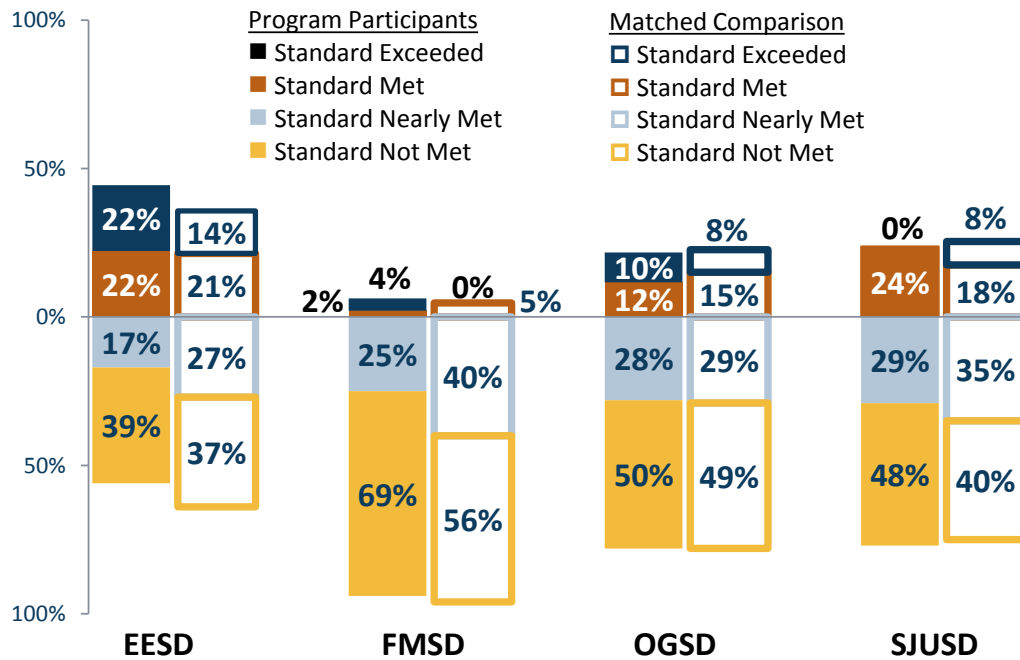
Looking at the mean scores for SBAC ELA placement level, we see that there is virtually no difference between the participant and comparison groups (scores are very slightly higher for EESD, very slightly lower for FMSD and SJUSD, and the same for OGSD). If we look at the distribution of scores at the top two levels, however, we see that at EESD, participants performed better than did their counterparts: 44% tested at the “met standards” or “exceeded standards” level, compared with 35%. FMSD program participants also outperformed their counterparts. While the difference was minimal looking at the top two levels (6% versus 5%), 4% of the FMSD students exceeded expectations while no students in the comparison group did.

**Exhibit 47. SBAC ELA: Mean Scores (Third Grade)**

School District	Program Participant ELA Mean Score	Matched Comparison ELA Mean Score
EESD	2.3	2.2
FMSD	1.4	1.5
OGSD	1.8	1.8
SJUSD	1.8	1.9

<sup>27</sup> SBAC scores are categorized into four levels: standard not met (1), standard nearly met (2), standard met (3), and standard exceeded (4).

Exhibit 48. SBAC ELA: Student Outcomes (Third Grade)



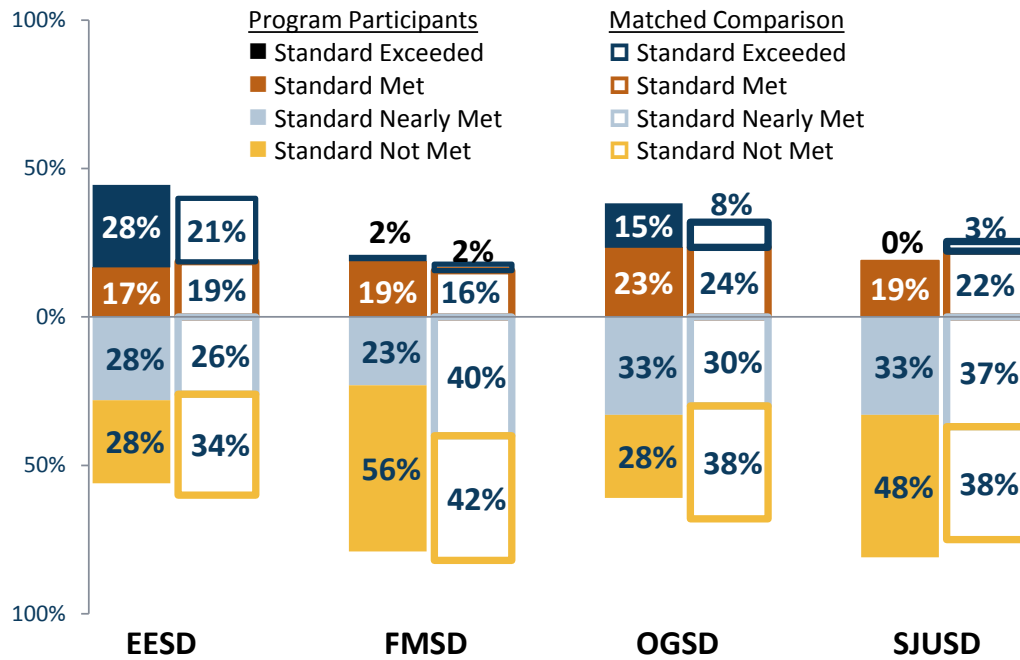
Results for math are more positive. For OGSD, the mean score is 2.3, compared with 2.0 for the comparison group. For the other three districts, the scores are essentially the same (EESD is slightly higher, and FMSD and SJUSD are slightly lower). However, when we look at students scoring at the top two placement levels, we see that in EGSD *and* OGSD, program participants did better than the comparison group: 45% versus 40% for EGSD, and 38% versus 32% for OGSD. The FMSD participants also slightly outperformed their counterparts (21% versus 18%).

Exhibit 49. SBAC Math: Mean Scores (Third Grade)

School District	Program Participant Math Mean Score	Matched Comparison Math Mean Score
EESD	2.4	2.3
FMSD	1.7	1.8
OGSD	2.3	2.0
SJUSD	1.7	1.9



Exhibit 50. SBAC Math: Student Outcomes (Third Grade)



# Initiative Reflections and Recommendations

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The SJ Learns initiative brought together the talents, expertise, and resources of a diverse set of partners – including leaders from nonprofits, foundations, school districts, and the City of San José – and united the San José community around a common vision: supporting the academic success of children during the critical early grades. School districts and program partners worked very hard to develop and expand high-quality, evidence-based extended learning programs for low-income students. Lastly, partners have demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous learning and improvement.

This final section of the report takes stock of successes and challenges in the initiative’s implementation to support partners as they reflect on how the initiative unfolded. Given that partners are committed to continuing the efforts launched through this initiative, this section also offer recommendations to inform and strengthen future endeavors.

## Reflections on Initiative Implementation Successes

**San José Learns funding has meant that program slots were made available to children who *may not have received services otherwise*.** The initiative served over 1,000 students (in kinder through third grade) in high-need schools. Program partners spoke to the fact that without San José Learns many of the students served would *not* have had access to these academic supports and enrichment opportunities. Many afterschool programs have long wait lists and, because the families served are low-income, these families cannot afford to pay for fee-based alternatives.

**Children served showed academic gains.** In addition to expanding the number of program slots available, there are also early indications that San José Learns made a difference in the academic success of the participating students. In every SJ Learns program, there were gains in reading and math over the course of the school year (results discussed in more detail in the previous chapter). In addition, looking initiative-wide at results pooled *across all districts*, we can see that *on the whole*:

- 1) Many students improved at least one performance level in ELA and math,
- 2) Participating kindergarteners *and* third-graders outperformed the matched comparison groups in ELA *and* math (with the results especially impressive for kindergarteners in ELA) (see Exhibit 51), and
- 3) Participating third-graders outperformed the match comparison groups on the math SBAC (see Exhibit 52).

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[San José Learns] is offering additional opportunities to students that...are low income and below grade level. So it's given them additional enrichment opportunities that benefit ELL, literacy, and doing it in a creative way where they are being enriched by STEAM classes (sciences, art, music, etc.).

**It's something that they do not have access to on a normal level, mostly because it's not affordable or parents can't provide.**

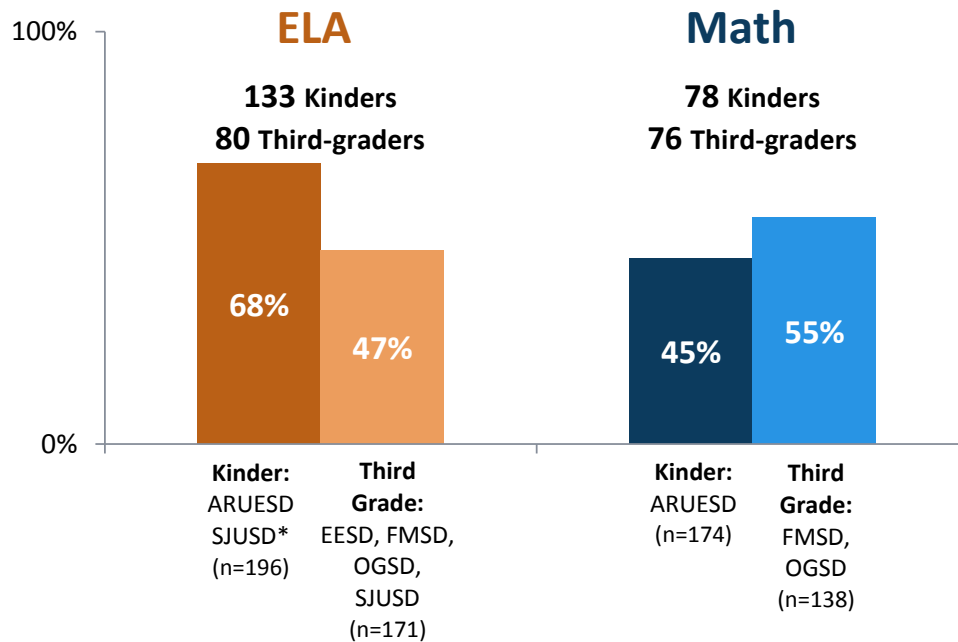
*San José Program Partner*

**The biggest [difference] is the opportunity for our Kinder students to have support after school.** Living in Silicon Valley, with the rent prices and housing costs so expensive, many parents have to work multiple jobs. Where do they put their kids? [...] **Without... funding from the San José Learns grant we probably wouldn't have done it.**

*Oak Grove Program Partner*

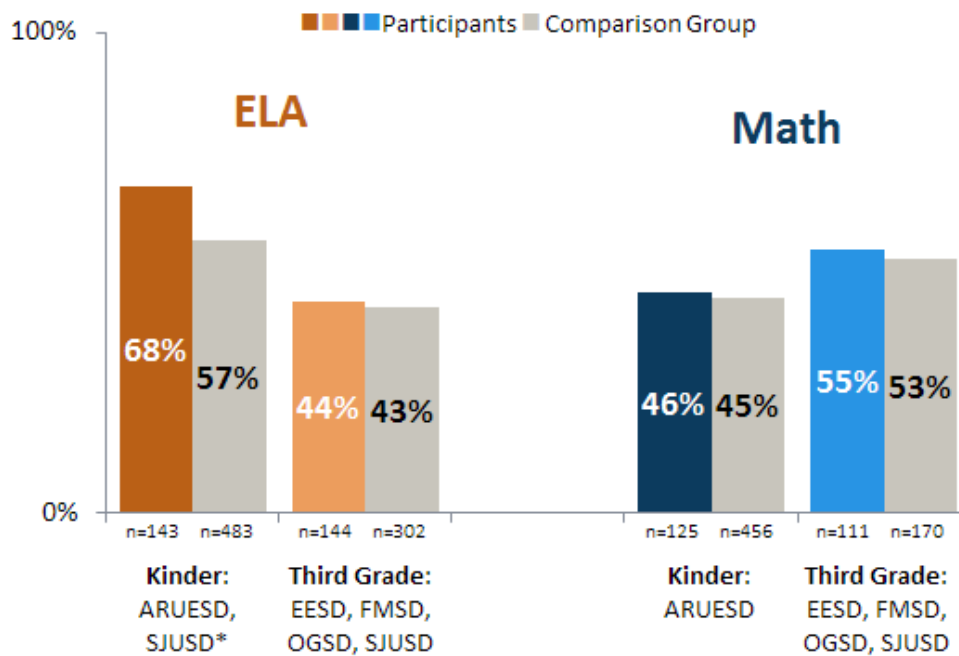
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**Exhibit 51. SJ Learns Students Improving at Least One Placement Level**



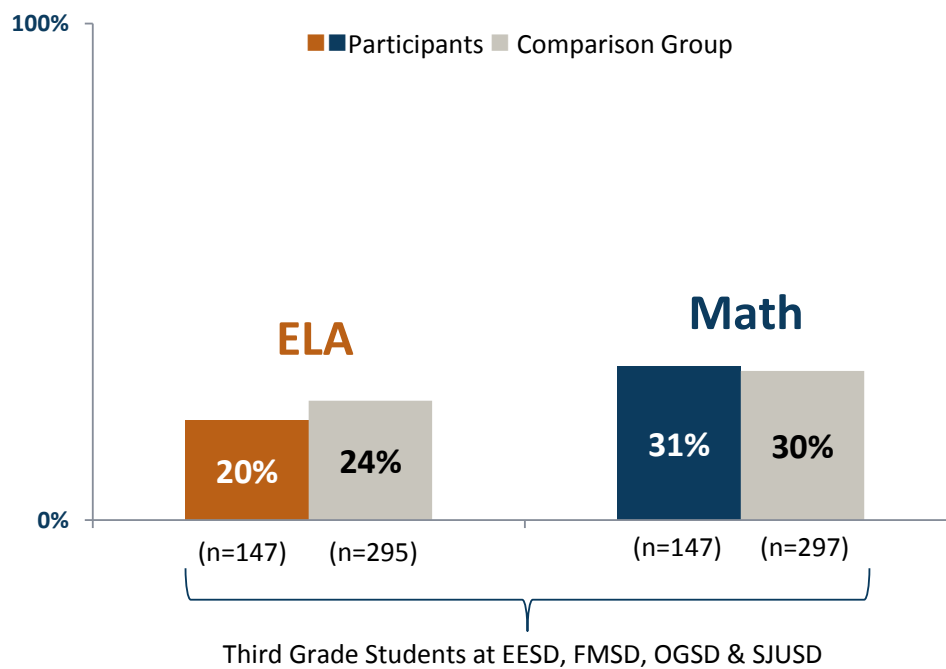
\*SJUSD had two ELA-related assessments; CPAA for literacy and WPA for writing. Results for the CPAA are used here.

**Exhibit 52. Percent of Students Improving at Least One Placement Level, SJ Learns Participants versus Comparison Group**



\*SJUSD had two ELA-related assessments; CPAA for literacy and WPA for writing. Results for the CPAA are used here.

**Exhibit 53. Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards on the SBAC, SJ Learns Participants versus Comparison Group**



**The cohort learning meetings added significant value to the participating programs' experience.**

Program staff valued coming together during quarterly cohort meetings to share program updates, learnings about what it takes to meet students' needs, and information on how each site was modifying their approach in response to those needs. The cohort meetings also provided other valuable group learning opportunities such as demonstrations of education technologies, discussions of promising program practices, and discussions of their sustainability plans. Program staff found these peer learning exchanges to be extremely valuable and were eager for more learning opportunities and to share the experience with others. For example, program staff suggested that a broader group of program stakeholders (e.g., frontline staff and teachers) could have benefitted from and enriched the learning experience. Another program partner shared that site visits to each program could have supplemented the learning and given programs an opportunity to showcase their work.

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I really **valued the...cohort meetings** to hear what others were doing, [and] challenges others were going through.  
*San José Unified Program Partner*

I loved our cohort meetings for this initiative. The SJL cohort [group] was good and **we learned a lot from each other**. But, I would want development across a bigger group of stakeholders. For example, the learning community could have included our [program] directors or been more regional [in scope].  
*Evergreen Program Partner*

...the collaborative meetings [were valuable]... It was **really helpful to hear what our colleagues were doing in other districts**. It was a really positive way to continue the program forward.  
*Franklin-McKinley Program Partner*

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**The initiative's emphasis on data and rigorous monitoring encouraged programs to prioritize data use and engage in continuous program improvement.**

The initiative required programs to track and report on student improvement in reading and math proficiency. To fulfill this requirement, programs collected a variety of student formative and summative assessment data (such as data collected from STAR Renaissance Reading Assessment, Children's Progress Academic Assessment, iReady, and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium). Programs leveraged these and other data for multiple uses beyond what was required by the grant. Oak Grove, for example, used student assessment data from 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to identify and invite incoming 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students not performing at grade level to join the program. Programs also used data to tailor their programming so that it was responsive to each student's needs. The Evergreen program used data from the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) to evaluate students' social-emotional wellbeing and identify resources and activities to help staff better engage and support each student. Oak Grove consulted student assessment data to determine the focus of the program's math curriculum and to understand whether having teachers partnered with math tutors made a difference. This proactive use of data to inform program planning and decision-making is a meaningful accomplishment. While data use is common in education settings, programs often struggle to prioritize it due to the capacity of their staff to access, analyze, and act on the data. The program use of data throughout the initiative is even more striking given how long it can take to establish data access and set up data use routines with multiple partners.

**Programs attributed their implementation success to the strong partnerships they developed.** Programs shared that the partners involved in the work – district, school, and nonprofit leaders and staff – developed strong relationships and collaborated effectively, and this was critical to their success. Even though some of these relationships were not new, programs spoke about the valuable ways the initiative enabled them to deepen and expand their partnership in new ways (e.g., by working together to test and launch a new approach or expand to a new grade or age group). Having strong partners made it possible to launch relatively quickly, problem solve challenges and overcome roadblocks, and work together to ensure the program's continuity after the initiative came to an end.

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SJ Learns has brought [our district] partnership to a new level with really looking at the data. **We never looked at [test score] data so in depth before....** I was thinking that we should be doing this with all our programs. [...] **The district has been very open to share a lot of the data with us.** So we have access to pull out and look at the data.

*Franklin McKinley Program Partner*

Teachers **constantly looked at student data and tailored the experience and content to best fit students and their areas of need.** This is what makes the program unique; we continue to build the curriculum and future program sessions around this model of data combined with teacher observations.

*Oak Grove Program Partner*

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You have to establish that relationship from day one, even before the program starts. **It would have been difficult to do this without a strong partnership.** That's the number one thing I would suggest. It's crucial.

*Franklin-McKinley Program Partner*

**The collaboration between so many different groups [was critical].** ...We had the Silicon Valley Education Foundation helping with the grant – they wrote the grant. We had Bay Area tutors who helped get us started – we didn't know how to get the program [started]. Our Oak Grove staff – we had a librarian, a health clerk, and a teacher's assistant all help support the program. **Having this ongoing support helped us be successful.**

*Oak Grove Program Partner*

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## Reflections on Initiative Implementation Challenges

**Components of the initiative strategy sometimes worked at cross-purposes.** The strategy of SJ Learns was to invest in programs that: are high-quality; based on research and evidence; align with the school day; incorporate innovative strategies; expand programming for low-income students; and have the potential to scale and replicate. While these components were intended to complement one another, in practice they often set up competing priorities that divided the programs' attention. For example, implementing evidence-based programs competed with the goal of incorporating innovative practices.<sup>28</sup> Implementing an evidence-based intervention typically means using a model that has been rigorously tested and strictly codified. When implementing an evidence-based model, the key to effectiveness is often seen as implementing with fidelity. By definition, implementing with fidelity to a codified model prevents innovation (although these models sometimes allow for local adaptations, and these adaptations are sometimes innovative). Similarly, innovation competed with scaling and replication. Scaling or replicating a program often requires routinizing and standardizing the model. While there is room for incremental refinement and adaptation to the local environment, the focus is on scaling or replicating the current operating model. Challenging the status quo and experimentation, which are fundamental to innovation, are thus less encouraged during scaling and replication.

**Initiative partners did not have a common definition of success.** To programs, success centered around promoting academic achievement (math and literacy) as well as other skills and attitudes that are important to academic and career success (e.g., resiliency, self-confidence, communication, and collaboration). While these goals were central to the City's definition of success, the City *also* placed a strong emphasis on innovative practices and technology-based interventions. Programs considered innovative practices as they were designing their programs, but the majority did not continuously experiment with new practices or approaches throughout implementation. Similarly, a few programs integrated technology components (e.g., to support student learning and communicate with parents) but all the programs largely relied on traditional, in-person instruction and engagement methods. Initiative partners became aware of this disconnect after the first year of implementation, but had limited time to clarify expectations and develop a common definition of success.

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I believe there needs to be a ... more lengthy discussion on **what "innovative practices" and "technology use" really mean.** ...We barely touched on these topics at the one meeting we had as an Advisory Group last Spring.

*Advisory Committee Member*

When I went to the debrief in the Mayor's office in April there was such an emphasis on technology. ...**We felt out of alignment with what was expected, but that never was a part of our program design.** [...] We have so much tech at our school...I would have used some of that if that was an expectation.

*San José Unified Program Partner*

[The initiative needed] tighter clarity and focus about defining quality and expected outcomes from the investment. **What really constitutes success?** I am worried that it is very difficult to know what difference SJ Learns has made, and to make a public case for continued investment based on that success.

*Advisory Committee Member*

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<sup>28</sup> The issue of how requiring school districts to implement programs that were evidence-based may have limited innovation is discussed in more detail in the Year One report.

### **The mismatch between the grant funding cycle and the school calendar was an implementation challenge.**

Programs missed an opportunity to implement during the first semester of the 2015-16 academic year because the grant funding cycle, which was tied to the City's budget approval process, did not align well with the start of the school year. Each year, the City's budget approval process concludes in June, which means that the earliest the SJ Learns application process could open was July 2015. By the time SVCF announced the grant recipients in October 2015, schools were approximately two months into the instructional calendar. The programs made the most of this less-than-ideal start time: by using the rest of the fall semester to plan (and prepare for a spring semester launch) or offering programming during school breaks to make up for the lost time. However, the delayed start had several implementation downsides: students received less programming; and programs had less time to test, refine, and standardize their program model.

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I would also suggest really looking at the school calendar and looking at the fiscal calendar for future funding. **It was really hard for us to recruit families mid-year. That's a hard time of year.** [...] I'd suggest that they work within the fiscal year [to ensure it] aligns with the school year. That would give us time in the summer so that we're starting fresh in the Fall.

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*Franklin McKinley Program Partner*

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### **Engaging in sustainability planning was a challenge due to the time required to launch a brand-new program, challenges with staff retention, and the uncertainty of continued funding.**

Programs learned that launching a brand-new afterschool program requires significant time and coordination from the districts and partners, and planning for future years of the program requires additional time and investment on top of that. In addition, several programs struggled to recruit and retain qualified and effective staff, largely because staff seek higher-paying options elsewhere. This negatively hurt programs' ability to plan for the future for a couple reasons: 1) lack of staff continuity requires that programs dedicate more time to staff recruitment and orientation, and 2) dedicated staff with intimate knowledge of the program may not be available to share and implement ideas to sustain the program and build upon their model. A third challenge to sustainability planning was uncertainty about funding. As the initiative entered its second year, program staff were unclear about the level of funding that would be available to sustain programs the following year. Programs regularly inquired: "Will the City of San José make another investment? Will additional funding be available to scale promising programs?" Programs did not learn about the City's next investment until well after the initiative had formally concluded. Though some programs successfully secured additional funding (from program fees and additional district funding) to replace the City's 50% match, uncertainty about additional City resources complicated the task of planning for the future.

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I felt so confident that the funding was going to continue.... **We could have known earlier that the funding was uncertain....** If we had known this there might have been changes we would have made to the program model to make the funding stretch.

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*Evergreen Program Partner*

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## **Recommendations**

**Develop a Theory of Change for the SJ Learns initiative.** The initiative could benefit from a Theory of Change framework to make even more explicit what change is envisioned and how the desired change is expected to happen. Theories of change also communicate the need or problem being addressed; contextual factors that might affect the outcomes; the intended change; and the strategies expected to bring about that change. In addition, the *process* of developing a Theory of Change can help to: create agreement among partners about how change happens, what it takes to get there, and what defines success; challenge and clarify the underlying logic of the connection between the initiative's strategies



and expected outcomes; determine the level of change that stakeholders can reasonably expect with the resources invested; and clarify how to test whether the hypotheses embedded in the Theory of Change are borne out.

**Consider how to engage in advocacy efforts to sustain extended learning programs.** California's investment in afterschool programs has largely remained stagnant since the inception of the School Education and Safety (ASES) program in 2006. State ASES funding had remained at \$7.50 per pupil per day until this year's increase to \$8.19, which is still far from what experts believe is necessary to run a high-quality program. According to one study, the average daily cost per slot for out-of-school time programs is \$24 during the school year and \$32 during the summer.<sup>29</sup> Given the perennial need for funding, initiative partners should discuss how to best engage in advocacy efforts (at the state and local level) that seek to increase the amount of funding available for student slots, as well as for staff training and professional development. A focus on advocacy is even more pressing given that the current federal administration has proposed ending the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants, which provide substantial funding for K-12 after-school and summer programs.

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...We're an ADA district, we're not in Sunnyvale or Cupertino that gets money from local taxes. We only get money for students in seats. Twenty percent more for needy students, doesn't translate to that much for programs. **When you're working with a community with high need [the current funding level is insufficient]...**

*San José Unified Program Partner*

Much stronger state support [is needed because] the cost model for out-of-school time providers is very challenging. **Advocacy from local civic leaders pushing on the state** to continue increasing the daily per student reimbursement would be a great step forward.

*Advisory Committee Member*

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**Make a long-term investment to support extended learning.** San José and its partners invested over 3 million dollars to support the initiative, and the City anticipates investing another 1 million dollars in 2018 to continue supporting extended learning opportunities. The City's investments have made a meaningful difference, but their short-term nature made it challenging to realize the initiative's ambitious goals. In two years, schools and program providers were expected to launch new programs, build and sustain new program partnerships, gather continuous data to test and refine their model, measure and demonstrate changes in students' academic proficiency, and actively participate in a community of learners. Given the complexity of the initiative and the high level of need among the target students, a long-term investment could have minimized the pressure across all partners to deliver and demonstrate impact in such a short timeframe. A long-term investment is particularly important in a challenging field such as education where student outcomes can take time to manifest. As partners look toward the future we encourage them to consider a longer investment timeframe, for example a five-year commitment.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-Cost-of-Quality-of-Out-of-School-Time-Programs.pdf>

**Continue to facilitate dialogue and learning among the broader extended learning community to inform practice and policy.**

A key goal of the initiative has been to maximize its impact by engaging partners and the broader community in dialogue and learning. Early on, the initiative capitalized on the expertise of diverse stakeholders who were part of the SJ Learns Working Group and Advisory Committee – bodies composed of educational experts and stakeholders representing nonprofits, foundations, school districts, county offices of education, and the City of San José – to inform the initiative’s design. Following the conclusion of the first year, the Mayor convened participating programs and other community partners serving children and families, to share what the City was learning about the success of the initiative and to engage in a thoughtful discussion about what else was needed to strengthen extended learning efforts. These two examples highlight the valuable ways in which the City has successfully engaged the broader extended learning community. Partners are excited about and encourage opportunities to engage a broader network in shared learning.

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We have all of our lessons plans under lock and it would be great to share with other entities, and I don’t know where there’s a vehicle to do that [for example] outside organizations that could share those sorts of things. [So I suggest] **more resource sharing and a forum for doing that.**

*Oak Grove Program Partner*

The dollars are great, but it’s also [important] to **make sure we can share the best practices that we know of to continue to support our learning** and our work in education.

*Franklin-McKinley Program Partner*

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**Continue to evaluate and learn from afterschool learning programs.** The City of San José, program partners, and the broader afterschool learning community have learned a great deal through the San José Learns initiative. These stakeholder groups can continue to learn and share findings through ongoing evaluation efforts. Future evaluation efforts can build on the findings of this report by collecting additional data using similar methods (see list of Data Sources on page 3), and also by incorporating new data collection methods and measures. Specifically, future evaluation efforts could expand the scope of indicators to include factors such as students’ socio-emotional development and the cultural competency of the programs. In addition, the findings could be supplemented by capturing parent and student perspectives through surveys, interviews, classroom observations, or focus groups. Finally, there is an opportunity to learn more about the efficacy of a given program’s design by doing a more in-depth implementation evaluation with one or two programs of interest.

# Conclusion

## The SJ Learns initiative has accomplished a great deal since the launch of the initiative in 2015:

- The City of San José and school districts invested \$3.16 million dollars to make meaningful, extended learning opportunities available to students;
- Diverse partners contributed to a well-designed, rigorous investment;
- School district and program providers quickly assembled and launched research- and evidence-based programs at five school districts;
- Programs served 1,141 students in 16 high-need schools throughout San José;
- Programs demonstrated a strong commitment to program quality, as well as to rigorous monitoring and evaluation; and
- All partners engaged in and contributed to learning via program, cohort, and initiative learning activities (e.g., cohort learning meetings and evaluation activities).

## Student Outcomes

As a result of participation in SJ Learns-funded programs, many students improved academically. The table below highlights the districts in which program participants did better (either on local assessments or the SBAC) than a comparison group constructed through propensity score matching:

**Exhibit 54. Where did the participating students outperform their matched comparison groups?**

Kindergarten		Third Grade			
Pre/Post Improvement in Local Assessment				SBAC	
ELA/Reading	Math	ELA/Reading	Math	ELA	Math
ARUESD SJUSD	ARUESD	EESD SJUSD	OGSD	EESD	EESD OGSD

An even better story would have been one in which the participants in *every* district outperformed the comparison group in both disciplines and on all assessments. We should, however, keep two caveats in mind when considering the results:

- We need to interpret results with caution. The matched comparison group is *not the same as a control group* (even though the propensity score matching technique seeks to approximate a control group). Most importantly, we do not know what programs the comparison students participated in! They may also have had access to programs that made a difference for their own achievement.
- While results were mixed when comparing program participants with non-program counterparts, it is important to put these results into context. Programs were in operation for a relatively short amount of time (a year and half). Finally, we should not necessarily expect programs that are being asked to innovate to *also* show program impact early on. Innovative programs are experimenting and honing their implementation approach. Many of the programs were works in progress: providers continued to refine their models as they learned what worked and what did not work. While the groundwork is laid for later success, they may not necessarily be able to demonstrate a large impact on achievement during the first year or so.

In addition, some standout districts may have lessons to share: Other programs in the San José K-3 ecosystem may want to learn from ARUESD (which showed especially meaningful differences between the participant and comparison group for kindergarteners) and from EESD (which showed positive outcomes

for local assessments *and* SBAC for its third grade participants). It is worth asking the question: Did they use practices which are especially promising, and that could be replicated elsewhere?

### *Summary of Reflections and Recommendations for the Initiative*

As the City of San José continues to invest in early learning, LFA offers the following initiative level reflections and recommendations (summarized from reflections and recommendations discussed in detail above).

#### **Successes**

- San José Learns funding has meant that program slots were made available to children who may not have received services otherwise.
- Children served showed academic gains.
- Cohort sharing and learning opportunities add significant value to participating programs.
- Data and rigorous monitoring encourage providers to engage in continuous program improvement.
- Strong partnerships among districts, schools, and providers contribute to program success.

#### **Challenges**

- Components of the initiative strategy sometimes worked at cross-purposes.
- Initiative partners did not have a common definition of success.
- The mismatch between the grant funding cycle and the school calendar was an implementation challenge.
- The time it took to launch a new program, staff retention, and uncertainty of continued funding made sustainability planning difficult.

#### **Recommendations**

- Develop a Theory of Change for the SJ Learns initiative.
- Consider how to engage in advocacy efforts to sustain extended learning programs.
- Make a long-term commitment to support extended learning.
- Continue to facilitate dialogue and learning among the broader extended learning community to inform practice and policy.
- Continue to evaluate and learn from afterschool learning programs.

# Appendix A: Methods Appendix

## Propensity Score Matching

To gain additional insight into the extent to which the SJ Learns-funded programs are linked to academic achievement, the evaluation team used a quasi-experimental design. Unlike an experimental design, a quasi-experiment does not randomize (randomly select) study subjects into treatment and control groups. Instead of a control group, this design uses a *comparison* group: a group of study subjects that is selected with the goal of maximizing *baseline equivalence* with the treatment group. One of the most rigorous approaches to selecting a comparison group is called *propensity score matching* (PSM) – a statistical technique used to identify non-participating study subjects who are similar to the treatment group on some of the characteristics that have a known effect on the outcome of interest.

PSM uses logistic regression to “predict” which students will end up as program participants, and which ones will not. The goal is not actually to understand who is in each group, since we already know that. Instead, the goal is to understand how individual-level factors (such as gender and ethnicity) are *related to* the probability (propensity) of being a program participant. These factors can then be weighted and used to calculate a “propensity score” for each student. The propensity score is the probability that a given student would – in theory – be in the participant group. Students from the comparison pool (the full group of non-participants) are then selected into the comparison group based on their propensity scores. An algorithm identifies the students who most closely match those in the participant group.

## Alum Rock Unified Elementary School District (Kindergarten)

**The propensity score model included the following variables:**

- Gender
- English learner status
- Number of school days absent
- iReady Reading pre-test placement score
- iReady Vocabulary pre-test placement score
- iReady High-Frequency Words pre-test placement score

**Other important aspects of the matching process:**

- Since THINK Together was offered at other schools *not* funded through SJ Learns, all the schools with THINK Together that were not part of the initiative were removed from the comparison pool.
- Since so few students were enrolled fewer than 180 days, those enrolled fewer days were removed from the treatment group and comparison pool. For this reason, number of days enrolled was not included in the propensity score model.
- Since almost 85% of the students in the program were Latino, with the other ethnicities spread across five other ethnicities, non-Latino students were removed from the participant group and comparison pool. For this reason, ethnicity was not included in the propensity score model.

Characteristics	Participants	Matched Comparison
Percent Boys	47%	57%
Percent Latino	100%	100%
Percent English Learners	60%	68%
Number of School Days Absent	5	6
Average iReady Reading Placement Pre-Test Score	1.33	1.20
Average iReady Vocabulary Placement Pre-Test Score	1.52	1.37
Average iReady High-Frequency Words Placement Pre-Test Score	1.61	1.34

## Evergreen Elementary School District (Third Grade<sup>30</sup>)

**The propensity score model included the following variables:**

- Gender
- English learner status
- Number of school days absent
- AR STAR grade equivalent pre-test score

**Other important aspects of the matching process:**

- Data were available from only the school where the program was administered. There were enough non-participating students at the schools (who were similar enough to the participating students) to allow for adequate matching.
- The participant group and comparison pools had similar ethnicity frequency distributions. The largest clusters were Latino and Asian, with very small percentages of other ethnic groups. For this reason, ethnicity was not included in the propensity score model.

Characteristics	Participants	Matched Comparison
Percent Boys	56%	56%
Percent Latino	44%	37%
Percent Asian	39%	49%
Percent English Learners	28%	26%
Number of School Days Absent	5	6
Average AR STAR Grade Equivalent Pre-Test Score	3.2	2.9

## Franklin McKinley School District (Third Grade)

**The propensity score model included the following variables:**

- Gender
- English learner status
- Number of school days absent
- STAR reading pre-test score
- STAR math pre-test score

**Other important aspects of the matching process:**

- Data were available from only the school where the program was administered. There were enough non-participating students at the schools (who were similar enough to the participating students) to allow for adequate matching.
- 95% of the students in the program were Latino, so only Latino students were included in the participant group and comparison pool. For this reason, ethnicity was not included in the propensity score model.
- 93% of the students were enrolled for 180 days, so only those enrolled 180 days were included in the participant group and comparison pool. For this reason, days enrolled was not included in the propensity score model.

Characteristics	Participants	Matched Comparison
Percent Boys	53%	51%
Percent Latino	100%	100%

<sup>30</sup> Although Evergreen's program served kinders, data were available for only three kinder students.

Characteristics	Participants	Matched Comparison
Percent English Learners	82%	81%
Number of School Days Absent	2	2
Star Reading Pre-Test Score	22	23
Math Reading Pre-Test Score	28	29

## Oak Grove School District (Third Grade)

**The propensity score model included the following variables:**

- Gender
- English learner status
- Number of school days absent
- iReady Reading placement pre-test score

**Other important aspects of the matching process:**

- Students from all schools in the district were used for matching.
- 94% of the students were enrolled for 179 or 180 days, so only those enrolled 179 days or more were included in the participant group and comparison pool. For this reason, days enrolled was not included in the propensity score model.

Characteristics	Participants	Matched Comparison
Percent Boys	62%	61%
Percent Latino	88%	88%
Percent English Learners	67%	67%
Number of School Days Absent	8	6
Average iReady Reading Pre-Test Score	1.6	1.8

## San José Unified School District (Kindergarten and Third Grade)

### Kindergarteners

**The propensity score model included the following variables:**

- Gender
- English learner status
- Special education status
- Number of school days absent
- CPAA pre-test score
- WPA pre-test score

**Other important aspects of the matching process:**

- A comparable set of students was found at the same schools where participants were enrolled.
- Only one of the students in the program was not Latino, so non-Latino students were removed from the treatment group and comparison pool. For this reason, ethnicity was not included in the propensity score model.
- Only one student was enrolled less than 180 days (173 days); students in the comparison pool were included only if they were enrolled *either* 180 days or 173 days. For this reason, number of days enrolled was not included in the propensity score model.



- Only one student had special education status. Special education status students were removed from the comparison pool. For this reason, number of days enrolled was not included in the propensity score model.

Characteristics	Participants	Matched Comparison
Percent Boys	61%	62%
Percent Latino	100%	100%
Percent English Learners	67%	73%
Percent Special Education	1%	0%
Number of School Days Absent	5	8
WPA Pre-Test Score	2.00	2.04
CPAA Pre-Test Score	1.63	1.38

## Third-Graders

The propensity score model included the following variables:

- Gender
- Latino (v. white)
- English learner status
- Special education status
- Number of school days absent
- WPA pre-test score

### Other important aspects of the matching process:

- All schools in the district were included in the match.
- All but two of the students in the program were enrolled 180 days; the other two were enrolled 172 and 153 days. All students who were not enrolled these three numbers of days were removed from the set of students to be matched to. For this reason, number of days enrolled was not included in the propensity score model.

Characteristics	Participants	Matched Comparison
Percent Boys	43%	42%
Percent Latino	95%	94%
Percent English Learners	52%	59%
Percent Special Education	19%	28%
Number of School Days Absent	4.5	3.7
WPA Pre-Test Score	1.91	1.95