

PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

OUTCOME EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared for

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the evaluation of *Pathway to Excellence*, a professional development model implemented by School's Out Washington (SOWA) from 2007 to 2009 for afterschool programs throughout Washington state and Northern Oregon. The *Pathway to Excellence* model consists of four components that focus on one content strand area: 1) an initial training opportunity, 2) professional site-based coaching, 3) participation in regional Learning Communities, and 4) use of online discussion boards. In this initial pilot, SOWA used the model to deliver professional development to afterschool programs related to improving practices for English language learners.

This evaluation uses a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group to examine the impact of the model on afterschool program staff's knowledge and skills, program-level changes that support English language learning, and engagement of English language learners (ELLs) served by the participating programs. This initial evaluation of the model begins to build a base of evidence for the model's efficacy and provides information for improving the model for future use and replication with other content areas. A companion evaluation report related to the process of implementing this professional development model is forthcoming.

RESULT HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Training participants increased their **knowledge** and **use of skills** related to English language learning (ELL) regardless of their exposure to other model components, and maintained these changes over the school year.
2. The model resulted in **program-level changes** that help to institutionalize supports for English language learners.
3. Although there are considerable limitations to any conclusions that can be made about the impact of the model on **student engagement outcomes** based on this evaluation design, results indicate that students in programs that participated in the "full model" became more engaged in their programs over the course of the year.
4. Evaluation data also show the unique contribution of coaching, resource materials and Learning Community components of the model:
 - In particular, Learning Community participants found the **coaching** a strong component of the model.
 - **Quality resource materials** can support sustained improvements in knowledge and skills from the conference, ultimately supporting program-level changes.
 - The Learning **Community component** of the model promoted program networking and sharing of resources and best practices, which also supported program-level changes.

In addition to the summary of findings related to outcomes of this model, this report describes lessons learned about the components themselves and makes several recommendations for future evaluations of the model. These recommendations for future evaluations include further examination of the key model components and characteristics, resulting student outcomes and sustainability of program changes after participating in the model.

INTRODUCTION

School's Out Washington (SOWA) began a four-year effort in 2007 to pilot and implement *Pathway to Excellence*, a professional development model to support afterschool programs. This report describes key findings from a two-year evaluation of the impact of this model on strengthening afterschool program supports for English language learners (ELLs). The evaluation examines changes in staff knowledge and skills, program-level changes, changes in student engagement in the programs, and ways that the model components supported results. Results are based on two rounds of model implementation, each round for one academic year, across 35 afterschool programs in Washington state and Northern Oregon.

SOWA is a nonprofit organization “dedicated to building community systems to support quality out-of-school time programs for Washington’s 5-18 year olds through training, advocacy and leadership.” SOWA created and piloted *Pathway to Excellence* as part of its mission to provide professional development and support to afterschool programs, as well as to inform a model that could then be disseminated among organizations that provide similar services to afterschool programs in other regions of the country. The Atlantic Philanthropies provided the funding for *Pathway to Excellence* for four years, including the project’s evaluation.

SOWA contracted with Organizational Research Services (ORS), an evaluation firm in Seattle, Washington, to design and implement the evaluations. SOWA and ORS worked closely to design the evaluation, identify the most appropriate means of data collection and make adjustments as needed throughout the evaluation process.

This evaluation begins to build a base of evidence for the effectiveness of *Pathway to Excellence* as an evidence-informed or promising model¹ of professional development for afterschool program staff. While additional rigorous evaluations with results that demonstrate effectiveness would be necessary to consider this model well supported or truly “evidence based,” findings from this evaluation can be used to help SOWA and the out-of-school field better understand the changes that this model and its particular components may support for afterschool programs. The evaluation findings can also inform further development of the model based on what parts worked well and what aspects could be improved. In addition to describing the key findings from this particular evaluation, this report recommends questions for future evaluation focus that would further strengthen the evidence base for *Pathway to Excellence*. A second and complementary evaluation, examining the *process* of implementing this model, is currently underway as well. A summary of lessons learned and recommendations for the model’s implementation and replication will be presented in a separate report following the third year of the *Pathway to Excellence* project.

¹ See *Guidelines for CBCAP Lead Agencies on Evidence-Based and Evidence Informed Programs and Practices: Learning Along the Way* (Revised 11/13/07) for a description of the continuum of evidence for evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices.

THE PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE MODEL

The *Pathway to Excellence* model consists of four professional development “components” for afterschool staff: (1) an initial training opportunity, (2) ongoing coaching, (3) participation in a peer learning community and (4) additional supports (e.g., online discussion boards).

During each of the two years on which this evaluation focused, SOWA provided professional development to strengthen the capacity of afterschool programs that support English language learners (ELLs). SOWA implemented each of the four *Pathway to Excellence* model components in 2007-09 as follows:

- **Training.** SOWA hired The Center for Afterschool Education (The Center), experts in both the field of English language learning and afterschool education, to facilitate three training sessions to participating afterschool staff over the course of one and a half days at a regional conference for afterschool providers called *The Bridge from School to Afterschool and Back Conference*. The Center provided all training participants with their own set of resource materials to take back and use in their programs following the conference, including two resource books describing relevant techniques and activities and a companion CD containing electronic versions of activity materials that could be adapted and printed.²
- **Coaching.** Each program received regular onsite visits and communication from coaches with experience in providing youth programming and serving diverse populations. Coach contacts began just prior to or following the training for an anticipated average of six hours per month until May or June of the academic year. The format of the site visits varied based on the availability, preferences and stated needs of afterschool program staff, but typically included a combination of lesson planning, one-on-one consultation and “problem solving,” modeling, observation and feedback. During their site visits, coaches also provided additional training for those staff who had attended the conference, as well as initial training for other program staff, volunteers or members of the agencies that offer afterschool programming.
- **Learning Communities.** The program representatives who attended the conference also participated in regional Learning Community meetings. One to two staff (those who participated in the training) attended quarterly meetings facilitated by the coach and/or their peers. The format of these meetings varied based on the style of the coach and the preferences of group members. They included opportunities for sharing activities and resources, problem solving related to the content strand and networking.

² These materials included: “More Than Just Talk: English Language Learning in Afterschool” and “Afterschool Style Guide Graffiti Wall”.

- Online Discussion Board. The Center supported and managed an online discussion board for SOWA the first year, after which SOWA designed and managed online discussion board itself using Yahoo! Groups. Coaches encouraged program staff to post to and read the online discussion board messages regularly. Postings ranged from posed questions regarding individual program challenges to requests for or descriptions of activity ideas and resources.

EVALUATION DESIGN & METHODS

This evaluation used a quasi-experimental design.³ In this type of design, comparison groups serve as the baseline against which program impacts are measured. This design is most suitable when random assignment of individuals is not possible (Bawden & Sonenstein, 1992). To better understand what difference the “full model” experience might have made for resulting outcomes, participants were designated as two types:

- Learning Community (LC) Participants: Programs that participated in the full model (i.e., training, coaching, learning community and online supports) for approximately six months. Two staff members (a line staff and supervisor) were required to participate in the training.
- Conference Only (CO) Participants: Programs that participated in the training alone. Only one staff member attended the conference.

Although programs were not randomly assigned to these two groups, SOWA did attempt to recruit comparable programs for each group based on the size of the English language learner population served by the programs and size of the program overall.⁴ Other selection criteria included participants’ acknowledged understanding of the various components of the model and agreement to participate in the evaluation. As an incentive for participation, SOWA provided participating programs with a scholarship covering the conference registration fee and, for some participants, travel and lodging costs. While the programs did not have to pay to be included in the *Pathway to Excellence* project, participants were required to dedicate some of their own program resources, primarily staff time, but also use of computers and the Internet for the discussion board and, in some cases, space for Learning Community meetings.⁵

The evaluation design explored three outcome areas: 1) changes in program *staffs’* knowledge and use of skills related to supporting English language learners, 2) changes in *programs* to support English language learning, and 3) changes in the level of *student engagement* among English language learners served by the participating programs. ORS collected data through the following methods (see the Appendix for the full Evaluation Plan):

- Participants’ self-report surveys for both the Learning Community and Conference Only groups at the end of the conference and again at the end of the academic year.
- Coach assessments of Learning Community staff’s knowledge and skills and program changes.
- Interviews and focus groups with Learning Community participants.
- Brief interviews with coaches regarding each Learning Community program.

³ A quasi-experimental design is commonly employed in the evaluation of programs when random assignment is not possible or practical (Gribbons et al., 1997).

⁴ See Methodology & Data Addendum for further detail regarding group assignment and comparability.

⁵ The forthcoming report on model implementation will discuss recruitment and participation agreements in further detail.

- Observational assessments of a sample of English language learners in Learning Community programs completed by coaches once during an initial program visit and then again at the end of the academic year. No student data were collected for English language learners in Conference Only programs.
- Monthly logs of coaching contacts completed by coaches.

Data were collected from 71 programs over two academic years: for 18 programs in each of the Learning Community and Conference Only groups during the 2007-2008 academic year and for 18 and 17 programs in each group, respectively, during the 2008-2009 academic year.⁶ There were some differences in model implementation between the two years related to recruitment, incentives provided, the design of training sessions, and Learning Community participation requirements; however, we don't think that these differences significantly impacted the comparability of data collected between the two years. Due to the relatively small number of programs participating each year, we present findings from the combined data from both academic years for most data collected for this report, though all of the afterschool programs participated in the training or "full model" for just one year. Full results by year and for combined years are available in the *Methodology and Data Addendum*.

Quantitative data were analyzed by calculating frequencies of response ratings at each point in time, as well as assessing the change in rating over time (increased, decreased or same). Tests for statistical significance were conducted to see if differences existed between the Learning Community and Conference Only groups. The qualitative data, including transcribed interview and focus group data, were analyzed by coding the responses for both predetermined and emerging themes. A second reviewer conducted a quality check of the coded responses. All discrepancies were reviewed and discussed until reviewers reached an agreement.

DATA CONSIDERATIONS

Several important considerations related to the data collected for this evaluation are worth noting here. First, the relatively small number of programs and providers participating in this evaluation, as well as a low response rate in some instances, make it more difficult to detect statistically significant differences between the Learning Community and Conference Only comparison group than would be the case in a larger evaluation. Second, this evaluation relied on a variety of data collection sources, some of which were modified between the first and second years of the evaluation to increase the reliability of participants' responses. Some of the data collected in the first year of the evaluation that were deemed unreliable or redundant are not presented in this report. Because of inconsistencies in data collection associated with student outcomes during the first year, in particular, only data from the second year of the evaluation are included here. Finally, there are potential biases associated with some of the data sources. Some of the data collected were self-reported, a method known to present

⁶ Although 18 programs initially signed up for each group in 2008-2009, staff from one "Conference Only" program did not show up at the training and one Learning Community program was removed part-way through the year due to program complications. During both years, staff turn-over and survey response rates limited the number of programs for which data are available.

possible social desirability biases. In other instances, coaches reported on student engagement, teachers' knowledge and skills, and program changes. Since these coaches provided data related to the Learning Community programs and providers with whom they worked, they had a possible incentive to provide favorable comments. These concerns, however, are addressed in part by the various data sources included in the evaluation design which taken together, provide different points of evidence to describe the experience and impact of the model.

PROGRAM & PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

We analyzed the characteristics of the Learning Community (LC) and Conference Only (CO) programs to determine if significant differences existed that could account for differences in outcomes from participation. Very few significant differences in student, program or provided characteristics existed between the groups prior to their participation in the conference training. Some of the student and program characteristics considered were the number of students, the number of English language learners and grade levels served, the program setting, and the number of months and hours of operation. Provider characteristics included the staff members' position in the program and the extent of their experience in the afterschool program and in the field. See the *Methodology and Data Addendum* for a complete data summary.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

- Results show that participating programs served a range of age groups. Most participating programs served elementary school students (LC, 72%; CO, 83%), followed by middle school students (LC 58%; CO, 40%) and then high school students (LC, 31%; CO, 37%).
- Notably, more than three-quarters of students enrolled in participating programs were eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program (LC, 78%; CO, 77%).
- 18% of students served by programs in both Learning Community and Conference Only groups had special needs.
- Although not statistically significant, Conference Only group programs served more recent immigrants (45%) than Learning Community group programs (33%).

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

- The vast majority of programs operated on an “enroll” basis (LC, 89%, CO, 80%) versus “drop-in” (LC, 14%; CO, 29%). Afterschool programs operated from community-based organizations (LC, 38%; CO, 50%) or schools (LC, 50%; CO, 42%) for the most part, but a few operated from a community center and one belonged to a faith-based organization.
- Approximately two-thirds of programs operated year round (LC, 69%; CO, 62%), after school hours only (LC, 77%; CO, 57%), and five days per week (LC, 66%; CO 67%), while one third was open only during the school year (LC 31%; CO 38%).
- When asked about their program’s primary focus, more than half of providers reported a focus on academic achievement (58%), followed by social skills (22%), recreation (10%), culture (6%) and then basic adult supervision (4%).⁷

⁷ This data was only collected in the second year of the evaluation.

- The total number of students, as well as the number of English language learners served in the programs, was evenly distributed between both comparison groups. There were no significant differences in the number of small size programs with large or small ELL populations or large size programs with large or small ELL populations.

PROVIDER CHARACTERISTICS

- Of the afterschool providers who attended the training, slightly less than two-thirds were supervisory staff (LC, 57%; CO, 67%) and the rest were lead activity staff (LC, 35%; CO, 23%).
- Most programs in both groups had an adult to student ratio of at least 1:15. Programs in both groups had an average of seven staff, 2.4 of which were full-time.
- Many of the participating afterschool providers were quite new to the program with which they worked; less than half of the providers in both groups (LC, 44%; CO, 34%) had worked with their program for more than two years.
- Approximately two-thirds of providers in both comparison groups had been in the afterschool field for more than two years (LC, 65%; CO, 62%).

KEY FINDINGS

Considerable data were collected for each of the outcome areas. This section highlights six key findings of the evaluation that most clearly show what can be learned about the model's efficacy. Outcomes for program staff, afterschool programs and reflections on the model components are described in more detail following this section. See the *Methodology and Data Addendum* for a complete set of data tables and summaries.

Training participants increased their knowledge and use of skills related to English language learning (ELL), regardless of their exposure to other model components, and maintained these changes over the school year. The training opportunity at the conference had a significant and lasting impact on all conference participants' knowledge and skills related to supporting English language learners, regardless of participants' access to coaching, participation in Learning Communities or use of the online discussion board. By the end of the year, the vast majority of participants reported either moderate or high levels of ELL-related knowledge and sometimes or always using related skills and strategies.

The model resulted in program-level changes that help to institutionalize supports for English language learners. Multiple data sources, both quantitative and qualitative, support the findings that the *Pathway to Excellence* model supported Learning Community participants in making program-level changes to support English language learners—including implementation of strategies and activities, increased planning time, renewed focus and intentionality around the topic area and other structural changes. In contrast to staff knowledge and skills, which increased for all training participants, those providers who participated in the full model were more likely to report making recent program-level changes than those who participated in the training alone. These changes are notable because changes instituted in programs are more sustainable than changes that occur among individuals alone.

Although there are considerable limitations to the conclusions that can be made about the impact of the model on student engagement outcomes based on this evaluation design, **results indicate that students in programs that participated in the “full model” became more engaged in their programs over the course of the year.**

Evaluation data also show the unique contribution of coaching, resource materials and Learning Community components of the model:

In particular, Learning Community participants found the coaching to be a strong component of the model. For many, the coach's presence and expectation that they implement some of the English language learning activities introduced at the training or shared by the coaches during their weekly visits supported many of their recently made program changes.

Quality resource materials can support sustained improvements in knowledge and skills from the conference, ultimately supporting program-level changes.

The Learning Community meetings component of the model promoted program networking and sharing of resources and best practices, which also supported program-level changes. Evaluation findings indicate that participants find the Learning Community meetings a good place to bridge many of the barriers afterschool providers often face, such as isolation from other providers in the afterschool field and the usual lack of intense and focused professional development follow-up in one particular content area.

OVERALL RESULTS

This section details key results related to changes among afterschool providers' knowledge and skills and program-level changes, including a description of the types of changes made by programs. We also present findings related to student engagement outcomes. Finally, we discuss specific components of the model that the evaluation show promise for supporting positive results based on this evaluation.

CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

The training opportunity at the conference had a significant and lasting impact on all conference participants' knowledge and skills related to supporting English language learners, regardless of participants' access to coaching, participation in Learning Communities or use of the online discussion board. By the end of the school year, the vast majority of participants reported gaining either moderate or high levels of ELL-related knowledge and sometimes or always using related skills and strategies.

Changes in Afterschool Providers' Knowledge

Participants developed much of their ELL-related knowledge during the training itself. Immediately after the initial training, more than half of participants in both groups reported greater understanding of the stages of second language development (LC, 67%; CO, 55%), the Language Experience Approach⁸ (LC, 63%; CO 63%), how to create and adapt activities (LC, 73%; CO 64%) and how to link activities to school day learning (LC, 58%; CO, 52%). Although more participants in the Learning Community group reported increased knowledge, the differences between the two groups did not achieve statistical significance for any of the indicators.

Remarkably, most training participants sustained this knowledge over the ensuing months. At the end of the year, participants in both groups reported either maintaining the knowledge gained at the initial training or increasing it even further (see **TABLE 1**). Again, the differences between the Learning Community and Conference Only groups did not achieve statistical significance.

⁸ This strategy uses the students' existing language and prior experiences to develop reading, writing and listening skills.

TABLE 1: Percent of Participant-Reported Change in ELL Knowledge by Group from Conference Feedback Form to YEAR-END Feedback Form

Survey Items on Knowledge of ELL Concepts & Approaches	Participant (n)	Decrease	Same	Increase
Understanding of How Activities Link to School-Day Learning	LC (38)	18%	40%	42%
	CO (19)	26%	47%	26%
Understanding of Language Experience Approach	LC (36)	19%	44%	36%
	CO (19)	37%	47%	16%
Understanding of How to Create and Adapt Activities	LC (38)	18%	61%	21%
	CO (19)	21%	53%	27%
Understanding of Stages of Second Language Development	LC (38)	32%	53%	16%
	CO (19)	32%	53%	16%

When asked in a survey how the model impacted them, participants in both groups described an increased awareness related to English language learner needs and language development that they could apply to their work.

“It has provided me with useful information [about] the English language learning process that many of our program’s youth are experiencing. Understanding how language develops and learning key strategies to facilitate and aid that growth has really helped me to enhance the support I give to the youth.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“More than anything, it’s made me more aware of the special needs and easy ways to help ELL’s. They tend to be the quietest of participants and were easily overlooked before.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“It led to a better awareness of the issues ELL kids are facing and a better understanding of how to provide support.” (Conference Only Staff, Survey)

Changes in Afterschool Providers’ Skills

In addition to the focus on building knowledge among participants, the initial training also emphasized the importance of preparing afterschool providers to use particular techniques and strategies to support English language learners. At the end of the academic year, providers from both groups who participated in the training reported using these ELL-related skills more frequently than they had in the fall. These skills included techniques to encourage more communication in English and improve reading and writing among English language learners, as well as strategies to create games with ELL goals and communicate with English language learners’ families. No significant differences were noted at the time of the conference, indicating that participants in both groups engaged in similar levels of use of ELL-related techniques and strategies initially. At the end of the academic year, the vast majority of all

training participants had either maintained or increased the frequency with which they used these skills (see **TABLE 2**). Again, at this point the differences in skill use between groups did not achieve statistical significance except that significantly more Learning Community participants increased or decreased their use of techniques to encourage more communication in English, whereas Conference Only participants maintained the same levels of use.

TABLE 2: Percent of Participant-Reported Change in Use of ELL Skills by Group from Conference to YEAR-END Feedback Forms

Survey Items on Use of ELL Skills	Participant (n)	Decrease	Same	Increase
Use of Technique to Support Writing	LC (37)	8%	41%	51%
	CO (19)	11%	58%	32%
Use of Strategies to Create Games with ELL goals	LC (37)	8%	43%	49%
	CO (19)	16%	53%	32%
Use of Techniques to Support Reading	LC (37)	14%	46%	41%
	CO (18)	17%	44%	39%
Use of Techniques to Encourage More Communication in English*	LC (37)	27%	41%	32%
	CO (18)	6%	78%	17%

* Statistically different distribution of change ratings between CO and LC group overall at $p < .05$.

When asked in a survey to describe a “key learning” from the training that stood out for them, the vast majority of participants shared responses concerning activities, such as the following:

- References to specific activities, particularly forms of Graffiti Wall,⁹ and how to use them (e.g., as transitions between lessons)
- How to adapt, moderate or conduct activities generally (e.g., group by age or skill, make more interactive, etc)
- Activities and approaches related to incorporating multiple languages and cultural awareness/appreciation
- Activities and approaches for increasing “talk time” and encouraging students to talk more in afterschool programs

⁹ The Center demonstrated the use of and provided a resource called Afterschool Style Guide: Graffiti Wall, focusing on a type of activity for students in which they, for example, complete or contribute to a list, respond to a question, draw, or complete a math problem on large sheets of paper on the wall. The activities can address a range of academic content and be used in a transitional or focused manner (see Center for Afterschool & Community Education, 2006. Afterschool Style Guide: Graffiti Wall.)

Other “key learnings” mentioned by participants in both groups related to concepts and strategies learned:

- Improved understanding of the Stages of Language Development and how to assess language ability levels
- Improved understanding of the Language Experience Approach and awareness of differences between language and literacy
- Reinforcement of the importance of and new knowledge about ways to engage and communicate with families

When asked in a survey how the model impacted them, participants in both groups mentioned an increase in skills and techniques to support English language learners. Learning Community described these changes in skills more than Conference Only participants in the open-ended survey questions.

“I have used handouts/materials from the conference in designing classes.”
(Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“I work more intentionally on serving these students & their families with better communication using interpreters, etc.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“I obtained the knowledge of using the interactive games as means of engaging children in learning.” (Conference Only Staff, Survey)

Coaches’ Perspective on Learning Community Participants’ Skills and Knowledge

To validate the Learning Community participants’ self-report data, coaches also provided ratings of ELL-related knowledge and skills demonstrated by the Learning Community staff with whom they worked. The coaches’ perspective of Learning Community participants suggest even more strongly that participants increased their knowledge and skill use, with coaches reporting that more than 96% of participants showed increases in all the above areas over the year.

Discussion

Both the maintenance of knowledge and skills and the lack of differences between groups constitute meaningful findings. A less effective training could have resulted in a short-term knowledge increase among participants that returned to prior levels relatively quickly. That this did not occur demonstrates the effectiveness of the training and possibly the resource materials provided there. It is also, perhaps, surprising that there are so few differences in the changes in staff knowledge or skills over the course of the year between the Learning Community and Conference Only groups. A closer look at the data showed that more Conference Only participants than Learning Community participants decreased their knowledge

and skill use over the course of the year, although the differences did not achieve statistical significance for the most part (see **TABLE 2**).¹⁰

The fact that there were very few differences in participants' knowledge or skill development based on one group's access to additional model components seems to speak to the importance of the initial training in supporting a strong foundation of understanding and actionable skill sets related to the content strand. See the *Lessons Learned* section for a discussion of which aspects of the training did and did not work well.

CHANGES IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Multiple data sources, both quantitative and qualitative, support the findings that **the *Pathway to Excellence* model supported Learning Community participants in making program-level changes to support English language learners**—changes that were anticipated and additional changes that emerged over the course of the evaluation. In contrast to staff knowledge and skills, which increased for all training participants, those providers who participated in the full model were more likely to report making recent program-level changes than those who participated in the training alone.

This section details results associated with program changes including: implementation of strategies and activities; preparation time, time spent redesigning programs to support English language learners; and emergent program outcomes.

Implementation of strategies and activities to support English Language Learners

Strategies implemented by learning community participants include, among others, the use of the Stages of Second Language Development and the Language Experience Approach to create and adapt resource materials. Most of the activities implemented include many from the hands-on resources provided at the training or brought in by their coach. Results of both quantitative and qualitative data sources from participants and coaches demonstrate that Learning Community participants were more likely than Conference Only participants to report making recent changes related to implementation of strategies (LC, 52%, CO, 26%) and activities (LC, 53%, CO, 32%) that supported English language learners, whereas Conference Only participants were more likely to report not having plans to make these changes (see **CHARTS 1 and 2**). The differences in the pattern of responses between the two comparison groups are statistically significant.

¹⁰ See prior description of the difference between groups related to the change in participants' use of techniques to encourage communication in English over the course of the year.

CHART 1: Percent of Participant-Reported Change in Implementation of Strategies to Encourage Learners to Communicate More in English (Over Combined Years)¹¹

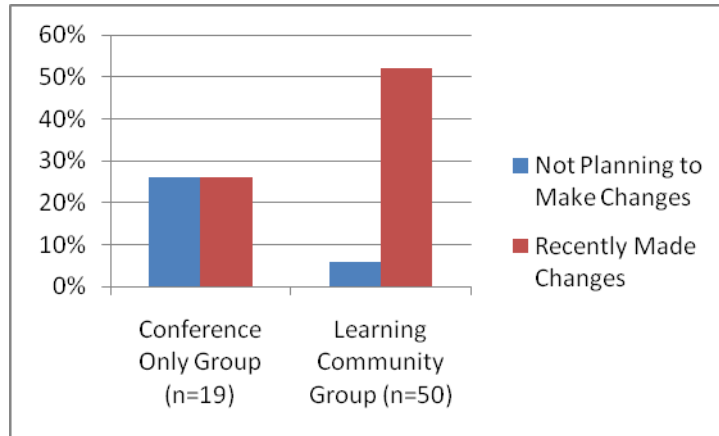
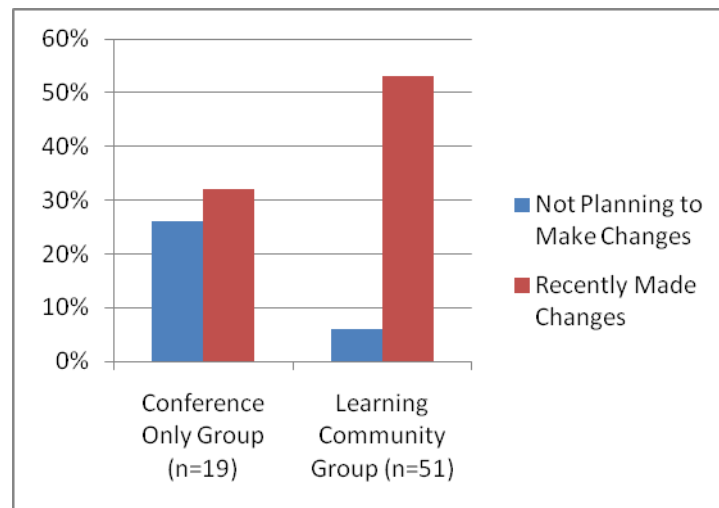


CHART 2: Percent of Participant-Reported Change in Adding Activities with Specific Language Learning Objectives (Over Combined Years)¹²



¹¹ Statistically significant $p < .05$

¹² Statistically significant $p < .05$

Qualitative findings from open-ended survey questions and interviews, as well as focus group discussions, validated these quantitative results. In fact, Learning Community participants and coaches described changes related to use of ELL-related strategies and activities more than any other type of change. The strategies described included the following:

- Promoting more “talk time” for students
- Emphasizing interactive activities
- Emphasizing culturally relevant activities
- Applying ELL activities to academic subjects and homework support
- Prioritizing a broad definition of “learning” beyond just academic support
- Infusing ELL-supportive activities throughout transition periods and increasing time devoted to “enrichment”
- Assessing and recognizing a broader range of student language needs
- Engaging with students’ families

Coaches and participants from both groups also frequently reported increasing their use of activities to support English language learning. Providers from both groups used the activities “off the shelf” and also adapted them to fit their particular program and student needs, both during transitions and for specific academic subjects. Graffiti Wall activities were mentioned most frequently by far. Although more Learning Community than Conference Only participants described an increase in use of strategies, both groups described using more ELL-related activities in their programs.

“A lot of the activities we do already contained the ELL components. We are now able to identify and enhance them.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“More social talk time.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“We use many of the activities from the More Than Just Talk book.” (Conference Only Staff, Survey)

“Having different visual cues around the room. So, we have the “wacky word list” on the wall right now. If they come across a word they don’t know, they write it on the list then everybody contributes to it and we find the definition for that word, which means now they are going into dictionaries and looking up the word and having conversations. You’ll see a pair of kids over by the list.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

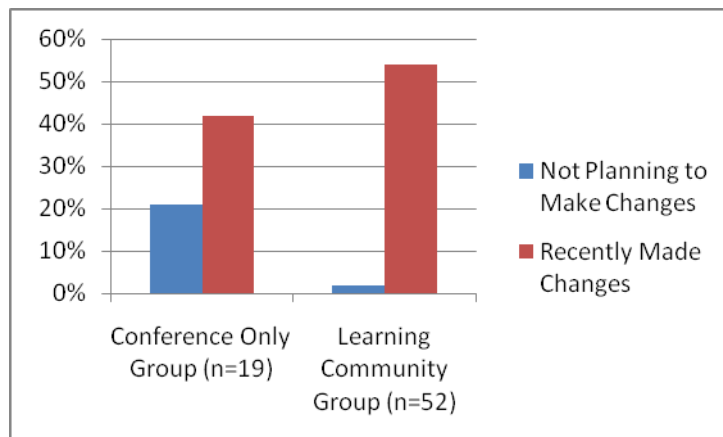
“We have become more aware of trying to bring an academic element to dodge ball, skate boarding, adding homework time to the end of skateboard time... You can’t start the dodge ball game until you do a letter scramble and find all the hidden words. We are trying to... balance it a little more, bring more of the academic to the recreation element.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

“The whole culture of our program has over the year adjusted to an activity-program focused on informal engaged learning with a real keen awareness of the English language ability, like the activity game with the math problem in another language. And I think we have really started to hone in on what it is the kids do and don’t understand because all of our students speak perfectly but their academic English, they really struggle with, and we didn’t really get that until we started to delve into it using some of the tools from the program. I always say that our program has changed significantly.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

Preparation Time Dedicated to Supporting English Language Learners

Programs spent more time preparing to support English language learners, through additional discussions, training and planning time. Afterschool providers who participated in the “full model” were more likely to report making recent changes in time spent discussing how to support English language learners on the year-end survey (LC, 54%; CO, 42%). Conference Only participants, on the other hand, were more likely to report not having plans to make these changes (see **CHART 3**). The differences in the pattern of responses between the two groups are statistically significant.

CHART 3: Percent of Participant-Reported Change in Time Spent Discussing How to Support English Language Learning (Over Combined Years)¹³



¹³ Statistical significant $p < .05$

Qualitative data from open-ended survey questions and interviews supported these results. Coaches and providers described increased time spent on discussion, training and planning. Learning Community participants mentioned these changes more often than Conference Only participants in the open-ended responses to the survey. Changes related to planning, in particular, came up in Learning Community focus group discussions. Examples of this increased “preparation” time included the following:

- Onsite trainings;
- Meeting to plan activities and review resources;
- Discussions about sharing materials and strategies with and among program staff, volunteers and tutors;
- Discussions about specific needs (e.g., how to work with particular age groups); and
- Increased time devoted to lesson planning, e.g., setting aside blocks of time in advance and creating activity calendars.

While planning, Learning Community providers discussed ways to more effectively target enrichment time, transitional periods and time set aside for homework or tutoring, as well as how to integrate ELL/PTE activities into a set curriculum. In a few cases, providers mentioned making plans for summer school or the following year.

“We have spent more time and energy focusing on our volunteer component and educating them about working with ELL students and using their skills and strengths to build the program.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

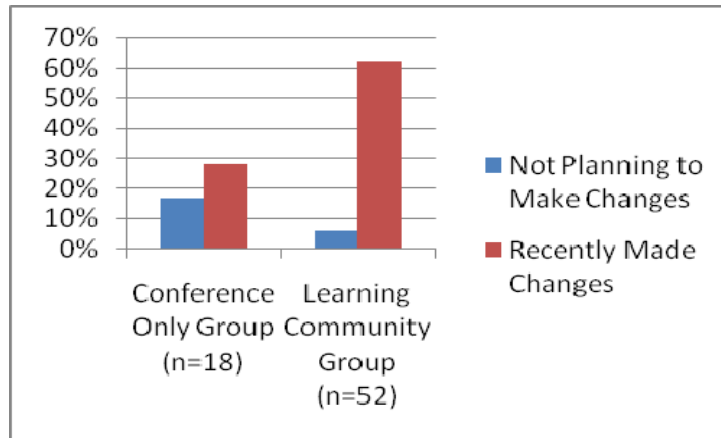
“More attention to how what we are doing or planning to do affects the ability for youth to learn. [We are] more thoughtful planning when possible.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“I think that the amount of time we spend planning activities that focuses on language development has increased. Each week the tutoring coordinators spend time identifying activities that will work and schedule them into our program.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Interview)

Redesigning How Programs Support English Language Learners

Beyond time spent on planning and design, staff reported actually implementing some important structural and organizational changes within programs. Although there were not statistical differences between the comparison groups, the Learning Community group showed markedly more recently made changes than the Conference Only group (LC, 62%; CO, 28%).

CHART 4: Percent of Participant-Reported Change in Time Spent Redesigning How the Program Supports English Language Learning (Over Combined Years)



Qualitative findings from open-ended survey questions, interviews and focus group supported these results. Coaches and providers described allocating more time to support English language learning. For example, Learning Community programs instituted more structure into particular program segments (e.g., community time, homework time, reading time, enrichment time) by including options for English language learning activities, instructions for students and, in a few instances, assessing student progress and needs.

“At the beginning of the year, it started out [like]: ‘If you have homework, here, come hang out.’ When it is time to move on to the next class [we say], ‘See you and have a good time.’ [Now it is like:] ‘What homework do you have? How can I support you? Here are some materials that might help you with that. You don’t have homework? Here are some More Than Just Talk games; find a partner...’ [There is] a lot more structure. A lot more focus.” (Learning Community Coach, Interview)

“My program is the opposite. My program was already with the structure: this time is for snack, this time is for reading, this time is for homework. And after working with [my coach] and graffiti walls and the other book... [my coach] helped me be more flexible with the kids. It’s not like in this block we need to be doing homework and only homework, and we need to wait until 4:30 until we can move on to something else.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

Providers also initiated additional procedures for communicating with teachers, parents and volunteers, and staff.

“There was just one thing that helped to push me out of my comfort zone, it was connecting with the teachers of the participants of the program, and finding out what they are doing in their classroom, so that I could support what they were doing by using those as my examples.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

“A comment that has been shared by each program [operating under one umbrella agency] is that PTE has encouraged more sharing of ideas and resources, monthly meetings between the sites, and a general supportive environment as an agency.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

Coaches’ Perspective on Learning Community Participants’ Program Changes

Coaches also provided their perspective related to the program-level changes they observed among the Learning Community programs. According to coaches, more than 70% of the Learning Community programs made or were considering five of the seven program changes specifically asked about on a survey. Remarkably, coaches reported that 94% of the programs with which they worked made changes related to implementing activities to encourage communication in English and that 88% of programs made changes related to increased discussion about how to support English language learners. Coaches were generally more positive than participants about the degree to which programs had implemented changes, though the rating difference between coaches and participants achieved statistical significance for only one indicator (“added activities with specific language learning objectives”).

Other Changes Experienced by Learning Community Programs

Afterschool providers, particularly those in the Learning Community group, also described several additional categories or “themes” related to program-level changes which were not assessed with quantitative data, but rather emerged from interviews, open-ended survey questions and focus groups. This next section details results on these emergent program changes experienced by Learning Community programs:

- New or renewed focus and intentionality related to the content strand.
- Increased engagement with professional development resources.

- Increased influence on support for English language learners among programs' sponsoring organizations and affiliated schools.
- Improved engagement of English language learners' families in the program.
- Increased emphasis on providing culturally relevant programming.

Providers experienced new or renewed focus and intentionality related to improving program practices to support English language learning.

Although surveys did not assess this emerging theme and participants did not often note this change in open-ended responses, interviews with coaches and Learning Community participants as well as focus groups with Learning Community providers indicated that programs placed a greater level of importance on supporting English language learners over the course of the year. Learning Community participants and coaches described a new or renewed energy, focus and intentionality related to supporting English language learners that built on the knowledge and skills gained among the smaller group of staff trained initially. Based on this focused attention, program staff demonstrated greater patience in working with English language learners, increased motivation to support them, and more confidence related to applying the knowledge and skills they had learned. Participants and coaches described these changes among specific individuals, but also collectively for the team of staff, volunteers and tutors at their program. Some also noted that the project seemed to spark a renewed interest and focus on offering professional development to program staff.

“Related to PTE, just the level of awareness that they’ve got things they need to work on. Before they wouldn’t have even thought of those things and now they are starting to make conscious decisions.” (Learning Community Coach, Interview)

“I think just having [our coach] come to the program, for the volunteers, gives it a little more weight... They see that I am going to trainings, that I am talking to other staff, that I am trying to learn as much as I can, and ... that there is intention behind what we are doing.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

“I feel that our tutors and part of our staff feel more empowered... We’ve sort of recognized the strengths of our program and we see the culture of our program... Now, I don’t even need to give the tutors activities anymore. I’ll walk into the room and see them playing with words or books, or reading out loud and I hear them doing something literacy focused and I hear the kind of questions they are asking are like coming from this material that we’ve presented in these tutor trainings. Now it is kind of an atmosphere that does its own thing.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

“I would say that the changes I saw were like a refreshed awareness of it, of ELL strategies and challenges for ELL students. That site and [staff person] in particular already had a lot of the knowledge and experience. They had just fallen into old patterns, so what I noticed most for her and this site was the rejuvenation of that... For the others that work in the program, they are all pretty new to afterschool and new to the program. They weren’t aware of these strategies or of this focus. But her excitement and [renewed] focus on it brought their attention to it. It was a new experience for them.” (Learning Community Coach, Interview)

Programs engaged more with professional development resources that support English language learners.

When asked on the survey, staff did not report significantly greater access to resources and partnerships. However, in open-ended responses, interviews and focus groups, Learning Community providers and coaches frequently described engaging with resources associated with the model. Presumably, programs distinguished between in-kind or financial resources from outside parties or sponsoring agencies, which they were no more likely to secure based on this project, and the increased access to professional development resources provided by the model directly. Learning Community providers described engaging with professional development resources such as the activity ideas, but also the conference scholarship, coaching and training. Learning Community program providers also mentioned partnerships and networking opportunities as new and valuable resources. In a couple of instances, they also mentioned partnering with other agencies.

“It has made [us] aware of the fact that we can with very simple means take it to the next step and develop new games and new ideas. It does not require a lot of money to throw a piece of paper on the wall and sort of start a creative spark that takes you in another direction.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus group)

Afterschool programs influenced greater support for English language learners among their sponsoring agencies and affiliated schools.

Again, this theme emerged from open-ended responses, interviews and focus group data. A number of Learning Community participants and coaches shared examples of ways in which participation in the project impacted relationships, resource sharing, communication, and shared focus with sponsoring agencies and schools. For example, providers described sharing materials with school teachers, joint trainings with other agency staff and coordinated lesson planning.

“The teachers became involved because [staff] would tell the ELL teachers of these students they know about the project. [He] talked to them about this and then he invited them to come and he shared materials.” (Learning Community Coach, Interview)

“The administration & staff at [school] has begun to become more aware of the importance of supporting English language learners in the school as a whole. This is because I have shared my experiences regarding this program.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

Programs improved their family engagement efforts, including reaching out to families more often and in different ways

Another theme that emerged from interview data with coaches related to efforts by Learning Community providers to initiate or improve engagement of families in afterschool programming. Although less frequently mentioned in the open-ended questions or focus groups, Learning Community participants and a small number of Conference Only providers described specific activities (e.g., Family Fun Nights), as well as efforts to communicate better regarding student progress.

“I have been reassessing how I communicate with families... sort of looking at why those things get missed, and different ways of engaging with families.”
(Learning Community Staff, Focus Group)

“Parents, I definitely heard parent engagement more... I have gotten ideas from my coach for more ways to engage parents but we do work on that quite a bit.”
(Learning Community Supervisor, Interview)

“Program offered a family night of PTE material.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

Increased emphasis on providing culturally relevant programming

Coaches and a few Learning Community participants described greater efforts among programs to provide culturally relevant activities for their students and families, as well as additional training opportunities for cultural competency and anti-oppression. Though Learning Community participants engaged in some non-PTE training related to these topics during the period of evaluation, *Pathway to Excellence* clearly influenced this program change as well.

“[Sponsoring agency] specifically has embraced cultural activities and celebrations, such as culturally based field trips, and provided additional culturally-based resources in their program.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

“[I saw] a change on the content of the material. It’s more cultural. It is infused. Before, it was mainstream. There was not awareness or an emphasis on cultural resources like using folk tales, legends and materials. They even have... puppets. So I think that is the most important outcome of the Pathway to Excellence project, awareness of cultural resources.” (Learning Community Coach, Interview)

“Really what I think what the project inspired was the cultural focus. I think that is really important for kids who are ELL students, trying to learn English, and probably being made fun of for that – to think, ‘I am important. I am not just weird. Someone wants to learn about me. They want me to teach it to the other kids.’ I see adults and kids are interested in that culture. I think that is most of our focus and, through that, there is a lot of talking and different things that are helping English skills as well as the homework.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

Discussion

These kinds of program-level changes are notable because changes instituted in programs are more sustainable than changes that occur among individuals alone. Staff turnover in the afterschool field is notoriously high (SOWA & OSPI, 2008). Although findings show that an initial training can be quite effective, training participants may work in the field or for a particular program for a relatively short period, so training benefits are easily lost. A strong foundation of knowledge and skills among some key staff is necessary to support related changes in programs, but institutionalized changes increase the likelihood of sustaining the training benefits over time through processes that support sharing knowledge among all staff and applying that knowledge and skills on a consistent basis.

The fact that participants exposed to the full *Pathway to Excellence* model reported so many program-level changes is quite compelling, particularly since many of the changes reported by participants and coaches align with proposed indicators of quality afterschool programming, e.g., skilled staff, use of focused and intentional strategies, appropriate structure, student sense of belonging, family engagement, cultural competency, opportunities for interactivity and access to resources (Metz et al., 2008).

CHANGES IN IMPACT: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

In addition to staff and program-level changes, the *Pathway to Excellence* model intends to ultimately improve student outcomes. In this pilot, the model aimed to improve the engagement of English language learners in their afterschool programs. **Although there are considerable limitations to any conclusions that can be made about the impact of the model on student engagement outcomes based on this evaluation design, results indicate that students in programs that participated in the “full model” became more engaged in their programs over the course of the year.**

Based on a comparison of coaches’ observations of English language learners at baseline and year-end, a considerable percentage of English language learners demonstrated greater engagement in their afterschool program over the course of the academic year in which their programs engaged in the full model in some ways. The greatest indication of increased change in student engagement that coaches observed related to the frequency with which students asked more questions to understand meaning (55%), worked on pronunciation (48%), demonstrated focused attention (46%), and persisted rather than giving up (41%). (See **TABLE 3**). Notably, three of these changes (asking questions, working on pronunciation and persistence) were focuses of *Pathway to Excellence* resources. The smallest area of observed change related to the increase in time they spent with English speaking staff and peers (17%).

TABLE 3: Percent of Coach-Reported Change in English Language Learners’ Engagement in the Learning Community Program Activities from Year 2 Only Feedback Form¹⁴

Observation Assessment Items on ELL Engagement	N	Decrease	Same	Increase
Asking Questions to Understand Meaning	148	8%	36%	55%
Working on Pronunciation	122	12%	39%	48%
Attention is Focused	199	8%	46%	46%
Persisting Rather than Giving Up	168	8%	51%	41%
Participating in Activities Using English	184	4%	61%	35%
Attend as Expected	206	13%	63%	25%
Enjoying Program Activities	198	8%	68%	24%
Spending Time with English Speaking Staff and Kids	202	1%	82%	17%

Some of the limitations that preclude us from making conclusions about the impact of this model on student engagement outcomes include the reliance on data from the coach perspective and the lack of comparison group for student data. After considering several sources of data and ultimately relying on coaches to record their own observations of student behavior, it is clear that there are some real challenges with this approach, including the extent to which it is reasonable to expect coaches to make a valid and reliable assessment of a large number of students based on the limited time they spend in the programs. Future evaluations should consider other data sources as well, such as classroom teachers and student self-report of progress when age-appropriate. Data from these other sources could be compared to afterschool staff assessments of each student.

¹⁴ Student outcome data from Year 1 were deemed unreliable due to inconsistencies in data collection so not presented in this report.

SUPPORTING RESULTS THROUGH THE MODEL

In addition to clarifying the impact of the model on program-level changes, evaluation findings help us better understand how the *Pathway to Excellence* model or its components supported those changes. The *Pathway to Excellence* model consists of four professional development “components” for afterschool staff: (1) an initial training opportunity, (2) ongoing coaching, (3) regional meetings, and (4) participation in an online discussion board. When asked to describe the factors that most supported the previously described program-level changes, Learning Community providers and coaches discussed the importance of the coaching process most frequently, followed by Learning Community meetings and then conference resource materials. This section describes the aspects of these components that Learning Community participants and coaches noted as most supportive of achieving program changes.

Coaching

Data indicate that **the coaching component and the way in which the *Pathway to Excellence* model fostered intentional focus on supporting English language learning for several months helped to prioritize the content strand and support meaningful program-level changes.** That coaching rises to the top as a valued model component makes sense. Of the model components, Learning Community providers participated in the coaching the most. Coaching offered the greatest depth and breadth of support, in terms of the total hours spent and the number and range of providers receiving technical assistance. In the second year of *Pathway to Excellence*, for example, each site received an average of 35 hours of coaching and 21 site visits or virtual (phone or email) coaching contacts.¹⁵

Coaches reported working with at least one of the “main contacts”¹⁶ from each program during their required monthly six hours of contact. Coaches and participants described focused attention with one or two staff (typically those who attended the training), but also training, observation, modeling and meetings or problem solving with a wider range of other staff, volunteers and organizational leadership. These data, along with qualitative reports from coaches’ interviews and participants’ focus groups and open-ended survey questions, indicate that coaches supported several staff and/or volunteers rather than just one provider in an intense and uniform manner over the course of the coaching relationship.

¹⁵ Although nearly three-quarters of participants received some form of “virtual” coaching during the second year of the evaluation, coaches varied greatly in their use of this format. In the second year of the evaluation, one coach conducted less than 1% of her coaching virtually while the others did so 27% and 47% of the time.

¹⁶ The “main contacts” were those providers who worked most with coaches over the course of the year. They included all providers who attended the initial training and stayed at their program for the full academic year, as well as any providers who replaced initial participants or were acknowledged as the most appropriate person to attend the training, but could not for some reason.

“I think having coaches there, who are always at the table with you and keeping it current with you, and asking you the questions, “What are you going to do?” I think is really powerful. Because many of the afterschool programs, their plates are so full... It is not a matter of, “Let’s look at the book.” It is more about, “What are you doing and how does the material support the work you are doing?” (Learning Community Coach, Interview)

“I think that having the coach there period is a huge help. Because the way we have it set up, we teach during the day and for two hours after school, finding the time to plan is hard. [Our coach] works on activities that integrate into what we already are doing. She is more than willing to do this. If [our coach] wasn’t there at all, there would be even more difficulty in finding the time I need to plan activities and find the materials.” (Learning Community Staff, Interview)

“The coach has been very encouraging of our staff about affirming what is going on here in the center and being able to make suggestions about what else we can do. The coaching has been helpful especially in that the follow-up from the conference has had a more long lasting impact. Otherwise you tend to go to the conference and you learn a few things and you have this bag full of stuff that sits on the side of your desk. The coaching has been the primary reminder that we have this commitment that we’ve made because it is important to the kids so we need to continue to look at these activities.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Interview)

“We communicate at least weekly... She comes here during program and she’ll observe or she’ll come on a day at a time when I’m not having program to talk about other things. I think she has been really respectful of my time. Instead of just saying that this activity would be good, she has copies of it and way to do it and tries to make it easier... I use an activity that she gives me about once a week.” (Learning Community Staff, Interview)

When asked what worked best about the coaching process for individual programs, Learning Community participants and coaches described a number of factors, particularly the outside perspective, feedback, social support, and affirmation that coaches provided. They also cited the resources coaches shared and the training they conducted for other staff and volunteers. Both providers and coaches mentioned specific coaching methods, including the one-on-one problem solving approach and modeling.

“[Our coach] was able to give very specific concrete feedback. Her honesty and positive attitude were very much appreciated. All of us feel validated and affirmed after spending [time] with her.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“We felt comfortable being honest with [our coach] about our challenges and trusted her to provide us the feedback we needed to meet our goal.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“Because [our coach is] involved in many ways and really invests in and cares about our program and staff, she can help us see a lot of things it's difficult for us to see on our own. (We love our coach!!)” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“Keeping me thinking about it constantly. New resources and materials to get excited about. Someone to share successes/challenges with.” (Learning Community Supervisory, Survey)

“[Our coach] provides wonderful materials. She puts them together and has completed research on certain topics that have been really helpful because I don't have time to.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“On-site coaching helped a staff member who was unable to go to the conference implement the material. Modeling and bringing extra resources.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“The one-on-one talk time to discuss challenges in using guidebooks, youth's motivation and their language skills.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

Learning Community participants also mentioned, somewhat less frequently, the value they felt in coaches' help in planning, coaches' responsiveness and expertise, the enthusiasm and focus that coaches solicited, and their onsite presence (including, sometimes, working with students).

Overall, feedback indicates that coaching was a very powerful component of this model and that it, in large part, helped to focus programs on the content strand in a way that resulted in program-level changes. Although the initially proposed “theory of change” for this model assumed that the model components would strengthen provider knowledge, provider skills and program practices somewhat equally and sequentially, evaluation findings seem to indicate instead that a strong training and set of materials can result in positive changes among afterschool providers, but coaching plays a unique role in manifesting knowledge and skills into instituted program changes. This is a unique value-add in comparison to more traditional forms of professional development such as training alone.

Conference resource materials

As previously discussed, the fact that all afterschool providers trained initially went on to gain and maintain knowledge and skills over the course of each academic year regardless of their participation in the rest of the model stands out as a key finding from this evaluation. Data indicate that this may be due to the strength of the resource materials provided to all training participants. Both coaches and participants referred repeatedly to these materials, describing them as very activity-based, user-friendly, relevant and adaptable.

This high level of regard for the materials is reflected in the positive rating of the materials immediately following the training, and then again at the end of the year when participants reported how often they used or referred to materials. More Learning Community than Conference Only participants reported using the materials “several times” (LC, 64%; CO, 37%) or “all the time” (LC, 10%; CO, 21%), but this difference did not reach statistical significance.

Perhaps more significantly were the qualitative references and descriptions of the materials. As previously mentioned, both Learning Community providers and coaches referenced the materials when asked during interviews and focus groups what factors helped to support the program-level changes made to support English language learners.

“Yes, definitely we use the book, almost like a Bible. If we want something, we use the CD and we use the book”. (Learning Community Supervisor, Interview)

“Right now when we look for activities, our priority is finding easily facilitative activities. Having a group of activities with strategies that are easy to use is most helpful....They have taken ideas from the book and have looked from similar activities on their own and on the internet...One of the ways that this has improved is knowing how to select activities that specifically improve language development.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Interview)

“I think that a lot of the actual implementation of activities came from the books that I was given.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

When asked what they appreciated about the materials in a survey at year-end, coaches and participants from both groups provided specific examples related to activities they liked and how they were used from each of the two resource books, *More Than Just Talk: English Language Learning in Afterschool* and *Afterschool Style Guide: Graffiti Wall*.

“[Learning Community Supervisor] has really liked the “More Than Just Talk” and the materials that support her work in homework club. [She] is very academic support focused. These materials helped her with her work with children.”
(Learning Community Coach, Survey)

“The curricula themselves. More than Just Talk & Graffiti Wall have been very helpful because the info is all in one place!! Rather than several handouts stuffed in a file. The CD that can be used to recreate our own versions saves times & energy. The laminated versions of Graffiti Wall that SOWA gave us have also been great because they can be re-used.” (Learning Community Frontline Staff, Survey)

“The Graffiti Wall books really got my mind thinking about how you can affect learning for all the children in your program, not only the English Language Learners.” (Conference Only Staff, Survey)

“Because of his lack of time and multiple program structure challenges, the written and printed handouts have been the most beneficial. Quick activities such as Graffiti Wall that don't require direct adult supervision have also worked.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

“Graffiti Wall - partly because it's fun and easily adapted by English-level, and partly because it's inspired us to find other big passive activities that get our students engaged. We have several new maps & posters up now, inspired by the success of and ideas from Graffiti Wall.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

Participants from both groups also reported that the materials encouraged new ways of thinking among staff on various topics (e.g., stages of language development, how to make activities interactive), that the activities were easy to use (i.e., materials could be changed and then printed from a CD), and that the activities were flexible and adaptable (i.e., for use with various groups, in different settings and by a range of staff). Some participants also described the materials as a valuable tool for training other staff.

“It was good for getting me thinking about the idea of literacy activities. Seeing so many examples of activities really made it so you could pick and choose what would work for your program.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“The ELL curriculum materials are easy to read and user friendly. The activities are well-outlined and even provide different approaches to "Ratchet up" or "Ratchet down".” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“The availability of quick and easy printouts. We don't always have the time to create new activities.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“The activities in the ELL workbook were a lot of fun to implement and they saved me a lot of time in activity planning. I was very grateful to have all those materials and content as resources. The activities were especially helpful because they were each adaptable. I was able to tailor them to our program and the unique needs of our youth.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“At our program it's not the issue with the students being ELL, but the parents being the ELLs, and we just flipped a lot of the concepts to match the adults learning skills.” (Conference Only Staff, Survey)

“A lot of materials to choose from and formats to follow in creating new materials. Focused encouragement and coaching commitment to use materials and integrate strategies on a regular basis.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

Participants from both groups clearly valued the materials provided in the *Pathway to Excellence* pilot and the materials reinforced information provided in the training related to activities and ELL-supportive strategies in particular. It seems likely that **these materials may have supported the knowledge and skills that were maintained and increased over the course of the year, ultimately supporting program-level changes.** This would be a useful area for additional inquiry in future evaluations related to different content areas and associated curricula.

Learning Community Participation

Evaluation findings indicate that participants found considerable value in the regional Learning Community component of the model. Learning Community participants' comments did not describe the same direct relationship between this component of the model in increasing staff knowledge and skills or program changes as they did for the training or coaching components. Instead, data indicate that **Learning Communities supported a different set of outcomes related to social support, inter-program communication and access to resources, all of which ultimately support program-level changes and sustainability.**

When asked what factors supported program-level changes in interviews, Learning Community participants and coaches frequently discussed the Learning Communities, implying they make an important contribution to program support for English language learners:

"[The Learning Community] was an excellent opportunity to network with other afterschool providers... We have a huge staff but I don't get to interact with a whole lot of other colleagues who are necessarily doing the same thing. It is just the Youth Program Coordinator and myself as the Specialist who are running the show. It becomes easy to become narrow in our scope and narrow in our thinking... It was nice for me to talk to other people who could understand and who could relate and who had their own ideas and unique ways of doing things, with some really innovative solutions for some of the problems we were dealing with. That alone was fantastic. We felt very inspired." (Learning Community Staff, Interview)

"Besides school and agency support, there is also support from the community learning meetings. [Learning Community Supervisor] said that he really appreciated the community learning meeting. He really learned a lot from the other directors. And one result also is they work together, [fellow Learning Community supervisors]. They share materials, and share their problems, and they problem solve... They didn't even work collaboratively before, but because of the community learning meeting they meet there all the time and then the virtual coaching, they received the same materials. So the follow up questions, instead of going to me, they just resort to copying each other for answers." (Learning Community Coach, Interview)

The dynamics of the various Learning Communities naturally varied depending on factors such as the proximity of the programs to one another and their prior relationships. For example, four of six programs in a Learning Community belonged to one common umbrella organization; in another, fellow organizations were in competition for a shared funding source. Still, participants consistently expressed appreciation for the opportunity to gather with their peers in this manner. When asked in year-end surveys what they appreciated about the Learning Community meetings, coaches and many Learning Community participants wrote about the opportunity for providers to receive and share ideas and resources related to implementing and adapting activities.

“The whole idea of bringing us all together was brilliant because we can troubleshoot and share ideas and knowledge with others who are working on the same project.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“The meetings are very useful and a great place for site staff to share ideas. They are productive and allowed us to walk away with something we can use at our site.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“The group sharing appears to be helpful to [Learning Community Staff]. Again, because of her learning style she prefers to discuss and share. Hearing what other programs have experienced has been good for her. Interacting with the activities has also helped her expand her ideas and particularly family engagement pieces.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

“[Learning Community Supervisor] seemed to enjoy hearing others’ stories, challenges, etc. She really liked the resource sharing portions and being able to look at books, articles, etc.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

“I really valued hearing from the other programs. Especially the ideas and activities they had come up with. It was also interesting to discuss how we were engaging our youth in our programs through cultural competency activities.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“Curriculum, resources, opportunities presented. Often these things are not readily available or out of our budget range.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

Learning Community participants and coaches also reported value in the opportunity for providers to network, become more familiar with similar programs and get to know others working in the field.

“I loved being able to meet new people and exchange new ideas, and just learn from one another.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

"[Learning Community Staff] appears to enjoy the discussion portions and engaging with others in networking and sharing program strategies. As a non-administrator I think sharing with administrators has deepened her understanding of program structure and "big picture" content." (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

"Built partnership with other PTE sites. Great learning and sharing environment. A sense of community w/other programs on the same journey." (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

In particular, participants noted that Learning Communities created an opportunity for social support among peers. The opportunity to interact with people to whom they could relate and hear from others who shared their commitment to the afterschool field helped them feel more affirmed and less isolated.

"It's fantastic being in a community of youth workers who share your commitment to youth, and especially ELL youth." (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

"Being able to share problems, successes, and be a support for each other. The morale boost is extremely useful in this very stressful field." (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

"The community meetings were much more beneficial. They provided us with a forum to discuss troubles and triumphs and support one another. It helps to hear first hand that other sites run into the same problems and hear their attempts to solve them." (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

"Networking with other afterschool providers is most helpful. Being at a single staff site often makes you wonder if you're providing the best services -- what can be different, etc." (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

"Having the opportunity to discuss topics from the online discussion board in real-time was great. Also, I benefit from having a support system -- people who relate to my work and challenges." (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

Some Learning Community participants also mentioned the logistics of the meeting (e.g., good food, rotating location among different program sites) and specific meeting topics they found helpful, such as cultural competency.

Afterschool providers make a compelling case for the Learning Community component and the need in the afterschool field for opportunities to network, learn from one another and share resources. SOWA received so much positive anecdotal feedback about Learning Communities that it decided to extend support for at least one group of programs in close proximity within Seattle beyond the *Pathway to Excellence* period into the next year.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Qualitative data in particular can help us to identify the parts of the model that worked best, as well as aspects that might be improved. Many of the factors that supported the staff, program and student engagement outcomes are described in earlier sections. Here we present a brief summary of the lessons learned related to each of the components and the general context in which the model operates.

INITIAL TRAINING

Providers reported considerable satisfaction with the training content, delivery and quality of materials during this pilot (see the *Methodology and Data Addendum* for data tables). These results seem to reinforce the value of placing a content area expert in charge of the training design and facilitation and the quality of the materials. While the training format appeared to work well for the pilot, we should note that this component may be successful in other formats as well. In addition to conference sessions, regional workshops or onsite trainings (especially for large organizations with multiple afterschool programs) are other formats to consider.

COACHING

Learning Community providers and coaches described in open-ended survey responses a wide range of topics and methods they found most useful throughout the coaching process, commenting, for instance, on the importance of the freedom for coaches and providers to determine the best fit for the relationship. Participants and coaches described one-on-one discussion and problem-solving, modeling and discussing activity ideas as particularly successful coaching methods.

“Best times were outside of program time when we could focus discussion, talk about challenges and look at individual kids/staff/ activities.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

“[Our coach] was instrumental in our success with the activities by modeling, observing, giving feedback and availability.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“It is helpful to have ready-made activities that [our coach] brings, and it also helps with planning.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

Learning Community participants and coaches also mentioned some aspects of coaching that could be improved. The most common issues related to the amount of time coaching required from their programs and preferences related to specific coaching methods. A few also mentioned scheduling complications, not having enough coaching sessions and staff turnover.

"It would be nice to build some of the coaching time outside of programming hours. Most of our meetings were during programming, so I'm usually distracted or busy." (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

"Modeling has been difficult. The size of the program and program structure create a changing atmosphere that makes this hard to "stick." [The frontline provider] has a learning style that prefers to practice, reflect and adapt on her own." (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

"I would like to see on-site coaching (discussion, meeting) is not longer than 1 1/2 hour long. I think on-site coaching can be more useful on observation during program time." (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

"[The afterschool provider I worked with] was very busy and had difficulty at times in remembering conversations or correspondence." (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

"I only wish [our coach] could have visited us more often." (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

This feedback indicates that it may be useful to institute some kind of feedback mechanism mid-way through the project to ensure that needs and preferences are adequately communicated and addressed.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Although providers clearly valued the Learning Community experience, as previously described, participants also shared in open-ended survey responses some aspects of the Learning Community meetings that did not work as well for them.

The most common feedback related to the amount of time required to participate in Learning Communities, indicating that processes related to determining relatively convenient meeting times are important. (A few providers also mentioned that the meetings did not occur frequently enough.) The change between the first and second year to require just one participant rather than two at these meetings is one good way to address the problem of time restraints. Some programs still opted to send more than one representative to meetings, but the flexibility recognizes the reality of understaffing among afterschool programs.

“The timing and scheduling so everyone is there. We have always had someone missing. That has been tough. You almost need to hold the meetings during the work day and sub out so all staff members can attend.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“It was a long period of time after working 8+ hours and then working at [organization] for another 2 and attending a 3 hour session. 13 hour days are just too long.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

Some participants also described challenges in relating to programs with unique dynamics or different focus areas. Ideally, the sponsoring agency should ask about and consider these dynamics in the recruitment process. Also, a few providers reported that some participants did not fully participate in the meetings by attending and sharing resources. Others mentioned that the meetings could have focused on topics that were more relevant to them. For the most part, coaches received high marks in the surveys from participants for encouraging participation and fostering program involvement with relevant sessions, although some responses indicated there is room for improvement in these areas.

“[The afterschool provider was] sometimes not focused or [felt] completely “pressed” due to overwhelming demands of [Learning Community Staff’s] position.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

“The fact that 5 of the 6 programs are part of the same systems for funding has made sharing difficult at times. (They compete for funds and don’t want to get “too close.”) Sharing challenges to get solutions from others is not something [the Learning Community Supervisor] feels comfortable with.” (Learning Community Coach, Survey)

“It would be better if more providers brought resources to the swap table. Also, I believe more breadth (number of resources) and less depth (actually practicing every aspect of activities) would be preferable.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“Some of the other providers are not as willing to give input.” (Learning Community Staff)

“At times it seemed we spent a lot of time playing games and didn’t have enough time focusing on a “meatier” topic (i.e., cultural relevancy) and gaining a really strong understanding of further best practices. It might have also been more relevant if programs had been split by age group rather than geography because needs are very different across these groups.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“I really didn’t feel like a close community because we are all located so far apart and met so infrequently.” (Learning Community Staff, Survey)

“The [last two meetings] have been the best because we needed time to really get to know each others’ programs before really sharing. I think unfortunately we are there now and it happens to be our last. Perhaps at first we could have met more often for shorter periods of time to help strengthen our connections.”
(Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

There was some variation in the requirements associated with participating in Learning Community meetings. In the first year of the pilot, both the supervisor and front-line provider who attended the training from each participating program were required to attend. In the second year, SOWA recognized the strain this requirement put on many of the participating programs, in particular those with a small staff, and only one program representative was mandated to attend the meetings.

As mentioned, the positive feedback related to Learning Communities in the initial pilot led SOWA to continue supporting at least one group for programs in close proximity within Seattle beyond the *Pathway to Excellence* period into the next year. This may be an area suitable for follow-up, to see how the Learning Community participation is sustained and what impact that has for programs in maintaining a focus on the content area or other professional development needs.

ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD

Compared to the coaching and Learning Communities, fewer Learning Community participants used the online discussion board and data indicate that this particular component, while useful to some, contributed less to program changes overall. Approximately two-thirds of Learning Community participants used the online discussion board over the course of the first two years of the pilot.¹⁷ When asked how they used the online discussion board, most participants used it sometimes or frequently to answer ELL-related questions (46%), share best practices (43%) or network (43%). Slightly more than one-third of participants reported using it to ask ELL-related questions (35%).

In open-ended survey responses, participants and coaches shared that they appreciated the way in which the online discussion board allowed for sharing activities and ideas among programs and by the coach. In this way, the online discussion board may have played a role in encouraging greater implementation of activities and ELL-supportive strategies among programs. Some participants also mentioned that the online discussion board helped the programs stay in touch and build relationships with one another.

¹⁷ More Learning Community participants used the online discussion board in the first year than the second (75% versus 56%), although the difference was not statistically significant. More LC participants also reported a statistically significant difference in the frequency with which they posted to the discussion board with the help of their coach during the first year (41% did so sometimes or frequently) versus the second (6% did so sometimes or frequently). Although there may have been other factors, coach comments indicate that the extent to which they encouraged or incentivized participation may have influenced these differences.

Along with their positive comments, participants and coaches shared almost as many aspects of the online discussion board they did not find especially helpful in enhancing their professional development. Among those mentioned most frequently were not having time to post and not finding the discussion board relevant, helpful or interesting partly due to low participation on the site. As with the Learning Communities, coaches in these cases may try using incentives to encourage participation. Some providers also experienced technical difficulties associated with passwords and site navigation and expressed a preference for live contact over computer-based communication (due likely to comfort as well as learning styles). For instance, some of the participants noted their typing speed was too slow or they spent too much time worrying about how to compose a posting. Coaches and the sponsoring agency should be sure to address these concerns in initial discussion board trainings.

“I am a service provider and a program administrator. It was difficult for me to find the time to participate as fully [on the online discussion board] as I would have liked to.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

“The online discussion board was separate from my regular communication (i.e., e-mail) and was, therefore, often forgotten. I occasionally posted questions that did not receive answers, and it sometimes felt just like something extra to do.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Survey)

Based on the experience in the pilot, it may be useful to consider this component as optional or to try somewhat different approaches as online social networking media and their popularity evolve over time. While some Learning Communities and providers find the online discussion board helpful, others may not; forcing participation when staff already struggle with time constraints or limited computer resources may not be beneficial. Importantly, the communication styles and comfort level of coaches likely have an important influence on the way in which providers receive the online discussion board.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Many other program and external factors impact the extent to which programs can engage in the processes of professional development and better supporting English language learners.

Although the model makes a powerful contribution to achieving positive changes among afterschool providers and programs related to a particular content area, participants discussed a number of barriers that prevented or challenged these improvements. Staff and volunteer turnover, understaffing, and lack of experience and training among providers topped the list of perceived barriers, all of which are common and acknowledged challenges in the afterschool field (SOWA & OSPI, 2008). Additional barriers included lack of time for planning and coordination among providers, the relatively late timing of the training in the academic year, as well as structural limitations on programs (e.g., academic or homework-focused program mandates). Afterschool providers also mentioned the lack of program resources and buy-in related to the content area (English language learning, in this instance) from agency and school administrators, fellow staff and program volunteers.

In interviews and focus groups, Learning Community providers and coaches also described some of the contextual factors that acted as supporting factors, many of which were just the opposite or absence of the barriers mentioned. Providers said the most important supportive contextual factor included the following:

- Committed and Skilled Staff

“I think a big part is in the staff being interested in wanting to make the changes and wanting to be there. This program assisted in giving enough new ideas and new concepts and new vision for them to be actually excited about doing something instead of just doing something because it has to be done.” (Learning Community Participant, Focus Group)

“I think that the commitment upfront to participate in the program, the choice before we started that this was an important focus to make with our program, and then commitment to being part of this group and then in particular the ongoing contact with the coach and the regional meetings.” (Learning Community Supervisor, Interview)

- Supportive Leadership and Organizational Culture

“The whole department supported the work that was going on. They were our first to host a Community Learning meeting and their whole department came into our meeting to share about what they do and learn about what we were going to do. They really embraced me as part of their team. It wasn’t like here comes the one who is doing that project.” (Learning Community Coach, Interview)

In addition to these, other supportive factors mentioned included support of affiliated schools, the “fit” of the overall *Pathway to Excellence* project with the program mission and needs, availability of other training opportunities, staffing stability, availability of other ELL supports (e.g., school-based ELL specialists), family involvement and staff autonomy.

Sponsoring agencies can investigate many of these factors as they recruit programs and foster or address these factors during implementation to ensure the best possible fit of participating programs with the model.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EVALUATIONS

This is the first study examining the efficacy of the *Pathway to Excellence* professional development model. As previously mentioned, developing an evidence base is an ongoing process that requires multiple studies and areas of inquiry. In addition to the findings presented here, an initial evaluation can contribute to this effort with recommendations and questions to consider in future evaluations. We present several such recommendations here.

1. Key Model Components & Characteristics. Although this evaluation report and the forthcoming evaluation report on implementation and replication begin to consider each component in some level of depth, additional exploration in future evaluations is necessary. Such exploration can help to clarify which parts of this model best support the resulting changes and which aspects are most critical for successful implementation. Here are some potential areas of inquiry:
 - What does and does not work well about each component and how can adjustments improve the components? For example, during the second year each site received an average of 35 hours of coaching and 21 site visits or virtual (phone or email) coaching contacts compared to the original expectation of 42 hours over this seven month period. Is there an optimal amount of coaching time? Some clear findings emerge from this report and some adjustments may be made accordingly, but future evaluations can assess these components in different contexts and continue to identify what other adjustments may be useful.
 - What is the impact of having a supervisor participate in the initial training with a front-line staff member? How does this requirement impact the adoption of program changes alone or in addition to the model? Similarly, which staff are the best fit for coaching and Learning Community participation?
 - This evaluation focused on an application of this model to supporting English language learners using a set of material developed by The Center. This model could be used to provide professional development in a range of content strand areas, such as math, science, health promotion or leadership, for example. It is possible this particular topic and these materials may be different from others in how they fit with the model in some important ways. Future evaluations should explore the use of this model with other topics and curricula to learn which fit the model best. SOWA is currently in the process of using the model to provide professional development in the area of health promotion and will use several evaluation tools to assess changes in the same categories of staff, program and student outcomes with a less rigorous design than this initial evaluation.
 - What is the most appropriate length of time to offer this model to programs? Is one academic year long enough?

2. Student Outcomes. Future evaluations should provide sufficient resources to more rigorously measure changes in student outcomes. Despite the fact that the ultimate aim of professional development for afterschool providers is to improve student outcomes, few evaluations of professional development actually measure outcomes at this level because of the challenges and high cost associated with these types of data collection methods (Bouffard, 2004). Although a comparison group of programs that participated in the training alone provided data for staff and program-level changes, the fact that coaches did not work with these programs would have required a different means of collecting student data for these programs. This could be addressed with additional resources in future evaluations.

This evaluation began to look at how the *Pathway to Excellence* model of professional development model might impact students and to learn about the process of evaluating these outcomes. The forthcoming process evaluation report will provide additional recommendations for student outcome measurement for agencies adopting the model in the future.

3. Sustainability. Ultimately, a measure of success for the model is to know that program changes are sustained after participation in the model. Future explorations might focus on what is sustainable after the coaching stops and what factors contribute to the sustainability of program changes. For instance, does having the regional Learning Community meetings extend for one more academic year help programs that have received the onsite training continue to focus on the content strand and make changes to improve their programs? Does this model support sustainable change in a field where turnover continues to be a challenge?

CONCLUSION

This first evaluation of the *Pathway to Excellence* model makes an important contribution to the understanding of the model's efficacy, as well as the ways in which it could continue to be developed for future use and replication.

In summary, this evaluation described the following key findings:

- Training participants increased their **knowledge** and **use of skills** related to English language learning (ELL) regardless of their exposure to other model components and maintained these changes over the school year. The fact that there were very few differences in participants' knowledge or skill development based on one group's access to additional model components seems to speak to the importance of the initial training in supporting a strong foundation of understanding and acquiring actionable skill sets related to the content strand.
- The model resulted in **program-level changes** that help to institutionalize supports for English language learners. In contrast to staff knowledge and skills, which increased for all training participants, those providers who participated in the full model were more likely to report making recent program-level changes than those who participated in the training alone. These changes included:
 - ✦ **Implementation of strategies and activities** to support English language learners.
 - ✦ **Preparation time** dedicated to supporting English language learners.
 - ✦ New or improved **organizational structure and procedures**.
 - ✦ New or renewed **focus and intentionality** related to the content strand.
 - ✦ Increased engagement with **professional development resources**.
 - ✦ Increased influence on support for English language learners among programs' **sponsoring organizations and affiliated schools**.
 - ✦ Improved **engagement of English language learners' families** in the program.
 - ✦ Increased emphasis on providing **culturally relevant** programming.

These changes are notable because changes instituted in programs are more sustainable than changes that occur among individuals alone, especially since staff turnover in the afterschool field is notoriously high (SOWA & OSPI, 2008). Although findings show that an initial training can be quite effective, training participants may work in the field or for a particular program for a relatively short period, so training benefits are easily lost. A strong foundation of knowledge and skills among some key staff is necessary to support related changes in programs, but institutionalized changes increase the likelihood of sustaining the training benefits over time through processes that support sharing knowledge among all staff and applying the knowledge and skills on a consistent basis.

The fact that participants exposed to the full *Pathway to Excellence* model reported so many program-level changes is quite compelling, particularly since many of the changes reported by participants and coaches align with proposed indicators of quality afterschool programming, e.g., skilled staff, use of focused and intentional strategies, appropriate structure, student sense of belonging, family engagement, cultural competency, opportunities for interactivity and access to resources (Metz et al., 2008).

- Although there are considerable limitations to the conclusions that can be made about the impact of the model on **student engagement outcomes** based on this evaluation design, results indicate that students in programs that participated in the “full model” became more engaged in their programs over the course of the year. Some of the limitations that preclude us from making conclusions about the impact of this model on student engagement outcomes include the reliance on data from the coach perspective and the lack of comparison group for student data. Future evaluations should consider other data sources as well, such as classroom teachers and student self-report of progress when age-appropriate. Data from these other sources could be compared to afterschool staff assessments of each student.

Evaluation data also show the unique contribution of coaching, resource materials and Learning Community components of the model:

- Learning Community participants found the **coaching** to be a strong component of the model. Data indicate that the coaching component and the way in which the *Pathway to Excellence* model fostered intentional focus on supporting English language learning for several months helped to prioritize the content strand and support meaningful program-level changes. That coaching rises to the top as a valued model component makes sense. While a strong training and set of materials can result in positive changes among afterschool providers, coaching plays a unique role in manifesting knowledge and skills into instituted program changes. This is a unique value-add compared to more traditional forms of professional development, such as training alone.
- **Quality resource materials** can support sustained improvements in knowledge and skills from the conference, ultimately supporting program-level changes. Participants from both groups clearly valued the materials provided in the *Pathway to Excellence* pilot and the materials reinforced information provided in the training related to activities and ELL-supportive strategies in particular. It seems likely that these materials may have supported the maintained and increased knowledge and skills over the course of the year. This would be a useful area for additional inquiry in future evaluations related to different content areas and associated curricula.

- The **Learning Community component** of the model promoted program networking and sharing of resources and best practices, which also supported program-level changes. Evaluation findings indicate that participants found considerable value in the regional Learning Community component of the model. Learning Community participants' comments did not describe the same direct relationship between this component of the model in increasing staff knowledge and skills or program changes as they did for the training or coaching components. Instead, data indicate that Learning Communities supported a different set of outcomes related to social support, inter-program communication and access to resources, all of which ultimately support program-level changes and sustainability.

Additional evaluations will further build evidence related to the effectiveness of the *Pathway to Excellence* professional development model. Although challenging, future evaluations should further examine the impact of the model on student outcomes, as well as the individual components' design and impact, and the sustainability of the model's impact on providers and programs.

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APPENDIX A: EVALUATION PLAN

School's Out Washington Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Design: Quasi-Experimental	
2 rounds (academic year, fall-spring), each year 36 afterschool programs randomly divided into:	
(1) Intervention Group = Learning Community Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 18 programs per year • N = 36 providers (18 staff/ 18supervisors)/per year 	(2) Comparison Group = Conference Only Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 18 programs per year • N = 18 staff or supervisors per year

OUTCOME EVALUATION:

Outcomes	Indicators	Data Collection Method/Tools	Schedule	Sampling Strategy & Sample Size
Afterschool <i>staff</i> increase <i>knowledge and skills</i> in new practices	1. Increased staff understanding of of/on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Stages of second language development b. Steps for using a Language Experience Approach c. How to create and adapt activities and projects with clear language learning objectives d. How language learning activities and projects link to academics, 21st century skill building and language learning 	Self-report: [retro-pre & post; post]	fall-at conf; end of academic year	Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72) ; Conference Only group (n=36)
	2. Increased staff skills in: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Techniques to encourage learners to communicate more in English (e.g., plan small group activities, pair students, choose activities at appropriate level.) b. Techniques for supporting reading (e.g., use tape read-aloud; set up reading partners, staged readings and theater) c. Techniques for supporting writing (e.g., set-up email pen pals, involve them in creating flyers or invitations to special events, encourage flow of writing with made up words, first and last letter of word or leaving a blank space,) d. Strategies to create or customize games and activities with deliberate English language learning goals (e.g., comprehension, building vocabulary, fluency with synonyms, etc.). e. Strategies and tools to increase communication with families and schools Staff can list and activity or approach and describe how they (would) use it. In what ways has <i>Pathway to Excellence</i> impacted you?	Self-report: [pre; post]	At conference; end of academic year 1&2	Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72) ; Conference Only group (n=36)
		coach “assessment [retro-pre & post]]	end of academic year	Learning Community staff & supervisors (n=18)
		coach “assessment: [retro-pre & post]	end of academic year 2	Learning Community staff & supervisors (n=18)

School's Out Washington Evaluation Plan

Outcomes	Indicators	Data Collection Method/Tools	Schedule	Sampling Strategy & Sample Size
<p>Afterschool <i>programs</i> change practices to support <i>implementation</i> of new practices.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Time dedicated to plan:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increased discussions with staff on how to better support English language learning. b. Allocated more time to redesign how our program supports English language learning c. More planning time for staff to learn about and implement English language learning strategies and activities. 2. <i>Planned activities are implemented by staff using techniques learned</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implemented strategies to encourage learners to communicate more in English b. Added activities with specific language learning objectives for learners. 3. <i>Resources are allocated to support program changes</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Additional resources are available to support staff in serving English language learners (e.g. financial, training, materials). b. Partner with community resources to support English language learners. <p>What changes (do you plan to make / have you observed or heard) in your overall program content, approach or activities as a result of participating in this project?</p>	<p>Self-report [post]</p> <p>Coach assessment [post]</p> <p>Coach interviews [post]</p> <p>Program interviews/site visits</p> <p>Learning Community focus group</p>	<p>end of academic year 1&2</p> <p>Year 2 only</p> <p>Year 2 only</p> <p>Year 1 only</p> <p>Year 2 only</p>	<p>Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72) ; Conference Only group (n=36)</p> <p>Learning Community staff & supervisors (n=18)</p> <p>3 coaches</p> <p>3 Learning Community afterschool programs</p> <p>3 regional Learning Community groups</p>
<p>Afterschool <i>children</i> are more <i>engaged</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Site's afterschool program 2. Enjoys participating in program activities 3. Attention is focused during program activities 4. Persists and tries rather than giving up quickly 5. Monitors, self-corrects and works at pronunciation 6. Asks questions to understand meaning 7. Spends time with English speaking staff and kids 8. Participates in activities and projects using English 9. General change in ELL student engagement 	<p>Coach observation checklist [pre; post]</p>	<p>Fall; spring: Year 2 only</p>	<p>ELL students in Learning Community groups</p>

School's Out Washington Evaluation Plan

PROCESS EVALUATION

Domains	Indicators	Data Collection Method/Tools	Schedule (each year, except noted)	Sampling Strategy and Sample Size
Program & Participant Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff: role, years on the job, years in the afterschool field Program: program size, %ELL, location, hours, age range, major activities ELL as a new emphasis Program: most important outcome 	Enrollment Form	During recruitment, prior to conference & at conference	1 per program
Use of Components (Fidelity to Model)	<p><u>Conference:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Session attendance Staff use of materials <p><u>Coaching:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount/frequency of coaching Who is being coached (breadth, consistency) Typical site visit Type of coaching contact <p><u>Learning Community (Meetings):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typical attendance <p><u>Online discussion board</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff use (yes/no, purpose) 	<p>Self-report [post]</p> <p>Coach Monthly Report</p>	<p>End of academic year</p> <p>Monthly (year 2 only)</p>	<p>Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72) ; Conference Only group (n=36)</p> <p>3 coaches (6 Learning Community programs each)</p>
Understanding the Components (Perceived satisfaction, supports needed, what did/did not work well)	<p><u>Conference Sessions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value of content Delivery Materials 	Self-report [post]	At conference	Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72) ; Conference Only group (n=36)
	<p><u>Conference resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has worked well? What has not worked well? 	<p>Self-report [post]</p> <p>Coach survey [post]</p>	End of academic year	Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72); coaches (3)
	<p><u>Coaching:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memorable coaching moment Coach role-expected & actual Successful methods Support needed by coaches What worked well? What did not work well? 	<p>Self-report [post]</p> <p>Focus group [post]</p> <p>Coach interviews [post]</p> <p>Coach Survey[post]</p>	End of academic year	<p>Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72)</p> <p>Coaches (n=3)</p>

School's Out Washington Evaluation Plan

	<u>Learning Community (Meetings):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical meeting • What worked well? • What did not work well? 	Self-report [post] Coach survey [post]	End of academic year	Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72); coaches (n=3)
External Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other external factors, if any, are holding back the implementation of English Language Learning opportunities? 	Self-report [post] LC focus group Coach survey [post] Coach interviews [post]	End of academic year	Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72) ; Conference Only group (n=36) 3 regional Learning Community groups Coaches (n=3)
Program Factors (facilitating/barriers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common characteristics among programs which were successful or unsuccessful 	Self-report [post] LC Focus group Coach survey [post] Coach interviews [post]	End of academic year	Learning Community staff and supervisors (n=72) ; Conference Only group (n=36) 3 regional Learning Community groups Coaches (n=3)
Perception about Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you (coach) feel? • How did participants feel? • Suggestions • Support needed 	Coach focus group	End of academic year 1	Coaches (n=3)

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