



Building a System of Excellence

An analysis of the influence of Collective For Youth programming on student attendance.

Since 2012 Collective For Youth (CFY) has made intentional efforts to examine the program work and identify opportunities for improvement. As part of this journey, a research and evaluation agenda was created to guide our inquiry about our work in out-of-school time (OST). The agenda had 6 key focus areas: Data utilization, dosage, staff skill development, program intentionality, system factors and program quality.

This study is the first effort from this agenda and explores the following three questions:

- What is the relationship between participation in Collective For Youth and attendance?
- Do students participating in higher quality CFY program sites have better outcomes than students at other sites or nonparticipants?
- How many days do students need to attend to maximize the benefits of attending CFY programs?

Methods

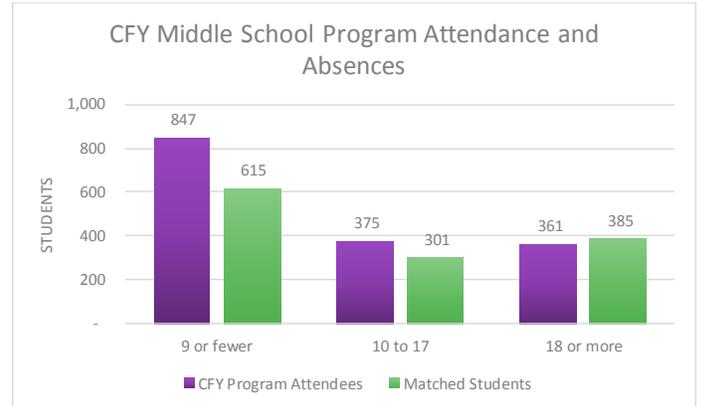
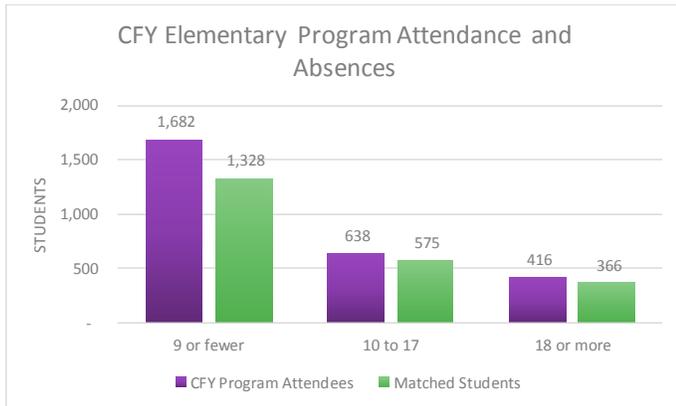
We worked with our partners in Omaha Public Schools (OPS) to identify a sample of 4,319 students who attended CFY programs in the 2016-2017 school year, and a matching sample of 3,570 students who attended the same schools in the same school year but did not participate in CFY programming. The matching was based on key demographic variables such as English Language Learner (ELL) status, gender, grade, race, and ethnicity. In addition to this demographic information, OPS provided course grades, NESAs scores, and school absences for each student.¹ Grades and NESAs scores may be examined in future studies. Using this sample, we examined student attendance, dosage and program quality as each relates to attendance outcomes with our middle and elementary school students.

Because program quality is not a one-dimensional concept we performed a cluster analysis, a statistical procedure that allows us to identify groups of sites (clusters) that show a similar pattern of scores. We used Program Quality Assessment (PQA) scores, which evaluate program quality based on four components: Engagement, Interaction, Supportive Environment, and Safe Environment. We used the PQA data to 5 clusters of sites based on program quality, which we then compared with student attendance for the matched sample. Cluster 1 represents the highest performing sites.

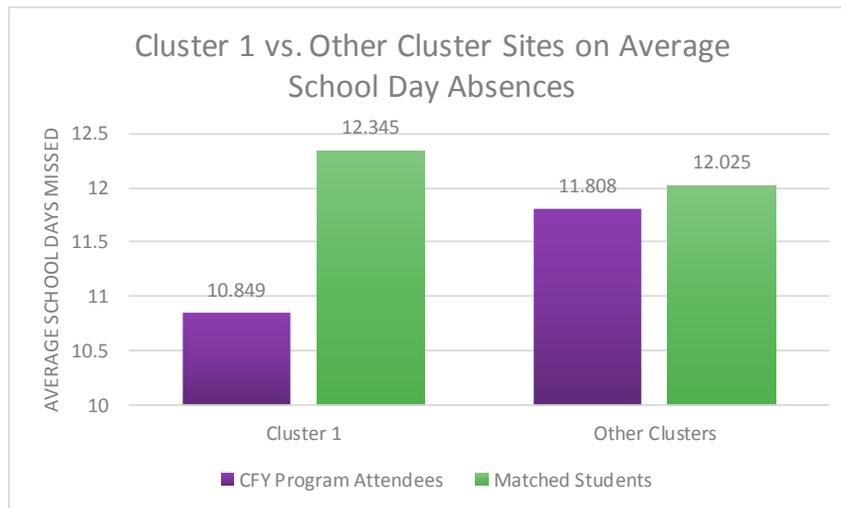
¹ Additional details on the study methods, data obtained, and analyses performed are available in the study technical brief.

Findings

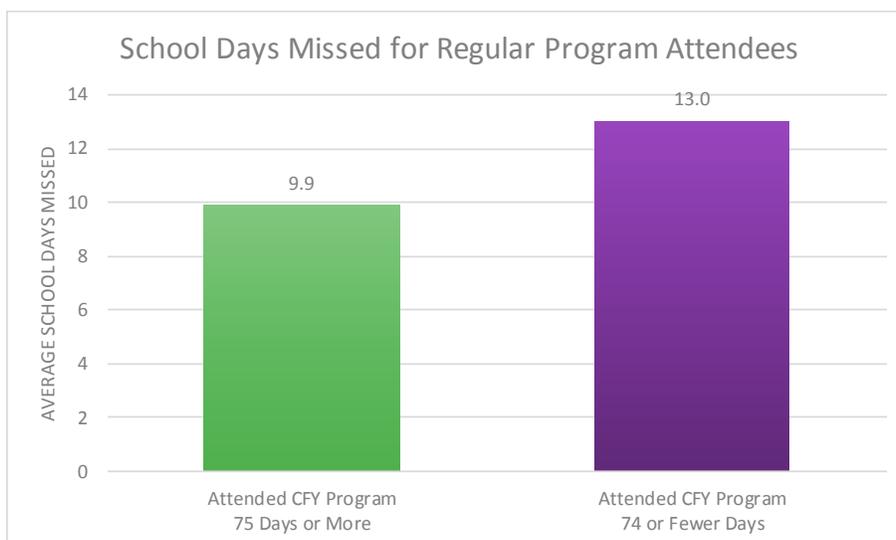
Elementary and Middle School students who participated in CFY programming were more likely to have favorable attendance, with a greater proportion falling in the favorable bands missing 17 or fewer days.



Students participating in CFY programming missed fewer school days on average than their peers



75 days is a crucial benchmark; students who attended CFY programming 75 days or more had fewer school day absences on average than their peers



Conclusion

This first effort in our research agenda is encouraging on many levels. In examining differences for students who attended CFY programs, we have a greater understanding of the influence of program quality and dosage on attendance. At a systems level, we also have identified factors such as leadership consistency that can further influence our impact. This effort has not only shown promising results, but has helped us identify avenues for future exploration within the context of our research agenda.

In the future, we plan to explore factors such as consistency in program attendance over multiple years, system factors, professional development, intentional programming efforts, differences between elementary and middle school students, program activities and other elements as they relate to our Youth Outcomes Framework.

We believe these efforts will strengthen the system and ultimately improve our collective support to students in the Omaha metro area.