

Tri-Project Initiative evaluation results

*A report to the SPCC Board and
Tri-Project program staff*

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Executive summary

The Tri-Project Initiative is a 3-year effort of the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative (SPCC) to address disparities in child safety and academic success by improving access to services for African-American youth in three targeted Saint Paul neighborhoods: North End, Payne-Phalen, and Summit-University. Each of the three projects (Building Future Leaders, East Side Heritage, and Project Voice) is comprised of an array of community-based organizations and child-serving systems (e.g., Saint Paul Public Schools, Ramsey County Human Services) intended to work in partnership to meet the needs of African-American youth in the community. Although each of the projects is unique in terms of the array of services provided and project infrastructure, all projects emphasize helping African-American youth and families build connections to their community and integrate the use of cultural approaches to engage youth and families and help them build a stronger sense of cultural self-identity.

As a result of the services and resources they receive, youth and parents are expected to have increased self-esteem and self-efficacy, more frequent involvement in the child's school, a greater sense of cultural self-identity, and an increased sense of empowerment. Project staff believe these changes in attitudes, beliefs, and values will ultimately lead to improved school behavior, greater academic achievement, and reductions in child protection involvement and out-of-home placements.

Evaluation approaches

A multi-method evaluation approach was developed that incorporates demographic and service utilization data gathered by program staff, focus groups with youth and parent participants, key informant interviews with project staff and stakeholders, and analysis of reading assessment data for youth who participated in Sankofa (a tutoring program common across the three projects). Changes in long-term outcomes were assessed for a smaller subset of youth participants whose parents consented to the release of data from Ramsey County Human Services and the Saint Paul Public School (SPPS) district.

Project descriptions

Building Future Leaders

Building Future Leaders was a partnership between three key community-based partners, Ramsey County Human Services, and Saint Paul Public Schools. The project served the North End neighborhood, which offers few other community-based resources for residents in the area. Of the three projects funded, Building Future Leaders (BFL) was

most closely connected to SPPS and was the only project to focus exclusively on providing school-based services. The project faced a number of challenges, including frequent changes in SPPS leadership, delays in implementation occurring over the summer months, and limited time and staffing flexibility among SPPS-hired staff. Although efforts were made in 2009 to move to a community-based outreach model, the project never built the infrastructure necessary to support this work and lost Collaborative funding in August 2010.

East Side Heritage

The project with the strongest connection to the community is likely the East Side Heritage Project, located in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood of Saint Paul. Many of the project staff, including the program coordinator, youth worker, and family support worker, have offices in the Merrick Community Center. Four key community-based partners are involved as partners in the project. While the project also works with schools and makes referrals to county agencies, these partners are not as closely tied to the project. A unique aspect of the program is their emphasis on direct community outreach. Instead of relying on referrals to come through partner organizations, the family support worker spends time meeting families in the community through door-to-door outreach and follow-up calls with parents.

Project Voice

Project Voice is housed at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center and serves residents of the Summit-University and Thomas-Dale neighborhoods of Saint Paul. A variety of services are available to youth and families through the Hub, the physical location of the project office, including assistance from Ramsey County case managers, public health workers, and financial workers. The project uses a more formal, centralized intake process to identify the needs of youth and families referred to the project from schools and partner organizations. Referrals across the six partner agencies involved with the project are facilitated by the project coordinator.

Approach to services

Each of the projects funded by the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative was charged with developing a way to provide coordinated services and supports to African-American youth from three targeted neighborhoods that would ultimately lead to improved academic achievement of youth, stability and safety within the home, and coordination across systems.

While each project is unique in terms of its location, partners, and service delivery approach, the three projects funded through the Tri-Project Initiative share a number of common service components and a commitment in working to strengthen the African-American community. The Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD) is a common partner to all projects, providing tutoring for youth (Sankofa) and parent training workshops (Parent Power). There are also commonalities in the types of services available through each of the programs. Mentoring is a common service component across the three projects, but is provided by different programs. Each project also has a partner focused on helping youth and families learn about their African ancestry and culture.

The service delivery approach taken by the three projects is built on a philosophy to expand and enhance the resources available to youth and families within the community, while engaging and empowering families to utilize these services and supports. The three projects also share a philosophy that, by focusing on culture, youth and families will have greater a greater sense of cultural self-identity, as well as improved self-confidence and self-efficacy. In a review of current literature, while culturally-specific services were shown to support healthy identity development and more enduring behavior changes, there was little information available describing how these factors then lead to improved academic success. There is a need for additional exploration of these linkages and reporting of lessons learned through culturally-specific initiatives in peer-reviewed literature sources.

Key findings

Based on information captured through an Access database used by each project, a total of 753 youth were served by the three projects through June 30, 2010. This included 421 East Side Heritage participants, 263 Project Voice participants, and 69 Building Future Leaders participants. It should be noted that some participants who were enrolled in 2008, prior to the development of the databases, may not be reflected in these totals.

Participant characteristics

All three projects served youth populations that included, but were not limited to, the priority demographic characteristics identified by the Collaborative. Most of the youth served were African-American (96%), and two-thirds were boys (69%). Although most youth served (80%) were between the ages of 6 and 14, the projects also served youth who had not entered school, as well as youth through age 18. Most of the youth served by the projects (72%) attended school in the Saint Paul Public School district.

A number of youth live and attend schools outside the neighborhoods targeted by each project. Among youth with household addresses available, 61 percent of East Side Heritage and 58 percent of Building Future Leaders participants lived within the neighborhood targeted by the project. Fewer Project Voice participants (31%) lived within the Summit-University or Thomas-Dale neighborhood. Combined, the projects served youth who attended 86 different schools.

Economic instability, limited transportation options, and social isolation were challenges faced by youth and families. Project staff observed many adult participants experiencing difficulty obtaining employment and many families experiencing instable housing and periodic homelessness. They noted caregivers were often unaware of community events and resources, and lacked connections to both formal and informal sources of support.

Service utilization

The total hours of service youth received from each project varied considerably, ranging from 1 to over 800 hours. About one-third of the youth enrolled in East Side Heritage (36%) and half of the youth enrolled in Project Voice (50%) received no more than 10 hours of services through June 2010. The average number of hours received per child was similar for youth enrolled in East Side Heritage (mean=59 hours) and Project Voice (mean=63 hours).

Few of the youth received services from three or more partners within each project. Across all the projects, most of the youth were served by one or two partners, rather than receiving a full range of services. Using the data available, it is not clear how well the utilization of services aligns with the actual needs of youth and families.

Program discharge

Very few of the youth were formally discharged from any of the projects. A total of 41 youth discharged from Project Voice and Building Future Leaders, while East Side Heritage did not formally discharge any youth from the program.

Perceptions of staff, participants

Project staff and stakeholders observed positive changes among youth and parents. Across all three projects, program staff who participated in the key informant interviews observed youth making gains in their reading levels, demonstrating better classroom behavior, developing new hobbies/interests, and improving peer skills. Project staff also noted a number of positive changes they noticed among parents, including increased self-

confidence, involvement/engagement in their child's school, and self-efficacy and engagement in accessing community resources.

Parents who participated in the focus groups had overwhelmingly positive things to say about each project. While it is important to note that the participants of the focus groups are likely to be parents who are the most involved, and likely the most satisfied with their involvement, the parents who participated in the focus groups give a voice to the experiences of participating youth and families. Their comments describe how their involvement with each project leads to the individual changes that, in the Tri-Project logic model, ultimately lead to greater academic success among youth and improved safety. A number of themes emerged in the focus groups conducted with participants of each project:

- The emphasis placed on culture was important to parents and youth. Participants appreciated developing greater knowledge about their culture and felt it was important for youth to have adult African-American role models.
- Adult participants became more engaged in the community and in the child's school. Parents described that gaining feelings of greater empowerment, self-efficacy, and self-confidence made them want to become increasingly involved in their child's education and in the community.
- Parents felt supported by the community and project staff. Parents frequently noted the projects helped them connect to different community agencies and learn how to access resources and request support.
- Improvements in youth reading skills were noted by parents and youth. Many of the focus group participants were pleased with the experience their child had through Sankofa, a culturally-specific tutoring program, and felt the program led to improved self-esteem, reading skills, and grades.

Reading assessment results

A total of 195 youth participated in the Sankofa program, including 81 youth from East Side Heritage, 64 from Project Voice, and 50 from Building Future Leaders.

Across most grade levels, more than half of the youth were reading below grade level when they began the Sankofa program. This was true even among early readers; half of all Kindergarten students and nearly three-quarters of all 1st Grade students were reading below grade level when the program began.

The number of youth reading above expected grade level increased at discharge and improvements in ready levels were made by students in most grade levels. A total of 141 youth completed the Sankofa program and final reading assessment. The total number of youth who read above the expected reading level increased from 53 at intake to 62 at discharge. Overall, one-quarter of the youth who participated in Sankofa and were reading below or at their grade-appropriate reading level improved their skills to read at or above reading level at discharge.

Long-term outcome results

A total of 42 Project Voice and 50 East Side Heritage participants were enrolled into the full evaluation, which examined long term academic and child protection-related outcomes.

New child protection cases were opened for 10 youth, with only one of these children having been involved with the child protection system in the past. One-third of the youth who were enrolled in the evaluation were involved with the child protection system prior to intake. As of June 1, 2010, child protection cases were open for only seven youth.

As of June 1, 2010, none of the youth were residing in an out-of-home placement setting. A total of nine youth had a history of at least one out of the home placement prior to their involvement with the project. Only two children were placed out of the home for brief stays (1 day and 3 days) after receiving services (Figure 1).

There is some indication that the frequency of suspensions decreased among Project Voice participants. Suspensions were infrequent among the evaluation participants. However, there is some indication that among Project Voice participants, fewer youth were suspended after receiving services through the project. The number of participants whose attendance improved also increased slightly. While these findings are promising, data from a larger cohort of youth are needed in order to determine whether these changes are significant.

Most youth maintained the same level of academic achievement, based on MCA-II test scores. A total of 27 youth had matched baseline and follow-up MCA-II reading scores available, while fewer (N=24) had eligible math assessment scores. Approximately three-quarters of the students maintained the same achievement level in reading (78%) and math (71%). One child demonstrated improvement on reading and math achievement levels based on these test scores.

Limitations

There are a few key limitations that should be taken into account when reviewing the evaluation results. First, while the long-term outcome measures used in the evaluation

clearly aligned with the primary goals identified by the Collaborative when funding the Tri-Project initiative, they are also be measures that are more resistant to change than some anticipated short-term outcomes (i.e., changes in perceptions of school, self-esteem). Second, the evaluation was designed to focus on the experiences of youth participants and did not incorporate strategies to gather information about the types of services provided to parents or parent outcomes. Finally, results from this report should also be interpreted with caution, as the subset of youth who participated in the evaluation may not represent the broader population served by each project.

Lessons learned

The interim report completed in March 2010 highlights some key lessons learned after conducting a series of key informant interviews with project staff and stakeholders. Many of these key findings continue to be relevant to the work of the projects today.

- The projects are unique in their commitment to providing youth and families with opportunities to learn about African-American culture and strengthen the community.
- Considerable time is needed for outreach and relationship-building with families.
- Improvements could be made to enhance the infrastructure of each project, including communication and coordination of services.
- Funding or other support is needed to support indirect service and administrative activities, specifically outreach and communication with system partners, care coordination, and evaluation activities.

A number of additional lessons learned were also identified through more recent evaluation activities:

- The projects provide services and support to youth and families who attend a number of different schools and live in neighborhoods throughout Saint Paul. This poses some logistical challenges in considering how to better partner with schools, provide outreach, and ensure transportation options are available to youth and families.
- Service utilization data show that many youth receive services from one or two partners. Partners may be more likely to refer youth and families to other agencies for services, but full coordination of services across partners occurs on a limited basis.
- The qualitative data gathered through focus groups and key informant interviews indicate youth and parent participants are experiencing improvements in self-esteem, increased engagement in school, and greater connection to the community. While these

results are promising, these evaluation activities need to be expanded to identify if these types of gains are common among all project participants.

- Additional discussions are needed among partners in each project to clearly define expectations of successful youth and parent involvement and establish discharge criteria.
- Evaluation activities must be integrated into the work of all partners and include opportunities to capture both short- and long-term outcome data.

Conclusions and recommendations

The three projects funded by the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative were charged with the difficult task of developing ways to coordinate services across agencies and systems to meet the needs of African-American boys and their families in key Saint Paul neighborhoods. It is important to recognize the work done by the projects to increase communication and coordination across all partners is an accomplishment in itself.

While the results of the quantitative outcome evaluation conducted for the Tri-Project Initiative are largely inconclusive in regard to the effectiveness of each of the three projects in impacting long-term change, qualitative data gathered through focus groups and key informant interviews suggest the projects are having a positive impact among youth and parent participants and providing services that address the needs of African-American youth. Participants felt greater self-esteem and self-confidence, reported being more engaged in the community and school, and had a stronger sense of cultural self-identity. While project stakeholders feel these attributes build a foundation to support academic achievement among youth and encourage stability in the home, more time may be needed to demonstrate the linkages between these short-term outcomes and long-term results.

The results of this evaluation show the work of the projects are leading to promising short-term outcomes for youth and families, but also demonstrate that more work is needed to refine their efforts and examine the impact of the services provided. In doing so, the projects will likely need to address three major challenges: time limitations of project partners to make meaningful enhancements to their current processes, economic uncertainty and anticipated reductions and available funding, and the need to better integrate data collection and reporting into their service delivery model to assess outcomes.

Using results from the evaluation, Wilder Research has developed a number of recommendations for the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative Board and project staff to consider. The following recommendations suggest opportunities for the Board and its staff to work more closely with the projects to address ongoing project- and system-level issues:

- Identify and secure sustainable funding sources for project coordination and evaluation activities.
- Offer proactive technical assistance to support the projects, especially to address data sharing concerns common across partners.
- Create opportunities to work more directly with each project to partner with schools and child-serving systems when multi-level buy-in is needed.
- Consider redefining the evaluation sub-committee or establishing other workgroup to act as a learning community to clearly define how culturally-specific approaches are utilized by each funded project and share these lessons learned with key stakeholders.

There are also opportunities for the projects to reassess the effectiveness of their work, clarify enrollment and discharge definitions, and improve communication and coordination across partners. The following recommendations offer strategies to address challenges faced by all projects:

- Consider developing a multi-tier definition of project enrollment to differentiate between families who receive more intensive ongoing support from the project in a highly coordinated manner and those who are served by a single program partner. Consider the importance of ensuring families see themselves as a participant within the full project (i.e., Project Voice) rather than of a specific service (i.e., Parent Power).
- Continue to consider new strategies to inform parents, community-members, and potential funders about the project.
- Revisit the population served by each project to identify strategic opportunities for targeted outreach to residents and enhanced partnerships with key schools.
- Revisit or establish common expectations around partner participation in meetings and communicating information across programs.
- Continue to offer opportunities for families to become involved in the community through events and consider ways to further engage families through volunteer experiences.

Finally, there are also opportunities to enhance the current evaluation framework:

- Develop data collection methods to assess parent/youth satisfaction with different program components and define successful completion of each component.
- Use a strength-based approach to more fully describe the assets of youth and families at intake, as well as changes in short-term outcomes.

Project background

The mission of the Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative (SPCC) is to engage policy-makers, communities, business leaders, and other stakeholders to strengthen the social and economic fabric of Saint Paul to support the healthy development of children. In 2008, the SPCC reviewed local data to determine where their resources may be best spent. This review pointed out disparities between African-American youth and youth of other cultures in academic achievement, involvement in the child-serving systems (i.e., child protection, juvenile justice), and rates of out of home and foster care placements, especially in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. As a result of this work, the SPCC moved forward a 3-year initiative (the Tri-Project Initiative) to fund three projects serving African-American boys in three targeted Saint Paul neighborhoods: North End, Summit-University, and Payne-Phalen (East Side).

The SPCC Board specified that each project should develop a partnership between community-based organizations and child-serving systems to address two key goals:

1. Improving child safety by decreasing the number of African-American males who enter the child protection and/or out of home placement (foster care) system
2. Improving school success by increasing school attendance, decreasing the number of reported problem behaviors and improving academic proficiency of African-American males

The SPCC Board holds responsibility for a third outcome:

3. Breaking down policy barriers within the SPCC systems (city, county, and school) that contribute to disparities in outcomes and/or limit the abilities of families to access the resources necessary for success

The purpose of this report is to capture information about early lessons learned by each project since funding began in 2008, identify challenges to program implementation, describe early indicators of project success, report outcomes that can be measured to date, and offer suggestion to further improve and enhance future programmatic and evaluation activities.

Methodology

Development of an evaluation framework

An evaluation committee, consisting of representatives from each project, Ramsey County Human Services, and Saint Paul Public Schools, was convened early in the project to develop a framework to assess the effectiveness of the projects. However, because Local Collaborative Time Study (LCTS) dollars cannot be used for some infrastructure elements, such as administrative duties, communication/coordination between partners, and evaluation, the committee could plan for, but not implement, an evaluation of the projects. Some funding became available to develop Access databases that allowed each program to document demographic information and service utilization data for the youth and families served by their program. However, funding for other evaluation activities was not available until financial support from the Traveler's Foundation, US Bancorp Foundation, the Greater Twin Cities United Way, and the Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties was obtained in Fall 2009.

The initial vision of the evaluation sub-committee included a two-phase evaluation. The first phase would involve focus groups and key informant interviews with community members and project stakeholders to define key outcomes (i.e., school success, safety) and identify the key short-term measures that would be most meaningful to incorporate into the evaluation plan. The second phase would focus on collecting data using the key measures, as well as short- and long-term outcomes, defined by all stakeholders. Due to delays in securing evaluation funding and the amount received, this two-phase evaluation approach was not feasible. Instead, the sub-committee focused its efforts to create an evaluation plan that would answer the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of youth and families receiving services?
- What are the needs of youth and families at intake?
- What types of services do youth and families receive?
- What are the reasons youth and families are discharged from each program?
- Do youth receiving tutoring services demonstrate improved reading skills?
- Do youth participants demonstrate greater school success (through reductions in absenteeism, suspensions)?

- Do youth participants avoid maltreatment reports (which includes, but is not limited to, out-of-home placements)?
- How do program stakeholders define school success? How do the program activities support the academic success of students?
- How do program stakeholders define strong, stable families? How do the program activities support families?
- What important lessons have program staff learned to engage youth and families in services?
- Are youth and families satisfied with the services they have received from each program?
- What are the experiences of parents in each of the programs?

To respond to these questions, a multi-method evaluation approach, incorporating program data, key informant interviews with program staff, focus groups with parent and youth participants, analysis of reading assessment data from Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD), and outcome data from Ramsey County and Saint Paul Public Schools, was developed. The final evaluation plan, described below, includes many of the data collection elements initially proposed. However, pre-post interviews with youth and caregivers to learn about the individual experiences of families and assess changes in short-term outcomes could not be integrated into the final evaluation approach due to limited funding and a truncated data collection timeframe. This impacted the ability of this evaluation to fully explore the experiences of youth and parents from each project, as well as their satisfaction with the services they received.

Data collection methods

Literature review

Focused literature reviews were conducted to explore how two of the broad service delivery strategies, collaboration and use of culturally-specific approaches, can enhance service delivery and lead to improved youth outcomes. This information was used to provide context to the data gathered in the report and further refine the logic model developed to describe the alignment between project activities and the goals of the Tri-Project Initiative.

Tracking of demographic information

An Access database was developed to track demographic information for all youth served by each project. Key demographic characteristics were captured consistently across all three projects, and specific adjustments were made to each database to better meet the project's needs. The databases also incorporated fields to capture service utilization data and discharge information. Information collected through June 2010 were analyzed and included in this report. It should be noted that because the databases were developed after each project began to receive funding, they may not include information for all youth served.

Key informant interviews

Semi-structured key informant interviews were also conducted with 28 stakeholders, representing the Board, consultants, project coordinators, and staff from each project in early 2010. These interviews were used to capture information about early lessons learned by each project since funding began in 2008, identify challenges to program implementation, describe early indicators of project success, and consider opportunities to improve and enhance collaboration within projects and across systems. Key themes and unique aspects of each project were identified. This information, as well as recommendations to further enhance the degree of collaboration and work across partners was published as an interim report in March 2010.

Focus groups

A series of focus groups with participating parents and youth from each project was conducted in Spring 2010. The focus groups were designed to capture qualitative data to describe the short-term and intermediate outcomes parents and youth experience as a result of their involvement with the project. Parents and youth were asked to share information about their experiences with the project and how the services they have received have impacted them. All focus group participants were also asked to suggest project improvements. Focus group participants received a small incentive (\$20 for parents and \$10 for youth) and a meal as incentives for their participation in the 90-minute discussion. A copy of the key questions asked during the parent and youth focus groups is included in the appendix.

Subcontracts were established with each project to recruit focus group participants and manage all logistical coordination. Wilder Research staff provided ongoing consultation and support to the projects through this process. Each project was also invited to identify community members or project stakeholders who would be interested in receiving training to serve as a paid notetaker for the focus groups. A total of five community members were trained and four of the five participated as notetakers for at least one focus

group. However, only one of the community residents returned a final set of notes that could be used for analysis. Wilder Research staff reviewed the audio recordings from five of the six focus groups to complete the notes and identify key themes. Although one focus group was not recorded at the request of the participants, notes taken by both the community resident and Wilder Research staff were available for this group.

A total of 27 caregivers and 24 youth participated in the age-specific focus groups, with each group including 5 to 12 youth or caregivers. A total of 23 participants (12 caregivers and 11 youth) attended the East Side Heritage focus groups, while fewer attended focus groups for Project Voice (10 caregivers and 8 youth) and Building Future Leaders (5 caregivers and 5 youth). Some of the youth and caregivers who initially arrived for the focus group did not stay to participate after hearing about the purpose of the discussion because they did not feel familiar with the project. Most of the caregiver participants were female (93%), while most youth focus group participants were male (70%). All participants were African-American or bi-racial.

Reading assessment scores

The Sankofa tutoring program is a common element across the three projects. This program, offered by the Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD) uses culturally-specific approaches to engage youth in reading. At intake for the Sankofa program, all youth participants complete a comprehensive reading assessment using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Guided Reading Level (GRL) test. These comprehensive assessments are administered by program staff to assess specific areas that contribute to reading skills and comprehension, including phonemic awareness, letter cognition, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and reading engagement. Assessment results can then be used to determine whether children are reading above, at, or below the expected reading level for their grade and point in the academic year. Assessment results from all Sankofa participants were reviewed and analyzed to determine how many youth exhibited changes in their reading levels as a result of the program. Reading assessment scores were available for 187 participants at intake and 141 participants at discharge.

Secondary outcome data

Staff from each project were asked to obtain informed consent from caregivers of as many youth participants as possible to the Ramsey County Human Services Department (Ramsey County) and Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) to release data used as key outcome measures for the evaluation. Consent forms were signed and information was requested for 80 youth from the Ramsey County and 78 youth from SPPS.

Ramsey County provided a summary of youth involved with a number of County child-serving agencies prior to and after October 2009. These agencies or departments included: adoption/guardianship, child protection, children's mental health services, developmental disabilities services, financial assistance, and juvenile delinquency. More detailed child protection and out of home placement data were also provided, allowing for comparisons to be made using data prior to and after the child's involvement in the project.

SPPS provided summary attendance and suspension data for youth enrolled in a school within the District during the following academic years: 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA-II) data were also available for youth who took the assessment in Spring 2009 and 2010. The data were analyzed to determine any change in attendance rates, total number of suspensions, or math and reading achievement levels.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that should be considered when reviewing this report. As described previously, the evaluation for this project was added to the work of each project when funding became available. Staff from all projects were asked to explain the purpose of the evaluation to all current project participants and obtain informed consent from as many participants as possible. However, the evaluation includes a small subset of all participants served. Results from this report should be interpreted with caution, as the subset of youth who participated in the evaluation may not be representative of the broader population served by each project.

Although the evaluation approach developed by the Tri-Project evaluation subcommittee was developed to capture information to report youth progress towards a number of short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes, funding could not be obtained to conduct the full evaluation. As a result, the sub-committee, with guidance from the SPCC Board, prioritized the collection and reporting of long-term outcomes data from system partners (i.e., MCA-II scores from SPPS, child protection involvement status from Ramsey County Human Services). While these outcomes are clearly aligned with the primary goals identified by the Collaborative when funding the Tri-Project initiative, they are also measures that are more resistant to change than some anticipated short-term outcomes (i.e., changes in perceptions of school, self-esteem).

Youth who participated in each project received very different levels of service. While some youth received hours of service from all project partners, others were briefly touched by the services provided by each project. The evaluation plan was developed with the intention of exploring possible relationships between improved outcomes and the intensity of services youth received. However, due to the low number of evaluation participants and fewer who had exhibited change in key outcomes, this additional exploration of the data could not be completed.

When the evaluation approach was developed, the projects envisioned their work would focus primarily on services to children. Over time, the need to engage parents in services became a major area of emphasis for all projects. However, the evaluation plan did not incorporate strategies to gather information about the types of services provided to parents or parent/caregiver outcomes.

Project summaries

Each of the three projects was designed to use strategies to address the three goal areas of increased academic success, improved family stability, and enhanced partnerships between communities and child-serving systems. Some of the common elements across all projects include: a focus on African-American boys; an emphasis on helping youth and families build connections to their community and existing resources; the use of cultural approaches to engage youth and families and build a stronger sense of cultural self-identity; common program elements (i.e., tutoring, parent training, culturally-focused events/workshops); and partnerships with community-based organizations and child-serving systems (i.e., schools, county human services).

Although the three projects share the same overarching goals and contain some common program elements, there are important differences between each project in terms of the partners involved, the approach to service delivery, and overall structure of each partnership. The following summaries describe some of the key service delivery components of each project, with additional characteristics of each program summarized in the Appendix.

Building Future Leaders

Of the three projects, BFL was most closely tied to the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) system and was different than the other two projects because of their plan to provide school-based services. However, a number of leadership and service coordination issues hampered the project's ability to reach out to and effectively serve youth and families in the North End neighborhood. Because the project was administered through the schools, the project ran primarily through the academic year. Although the project began to receive funding in late 2008, BFL did not have enough time to plan for and implement their project before the academic year ended. As a result, services did not really begin until Fall 2009.

Leadership for the project was provided in-kind through the SPPS district, but changes in roles resulted in six leadership changes since the project was funded in 2008. Although key SPPS district- and school-level staff served as leaders to the project, these high-level administrators also had many competing priorities that limited their ability to contribute time to the BFL initiative. Other school staff involved in the project had limited flexibility in their work hours and job roles, making it difficult to provide outreach to youth and families. In addition, although meetings were held with school administrators and staff to discuss the project and develop strategies to identify and recruit students, the work needed to engage youth and families was difficult for social workers, counselors, and principals to do on top of their current priorities.

To a lesser degree, the project may have been challenged by the lack of community-based resources available to youth and families in the North End neighborhood. Early on, the district identified community partners they planned to coordinate with to provide key school-based services to youth. These partners provided school-based services for youth during the academic year, but because the services are not housed in the community, resource options were limited for youth and families during the summer months. While the project did hire an outreach worker in 2009 to work more directly with youth and families in the neighborhood, the project never built the infrastructure necessary to fully support the work of the Education Systems Navigator and build cooperation between partners.

The following programs/organizations were BFL partners:

- **Chosen to Achieve.** This Saint Paul Public School program provided mentoring services to African-American middle school students.
- **Cultural Wellness Center.** The Cultural Wellness Center is a nonprofit community-based organization focused on engaging people in using cultural approaches as a resource for taking responsibility for their own health and well-being. As a BFL partner, the organization offered culturally-focused group activities and events to youth and parents. The education systems navigator for BFL was an employee of this partner organization.
- **Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD).** NdCAD provides a variety of academic and cultural enrichment programs. As a BFL partner, they were contracted to provide two specific services, a youth tutoring program in reading (Sankofa) and a parent training program that helps parents help their children improve in reading (Parent Power).
- **Ramsey County Human Services.** A social worker from the Ramsey County Family and Community Partnership Program worked with partner schools and the Education Systems Navigator to identify youth and families who may need additional support to address a variety of issues, including child safety issues.
- **Saint Paul Public Schools.** BFL had strong connections with SPPS, both in their support to provide key staffing and leadership for the project and as a primary referral source.

East Side Heritage Project

The project with the strongest connection to the community is likely the East Side Heritage Project, located in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood of Saint Paul. Many of the project staff, including the program coordinator, youth worker, and family support worker, have offices in the Merrick Community Center. While the program works with schools and makes referrals to county agencies, these partners are not as closely tied to the project.

The following programs/organizations are East Side Heritage Project partners:

- **African-American Academy for Accelerated Learning (AAAL).** AAAL provides a cultural enrichment program for youth and parents that helps youth learn about African heritage and cultural traditions that have been adopted and are part of their culture today.
- **Merrick Community Center.** The center is the physical location for much of East Side Heritage’s programming and the site housing a number of key staff, including the Family Worker, Youth Worker, and project coordinator. These staff provide support to parents and youth through one-on-one interactions and group activities. Because the center has a van, the program has been able to address some of the transportation barriers faced by families.
- **Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD).** NdCAD provides a variety of academic and cultural enrichment programs. As an East Side Heritage partner, they are contracted to provide two specific services, a youth tutoring program (Sankofa) and parent training program that helps parents help their children improve in reading (Parent Power).
- **Past Athletes Concerned about Education (PACE).** This organization provides group and individual mentoring to youth, focusing on youth with academic and behavioral problems. Weekly groups are currently held in two schools, and a basketball academy, that includes gym time and group activities, is held Saturdays at Merrick. A Boys Assembly is also held several times a year at a local middle school.

The project coordinator is a staff person at the community center, and meetings are held monthly to discuss project concerns. A unique aspect of the program is their emphasis on direct community outreach. Instead of relying on referrals to come through partner organizations, the family support worker spends time meeting families in the community through door-to-door outreach and follow-up calls with parents.

Project VOICE

Project VOICE has the largest number of partners involved in the project. The program is housed at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center in a center called the Hub. A variety of services are available to youth and families through the Hub, including assistance from Ramsey County case managers, public health workers, and financial workers. The project uses a more formal, centralized intake process to identify the needs of youth and families referred to the project from schools and partner organizations. Referrals across agencies are facilitated by the project coordinator.

The following programs/organizations are Project VOICE partners:

- **Cultural Wellness Center.** The Cultural Wellness Center is a nonprofit community-based organization focused on engaging people in using cultural approaches as a resource for taking responsibility for their own health and well-being. As a Project VOICE partner, the organization offers culturally-focused group activities and events to youth and parents.
- **Hallie Q. Brown Community Center.** The community center is home to the Hub, a centralized location for youth and families to access some Ramsey County services and other resources, and the project coordinator. Family Nights, events for Project VOICE participants and the broader community, are also held at the center.
- **Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD).** NdCAD provides a variety of academic and cultural enrichment programs. As a Project VOICE partner, they are contracted to provide two specific services, a youth tutoring program (Sankofa) and parent training program that helps parents help their children improve in reading (Parent Power).
- **Project Kofi.** A program of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Project Kofi provides culturally-specific, school-based mental health services to youth with behavioral concerns.
- **Ramsey County Departments.** A variety of Ramsey County departments provide services to youth and families through Project VOICE. A child protection case manager works with schools to identify youth with truancy issues, while financial workers and public health workers have provided services at the Hub.
- **Saint Paul Public Schools.** Project VOICE works to build relationships with school administrators, social workers, and teachers to increase awareness of the project and the services it provides and to help families build stronger connections with the schools.

- **Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department.** The Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department provides an in-kind staff person (a Community Service officer) to serve as Project Coordinator and Information and Referral Specialist. Responsibilities of this staff person includes working with families to determine and connect families the most appropriate Project VOICE or external services and/or programs to address their needs.
- **Walker West Music Academy.** Walker West Music Academy is a nonprofit music school. The academy provides musical and artistic enrichment activities, including lessons, to support Project VOICE youth participants.
- **YWCA.** The YWCA Saint Paul provides youth ages 7-14 with opportunities to participate in the Youth Achievers Program (YAP). YAP provides youth with afterschool academic, technology, leadership, and lifestyle enrichment activities, while also focusing on healthy choices.

Project VOICE also holds monthly meetings for representatives of all programs to attend. A unique aspect of the program is their care coordination meetings for youth. These meetings are held for approximately one-third of Project VOICE participants, focused primarily on youth who seem to have the greatest needs and would benefit the most from a coordinated array of services. These meetings allow program staff to speak to one another about the needs of the child and family and services that may be most helpful to support the family.

Collaboration and coordination of services

True collaboration between agencies and organizations is difficult. It requires partners to focus primarily on their shared goals and mutual interests, develop new communication and shared decision-making processes, and establish high levels of trust across organizations. Although the partners in each project have committed to working together to address the needs of African-American youth and families, ongoing effort is needed in order for the projects to move from simply working in partnership with one another to achieving full collaboration.

A series of key informant interviews was conducted with staff and stakeholders from each project in late 2009-early 2010 to assess the strengths and accomplishments of each project, as well as challenges and potential areas of improvement. To varying degrees, staff and stakeholders from each project identified collaboration between partners as an area where improvement was needed.¹ To help the projects better assess ways they could improve communication, coordination, and collaboration, all project partners were invited to complete the Collaboration Factors Inventory (CFI). This survey instrument assesses

¹ The results from these key informant interviews are reported in more detail in the March 2010 interim report: *Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative Tri-Project Initiative: Early lessons learned*

the project using 20 factors that are common to successful collaborations. These factors are grouped into six factors: Environment (e.g., Is there a favorable political and social climate?); Membership Characteristics (e.g., Is there mutual respect, understanding, and trust across partners?); Process and Structure (e.g., Are there clear decision-making processes?); Communication (e.g., Is there clear and frequent communication?); Purpose (e.g., Do all partners have a shared vision?); and Resources (e.g., Are there sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time?). Average scores for each factor are divided into three categories: areas of strength, borderline areas where additional exploration is needed to identify potential concerns, and areas of concern. The CFI results were analyzed and shared with project stakeholders and the SPCC Board earlier this year, and are briefly summarized in this report.

The scores reported by East Side Heritage stakeholders indicated areas of strength across all factors except having a history of collaboration in the community (Environment category) and having sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time (Resources category), which received borderline scores (Appendix Figure A1). The average factor scores were lower among stakeholders from both Building Future Leaders and Project Voice, with most areas receiving borderline scores. Areas of strength identified by Building Future Leaders stakeholders included members seeing collaboration in their own self interest and established information relationships and communication links, while concerns included having a history of collaboration or cooperation in the community and maintaining an appropriate pace of development. Areas of strength identified by Project Voice stakeholders included a favorable political and social climate, members seeing collaboration in their own self interest, and a unique purpose, while the adaptability of the project and sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time had scores indicating areas of concern.

Qualitative information obtained from project stakeholders also provided additional insight into the strengths of each collaborative effort and challenges they face. All East Side Heritage stakeholders reported their involvement in the project has met their expectations, except one who felt that youth could be introduced to more services and organizations than are currently involved as direct partners. Many spoke of the commitment among partners to working together and their ability to work together to identify areas of improvement as strengths of their partnership. Some stakeholders felt improvements could be made to the intake and enrollment process and communication could be enhanced if they had a project coordinator with more time available. Ongoing financial sustainability was a concern among many partners.

Stakeholders from both Building Future Leaders (BFL) and Project Voice had mixed opinions in whether their involvement with the project met their expectations. Among BFL stakeholders, a number of partners felt that, while there was a desire to help youth and families in the community, not all partners were actively involved, due to competing

priorities or limited flexibility in their job. Some partners felt communication across partners and outreach to the community had improved over time. However, other stakeholders felt unsure of the project's mission, the role of all partners in the project, and the resources available to youth and families through the project.

Among Project Voice stakeholders, a number of partners were felt they successfully reached youth and families who otherwise would not have access to a range of services and supports, and many felt encouraged by the changes they observed among the participants. A number of partners felt communication could be improved, especially in providing follow up information to agencies when a referral is made and in communicating directly with other partners (in contrast to direct communication with the Project Voice coordinator). While some partners participating in case management meetings saw direct service coordination as a strength, one partner did not feel service coordination was occurring. A number of partners noted the participating families have many needs, reinforcing the needs for partners to work collaboratively. Fragmentation of services and limited coordination between partners were identified as major challenges.

The challenges identified by stakeholders of the three projects are common to many collaborative efforts. However, when working diligently to address the needs of youth participants and their families, the infrastructure of the project that supports collaboration is easily overlooked. Staff and stakeholders from the projects are encouraged to regularly reassess their collaborative efforts, build on the strengths of their partnerships, and identify strategies to address common challenges.

Approach to services

Each of the projects funded by the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative was charged with developing a way to provide coordinated services and supports to African-American youth from three targeted neighborhoods that would ultimately lead to improvements in the academic achievement of youth, stability and safety within the home, and coordination across systems. Although the Collaborative engaged the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) District and Ramsey County Human Services as active partners in these projects, each project developed their own approach to providing services through a unique group of community-based services and supports. This section of the report briefly highlights common programmatic elements shared across the three projects, offers a logic model describing the linkages between anticipated short-term and long-term outcomes, and provides a summary of a focused literature review exploring what is known about successful culturally-specific program strategies that lead to improved academic achievement and reductions in out of home placements.

Common program elements

While each project is unique in terms of its location, partners, and service delivery approach, the three projects funded through the Tri-Project Initiative share a number of common service components and a shared commitment in working to strengthen the African-American community. The Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD) is a common partner to all projects, providing tutoring for youth (Sankofa) and parent training workshops (Parent Power). There are also commonalities in the types of services available through each of the programs. Mentoring is a common service component across the three projects, but is provided by different programs. Each project also has a partner focused on helping youth and families learn about their African ancestry and culture.

Linkages between program components and outcomes

In the process of preparing a funding proposal at the onset of the initiative, all three projects developed logic models to describe how their program activities would lead to the outcomes specified by the SPCC, specifically improved academic achievement and reductions in out-of-home placements. These logic models were revisited by the evaluation sub-committee during the development of the evaluation framework. The following logic model was developed to reflect commonalities across all three projects and the underlying program philosophy that explains the linkages between specific program activities and changes in long-term outcomes.

1. Tri-Project Initiative logic model

GAPS/AREAS OF CONCERN

According to local data, African-American boys are:

- More likely to be suspended, identified/labeled with EBD, demonstrate lower academic proficiency rates (SPPS)
- Overrepresented in child welfare/juvenile justice systems (Ramsey County)
- More likely to be homeless than youth of other cultural groups (SPPS)

Afrocentric/culturally-specific approaches are not regularly used to engage and teach youth

Communication and coordination across programs and youth-serving systems (SPPS, Ramsey County) is limited

Community resources are limited

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

Youth who participate in the programs will:

- Learn more about their culture
- Develop a strong cultural self-identity
- Build a strong support network
- Have increased self-esteem
- Identify positive adult role models

Parents who participate in the program will:

- Have increased knowledge of how to navigate education and social service systems
- Feel empowered to more effectively communicate with their child's school, obtain community resources

Programs involved in each project will:

- Increase communication and coordination across programs
- Identify successful strategies to engage youth and parents in services
- Develop/expand use of culturally-specific approaches

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

As a result of changes in knowledge and attitudes, youth will:

- Obtain an enhanced appreciation for reading and learning
- Exhibit positive behaviors in school and at home
- Develop greater self-efficacy

As a result of changes in knowledge and attitudes, parents will:

- Develop greater self-efficacy
- Feel greater connection to the community, more support
- Encourage child reading, engagement in school

Through increased coordination, projects will:

- Serve as a consistent resource to families in the community
- Address system-levels barriers with child-serving agencies (SPPS, Ramsey County)
- Identify successful models to provide culturally-specific, effective services

LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- The number of African-American boys in out-of-home placement will decrease
- School attendance among youth participants will increase
- School behaviors among youth participants will improve, suspensions/other disciplinary actions will be reduced
- System barriers will be identified and reduced

Activities leading to improved academic success and youth safety

The interviewed stakeholders discussed how their project programming contributes to success in the youth-focused goal areas in two different ways. First, specific program components (i.e., the literacy components of Sankofa, diversion from county services through Ramsey County case management) were components identified as directly tied to academic achievement and increased family stability. However, many of the stakeholders also identified how various program components lead to outcomes that indirectly supported academic achievement and reduced child protection involvement. These goals included helping youth and families develop a stronger sense of cultural self-identity, offering new opportunities to youth and families, empowering families to seek resources and support, helping parents develop effective advocacy skills, providing role models to youth, and facilitating connections between the family and community.

Many stakeholders spoke about the importance of the philosophy and approach of project staff in when providing services to address these goals. Many stakeholders identified building relationships, providing outreach, role modeling, and facilitating connections to community resources as important ways they provide services and supports to families. A number of stakeholders felt it was important to specify their approach to services emphasizes empowering families to access the resources available in the community, not simply to provide services to the family.

Activities leading to systems change

All projects have worked to enhance their ability to partner with a variety of child-serving systems, including the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) district, Ramsey County Human Services, and other community resources, such as libraries and recreational facilities. While some stakeholders felt the projects were helping school staff and other system partners become familiar with community resources, full collaboration between community organizations and established systems has proven difficult.

With representatives from the city, school district, city council, mayor's office and other key systems, the SPCC Board is well-positioned to address policy barriers within systems identified by the projects that contribute to disparities in outcomes or limit the abilities of families to access necessary resources. Some barriers to effective service delivery, including transportation and data sharing practices, have been brought to the Board through updates from the projects and have resulted in good discussion. However, changing the policies that influence these practices takes time. One stakeholder noted that the city parks and libraries were starting to work differently with the projects to share resources. Similarly, there are examples of ways county agencies and schools are starting to work differently with the projects. Other barriers to service delivery, such as housing, transportation, the

current economic climate, and limited availability of jobs in each neighborhood, are more difficult to address. One stakeholder felt more input from the three projects could help the Board could be more effective in addressing system barriers.

Efforts to strengthen community

An important aspect across all projects is the investment and interest project stakeholders have in strengthening the community. The difference in approach between this initiative and other efforts to increase community resources is notable in that the project stakeholders are clear to point out they are not providing services to the community, but expanding the availability of resources within the community. While this distinction may seem small, it leads to a service approach that does not focus on community needs and gaps, but on identifying the community strengths and assets that can be enhanced.

In a series of key informant interviews conducted with project staff and stakeholders in 2009, there were three broad strategies used by projects to strengthen the community: creating opportunities for youth and families to have strong African-American role models; integrating cultural knowledge and awareness into program services; and building connections within the community. These project components, briefly described below, are discussed in greater detail in the Tri-Project Initiative interim report (March 2010).

Integration of culture into services

Many of the programs involved in each project place a strong emphasis on teaching youth about African and African-American culture. The organizations providing these services are established in the community, not new organizations attempting to adapt their programs to reach a specific population. These programs may offer youth and families with opportunities to participate in specific cultural activities (i.e., African drumming, introductions to African language), or to learn about culture indirectly (i.e., reading books, participating in group discussions). Most of the program partners have a mission or guiding program philosophy that describes their emphasis on culture. A few stakeholders stressed the importance of culturally-specific approaches being embedded into the work of the project, not an adaptation or accommodation of a traditional approach to services delivery.

Role models

A number of stakeholders noted the youth participating in the projects often came from disrupted homes and did not have strong male role models in their lives. Within each program, there are formal mentoring programs, opportunities for youth to receive one-on-one attention from African-American program staff, or group activities that focus on developing goals, making good decisions, and avoiding conflict. Adult role models and mentors can provide guidance and encouragement to youth. Stakeholders felt it was

important for youth to hear adults speak openly and honestly about the challenges they faced growing up, not only their achievements and successes.

Connections to the community

Although individual youth and caregivers are the primary service recipients in each project, program stakeholders consistently spoke about their work in the context of the broader community. According to one stakeholder, the African-American concept of community is centered narrowly around cultural identity but includes all African-American individuals from children to elders, African-American organizations, religious institutions and other organizations or entities that are part of the community. There is a commitment to children within the community, but the needs of children are not considered in isolation. There is a strong sense of interconnectedness within the community that must be taken into account when needs are assessed and services are offered to families. Across all projects, staff have a strong sense of commitment and responsibility toward the community and feel one of the most important aspects of their work in building or enhancing the resources available within the community, and helping families develop strong ties within the community.

Connecting program activities to academic achievement

Each project utilizes culturally-specific, Afrocentric programming to impact a number of individual factors, such as cultural self-identity, self-efficacy, confidence, and empowerment, build a stronger sense of community, and expand resources available to community residents in these targeted neighborhoods. To varying degrees, stakeholders from each project who participated in key informant interviews articulated these factors can ultimately lead to improved academic achievement and less involvement in the child protection system.

In order to better understand and articulate how culturally-specific strategies can lead to improved academic achievement or reductions in out of home placement among African-American boys, a focused literature review was conducted including information from peer-reviewed academic journals and a subsequent review of key publications by African-American scholars.

Overview

Among a number of African-American scholars, the importance of creating opportunities for youth to build a strong sense of cultural self-identity and self-esteem is seen as critical for African-American boys to become engaged and successful in an academic environment. According to Amos Wilson (1987), the major factors that influence a

child's academic performance are: 1) the degree to which the child's parents value academic skills and work to motivate the child to do well; 2) the degree to which the role models children identify with show active interest in learning; and 3) the child's expectations of success in learning. He and other scholars note that while schools can do a better job of highlighting the achievements of African-American men and connection between these successes and current concerns among African-American youth, the motivation to achieve academic success must be developed outside of the school setting. In *Educating Black Students: Some Basic Issues*, Elizabeth Hood writes,

“Urban schools frequently fail to encourage the urban child to become interested in leadership because the curriculum does not include an adequate number of co-curricular activities. Many teachers and administrators assume that the Black child's primary educational needs are discipline and the three R's. They fail to understand that the heightened sense of power and self-esteem which stem from involvement in meaningful activities will motivate the child to become more self-directed and more anxious to improve his basic skills.”

It is important to note that the call for greater inclusion and focus on African-American culture in educational settings is not to imply that youth cannot experience high levels of success in a traditional school setting. Many African-American youth achieve high levels of academic success without any sense of African-American history or familiarity with culture. Rather, it acknowledges that the educational system is based on a system that reflects White culture, and therefore limits the ability of African-American youth to draw fully on their cultural strengths and traditions in their path towards academic success (Hilliard, 1995).

While there is not agreement among the scholarly community who publish primarily in peer-reviewed academic journals on the value or impact of Afrocentric programming, some peer-reviewed research suggests that culturally relevant programming can support healthy identity development (Washington et al., 2007) and more enduring behavior change (Gilbert et al., 2009). Research also suggests a relationship between positive racial identity and academic achievement among African-American youth (Byrd & Chavous, 2009). In addition, education theories such as Ladson-Billing's cultural relevancy theory suggest that to “successfully educate Black students, curriculum, instructional, and social relations much occur within a culturally relevant context” (Woodland, 2008, p. 552). Indeed, research suggests that while a strong positive racial identity *alone* is unlikely to increase academic achievement or reduce out of home placement, it can serve as a protective factor or important personal psychological resource, especially in high-risk environments (Byrd & Chavous, 2009; Gentle-Genitty, 2009; Gordon et al., 2009).

Programmatic findings – increasing academic achievement

Research indicates that strategies such as mentoring, one-on-one tutoring, and after-school programming can improve academic achievement among different subgroups of students, including African-American boys, *if* they are part of a high-quality program (Fashola, 2003; Gordon et al., 2009; Woodland, 2008). However, the intensity, duration, and quality of these strategies often vary dramatically from one program to another. Therefore, we are unable to make broad recommendations about the value of these strategies without more detailed programmatic information.

In a 2003 article, Fashola focused on after-school programs serving African-American males with evidence of effectiveness and identified four promising programs for review. Specifically, each of these programs has “an academic focus, wide replication, evaluation and evidence of effectiveness in after-school settings, and evidence of effectiveness among African-American students” (Fashola, 2003, pg. 405). Each program is briefly described below.

Howard Street Tutoring Program (HSTP)

The Howard Street Tutoring Program targets students in 2nd and 3rd grade who are reading at levels significantly below grade level. The model calls for a reading teacher to be the on-site program coordinator and develop lesson plans for trained volunteers to implement one-on-one with students. Evaluated on a small scale, HSTP students outperformed randomly assigned comparison groups in word recognition, spelling, and basal passage reading (Fashola, 2003). Locally, the East Side Learning Center tutoring program uses a similar model and initial evaluation results suggest that the program has been successful, especially in working with boys and students with high attendance rates (Schultz & Mueller, 2007).

Help One Student To Succeed (HOSTS)

HOSTS works with Title I schools to design one-on-one tutoring programs that are implemented by trained volunteer mentors. The program targets elementary through high school students performing below the 30th percentile and provides school staff with a comprehensive database of learning materials. School staff use this database to design lesson plans that are tailored to each student’s needs and aligned with the curriculum of the schools and local standards. In a multistate study of HOSTS, students in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade made substantial NCE (normal curve equivalent) gains and students in other grades made significant gains (Fashola, 2003).

Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) Memphis program

The Center for Research in Education Policy (CREP) created an extended-school day tutoring program for use in the Memphis City Schools. The program trained teachers how to tutor students in groups using curriculum adapted from the Success for All reading program. The majority of participants are African-American and were selected to participate based on their need for additional instruction. Evaluation results suggest the program enhanced students' academic skills, especially for those with greater attendance (Fashola, 2003).

Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)

The ECRI program has been used both as an in-school language arts program and after-school remedial tutoring program with elementary, middle, and high school students. The goal of the program is to improve reading achievement by using scripted lessons that incorporate multisensory and sequential methods and strategies. The main evaluation of ECRI as an after-school program using trained volunteers indicated that ECRI students made significantly greater reading gains than the control group (Fashola, 2003).

Reaching African-American boys

No matter how effective the program, it will not improve the academic achievement of African-American boys if they do not regularly attend and participate. Students who experience feelings of inadequacy or alienation within the school setting are unlikely to be motivated to remain in school for additional hours each afternoon “unless they can be ensured that their negative experiences during the regular school day will not be replicated and that they will benefit from this extra enrichment” (Fashola, 2003, pg. 417). Even high-quality programs that operate outside of the school setting may experience difficulty in working with African-American males if they “do not address the particular cultural and communicative needs of the population” (Woodland, 2008, p. 552). Therefore, programs targeting African-American males should have a deep cultural understanding, recognize their unique perspective, identify barriers to achievement, and find alternatives to support their academic success. Afrocentric programming, including the use of Nguzo Saba (Kwanza principles), and African-American male staff or volunteers may help encourage participation and foster success among African-American boys.

Self-Esteem Through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence (SETCLAE)

The Self-Esteem Through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence (SETCLAE) model focuses on teaching African-American children positive aspects of their cultural heritage while simultaneously increasing self-esteem and academic performance. The developers believe a major reason for the underachievement of African-American children is the lack

of strong self-esteem. The curriculum is based on an assumption that knowledge of culture can improve self-esteem. It uses an Afrocentric model to engage students and help them build self-esteem.

Programmatic findings - Reduce risky behaviors

Although there is not any published literature on reducing out of home placement for African-American boys, there is limited literature on reducing risky behaviors in this population, which may be useful. One model, described below, yielded promising results.

Aban Aya Youth Project

The Aban Aya Youth Project includes a culturally sensitive classroom curriculum that targets multiple risk behaviors and a community component that encourages parent involvement. The curriculum is rooted in established theories of behavior change and includes components that “1) enhance growth of sense of self and cultural pride and 2) strengthen family and community ties” (Flay et al., 2004, pg. 378). For the longitudinal cluster randomized trial of the project, three groups of schools were selected. The first group of schools received the classroom curriculum only; the second group received the classroom curriculum and the community component; and the third group received a control curriculum on nutrition and exercise. The study followed students for four years between grades 5 and 8 and the study schools were 91 percent African-American.

Results indicate that for boys, both the classroom curriculum alone and the classroom curriculum plus community component “significantly reduced the rate of increase in violent behavior, provoking behavior, school delinquency, drug use, and recent sexual intercourse, and improved the rate of increase in condom use” (Flay et al., 2004, pg. 377). Additionally, the classroom curriculum plus community component was significantly more effective than the classroom curriculum alone. There were no significant effects for girls. These findings show that for African-American boys, a “single curriculum or intervention can have large effects on multiple behaviors” and suggest the importance of community and parent engagement in youth behavior change (Flay et al., 2004, pg. 383).

The authors also noted that “a major strength of the [school curriculum and community component] program was the strong partnership that was developed with community organizations, including a community-based mental health organization” (Flay et al., 2004, pg. 383). This community-based organization was key in developing collaborative relationships and facilitating implementation of the program.

Limitations

This review has a number of limitations, most notably, the scarcity of relevant high-quality literature. Many programs have not been evaluated and of those that have, many Afrocentric programs “lack the replications need to become recognized evidence-based practices” (Gilbert et al., 2009, p. 244). Much of the literature on improving the academic achievement of African-American boys focuses on middle and high school students and there is not a scholarly body of work on reducing out of home placement for this group. While beyond the scope of this literature review, the Collaborative may want to explore kinship care in the future. While formally defined as foster care, kinship care or rearing of children by relatives “is one of the most enduring African traditions...and informal adoption continues to be widespread in the black community” (National Association of Black Social Workers, 2003). Over two million African-American children are raised by relatives (both in and outside of the child welfare system) and research supports the “positive functioning of children reared by relatives” suggesting that kinship care may warrant future attention from the Collaborative (National Association of Black Social Workers, 2003).

Summary

The programs highlighted in this literature review share common features including the use of credentialed staff and well-trained volunteers as well as theoretically sound, culturally sensitive, and developmentally appropriate curriculum. In addition, the academic programs targeted students who were in need of additional support and provided them with ongoing structured opportunities that were aligned with the curriculum and tailored to meet their individual needs. The quality and consistency of staff and volunteers along with their ability to connect with students are also likely factors to success. Additionally, it is important to note that the key components highlighted in the programs above are likely interdependent.

Many programs that have achieved successful outcomes with African-American boys were not designed with this population in mind. Instead, they are fundamentally sound programs that were adapted with the help of community knowledge to better meet the needs of African-American boys. However, there may be a number of promising Afrocentric models to increase academic achievement among African-American boys that have not been evaluated for peer-reviewed publications. SETCLAE is one example of a program that focuses on increasing culture self-identify not simply as a strategy to increase academic achievement, but as an important outcome of its own. This literature review demonstrates a need for Afrocentric programs, such as those funded by the Tri-Project Initiative, to find ways to measure how the program components lead to increased self-esteem and cultural self-identity, but to then determine how these individual characteristics contribute to improved academic success.

Participant characteristics

Demographic information for youth and families served by each project were collected by project staff and entered into an Access database. It should be noted that the Access database was developed after the projects began to provide services and may not include information for all youth served. Although the modifications made to the Access databases for East Side Heritage and Building Future Leaders included additional fields to link youth and parent participants as members of the same household, little information about parents served were captured by any of the projects.

Youth participant characteristics

All three projects served youth populations that included, but were not limited to, the priority demographic characteristics identified by the Collaborative. The three projects were funded to provide services to African-American boys in Kindergarten through 8th Grade who live in one of the three targeted St. Paul neighborhoods (Payne-Phalen, North End, Thomas-Dale/Summit-University). Most of the youth served through the project were African-American (96%), and two-thirds of the youth were boys (69%) (Figure 2). Although most youth served (80%) were between the ages of 6 and 14, the projects also served youth who had not entered school, as well as youth through age 18.

Most of the youth served by the projects (72%) attended school in the Saint Paul Public School district. Fewer youth attended a charter school (5%), public school outside of the District (4%), or private school (1%). Youth participants in the East Side Heritage project attended a charter school more often than Project Voice or Building Future Leaders participants (9% of East Side Heritage participants, compared with 1% of participants from the other projects).

The relatively large number of youth served by each project who do not fit the targeted population defined by the Collaborative may be explained, in part, because the projects used the database to report on all youth served. This could include siblings and children who may have been touched by a program element, but not fully engaged in a wide range of services. This issue will be discussed in more depth in the service utilization section of the report.

2. Youth demographic characteristics

	Project Voice (N=255-263)		BFL (N=60-69)		East Side Heritage (N=421)		All Projects (N=753)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender								
Female	89	35%	25	36%	118	28%	232	31%
Male	166	65%	44	64%	303	72%	513	69%
Race								
African-American	240	96%	58	97%	401	95%	699	96%
African-born	0	0%	1	2%	10	2%	11	2%
White	1	<1%	1	2%	8	2%	10	1%
Hispanic	1	<1%	0	0%	6	1%	7	1%
Native American	1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
Other	12 ^a	5%	0	0%	6 ^b	1%	18	3%
Age at intake								
0-5	15	6%	3	4%	33	8%	51	7%
6-10	157	60%	16	23%	185	44%	358	48%
11-14	65	25%	41	59%	135	32%	241	32%
15-18	11	4%	3	4%	45	11%	59	8%
Missing	15	6%	6	9%	0	0%	21	3%
Type of school attended								
Saint Paul Public School	188	72%	43	62%	309	73%	540	72%
Public school, not SPPS	8	3%	1	1%	18	4%	27	4%
Charter school	2	1%	0	0%	37	9%	39	5%
Private school	4	2%	0	0%	4	1%	8	1%
Not enrolled	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Missing	61	23%	25	36%	52	12%	138	18%

^a Other responses from Project Voice included the following: Bi-racial (6); American (3); Indian: (1); Liberian: (1); Multi: (1)

^b All other responses for East Side Heritage were Multi-Racial.

Household demographic information

Each program also gathered demographic information about the household to better understand the degree of stability in the household and potential need for community-based resources and support services. Household data are missing for many of the youth served and, therefore, the percentages of youth who live in households with various characteristics may change when data are consistently available.

Many of the youth served lived in low-income households with a single caregiver. Half of all the youth served (50%) lived in single-parent households, while fewer (21%) lived in households with at least 2 adult caregivers (Figure 3). Over half of the youth served had siblings or lived in households with other children (59%). Although income information was not reported for half of the youth served, among those with this data available (N=367), most (90%) lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty line.

Many of the youth served had moved within the past 12 months. The length of time youth had lived at their current residence was available for 402 youth. Within this subset of youth with data available, nearly two in five (38%) had moved within the past year (Figure 3). No information was collected to describe the reasons families had moved. Few youth (1%) lived in a shelter or had no type of stable housing.

3. Household characteristics

Characteristics	Project Voice (N=263)		BFL (N=69)		East Side Heritage (N=421)		All Projects (N=753)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Type of housing								
Apartment	68	26%	6	9%	82	20%	156	21%
Duplex/multi-family home	40	15%	3	4%	79	19%	122	16%
Single family home	90	34%	12	17%	101	24%	203	27%
Shelter	4	2%	0	0%	5	1%	9	1%
No stable housing	4	2%	1	1%	0	0%	5	1%
Missing	57	22%	47	68%	154	37%	258	34%
Number of years at current residence¹								
Less than 1 year	64	24%	0	0%	91	22%	155	21%
1 – 3 years	81	31%	3	4%	113	29%	197	26%
4 – 7 years	16	6%	0	0%	18	4%	34	5%
8 – 10 years	7	3%	0	0%	6	1%	13	2%
More than 10 years	2	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%	3	<1%
Missing	93	35%	66	96%	192	46%	351	47%
Adult caregivers in household								
One adult caregiver	150	57%	33	48%	191	45%	374	50%
Two adult caregivers	59	22%	16	23%	62	15%	137	18%
More than two adult caregivers	0	0%	9	13%	13	3%	22	3%
Missing	54	21%	11	16%	155	37%	220	29%
Other children living in home								
No other children	16	6%	6	9%	33	8%	55	7%
One to two other children	101	38%	31	45%	116	28%	248	33%
Three to four other children	50	19%	16	23%	95	23%	161	21%
Five or more other children	22	8%	4	6%	11	3%	37	5%
Missing	74	28%	12	17%	166	39%	251	34%
Federal Poverty Level²								
Above Federal Poverty Level	6	2%	0	0%	32	8%	38	5%
Below Federal Poverty Level	116	44%	3	4%	210	50%	329	44%
Missing	141	54%	66	96%	179	43%	386	51%

¹ Among 402 youth with data available, 38 percent had moved within the past year.

² Among 367 youth with data available, 90 percent lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty level.

Neighborhood of residence

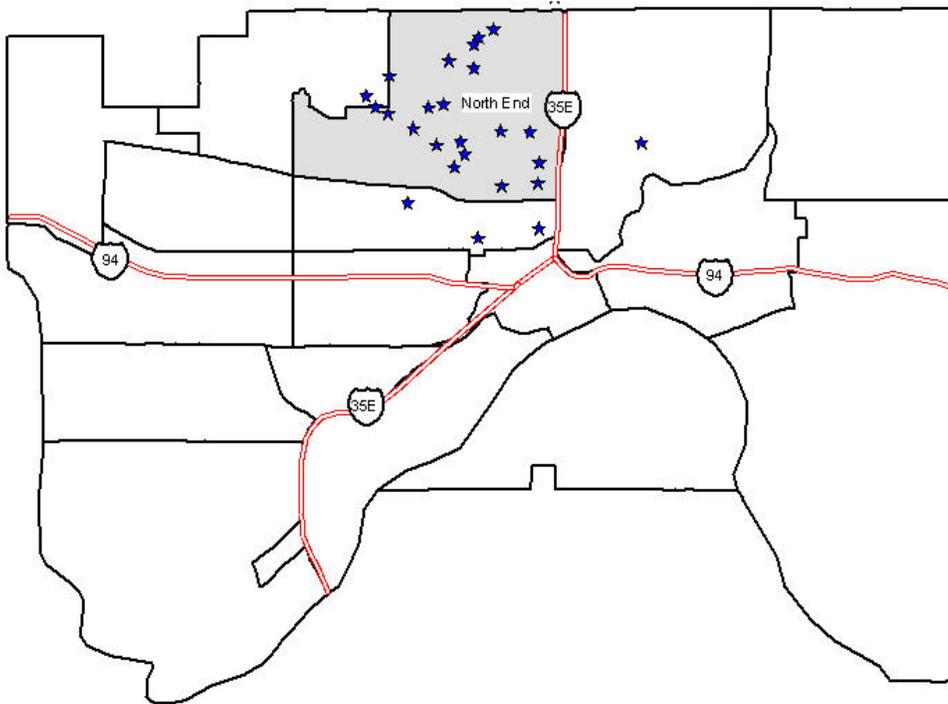
A number of youth live outside the neighborhoods targeted by each project.

Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping was used to visualize where children live and attend school in relationship to the project's target neighborhood. Household addresses were available for 276 of the youth who participated in the East Side Heritage program, 255 Project Voice participants, and 41 Building Future Leaders (BFL) participants. Participant addresses were gathered at intake, and may not have been updated if the child and family moved.

Over half of the BFL and East Side Heritage participants lived within the project's targeted neighborhoods. Sixty-one percent of East Side Heritage participants lived in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood, and 58 percent of BFL participants lived in the North End neighborhood (Figures 4-5). In contrast, less than one-third (31%) of Project Voice participants lived in either Summit-University or Thomas-Dale neighborhood and the GIS mapping shows many youth live further away from the target neighborhood (Figure 6).

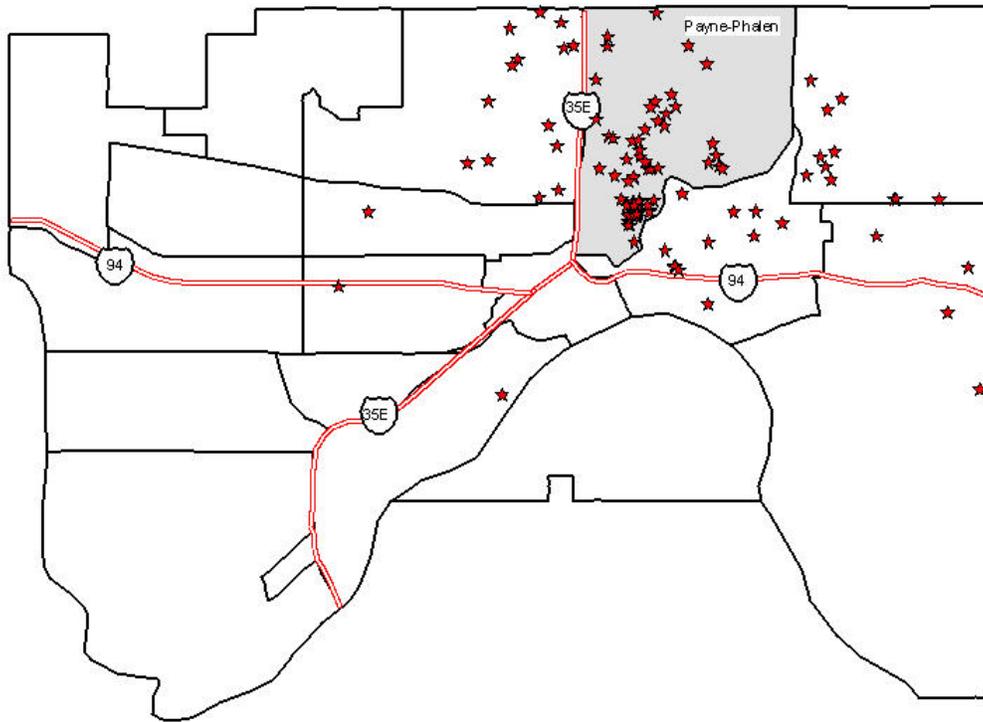
4. GIS map: Building Future Leaders, residence of program participants (N=41)

24 students in the North End neighborhood



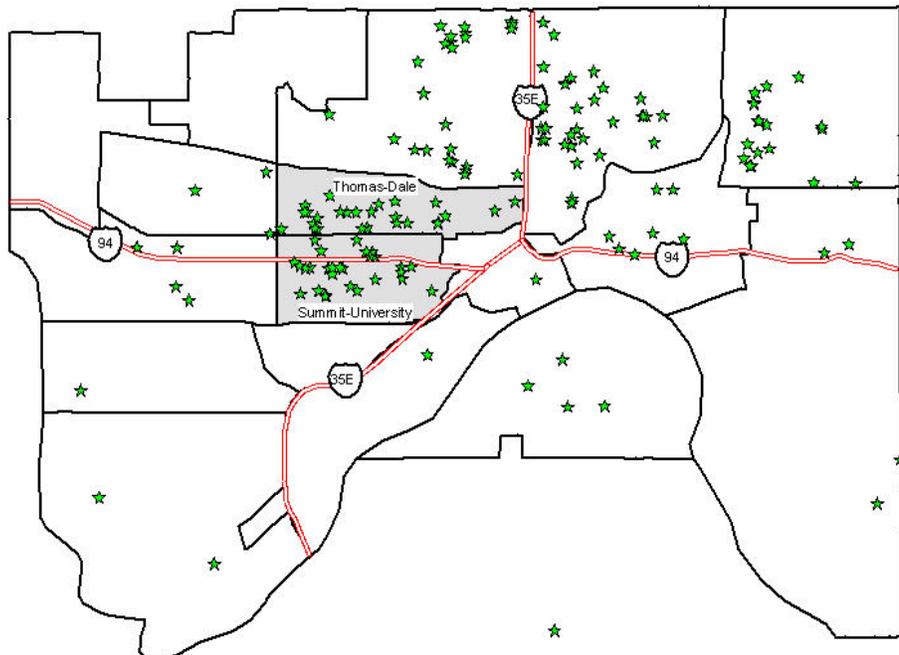
5. GIS map: East Side Heritage, residence of program participants (N=276)

169 students in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood



6. GIS map: Project Voice, residence of program participants (N=255)

33 students in the Thomas-Dale neighborhood
46 students in the Summit-University neighborhood



The differences between the projects may be a result of recruitment strategies used by each project. Because of their close partnership with North End Elementary, many BFL participants attended the neighborhood school and resided in area. East Side Heritage, though not closely aligned with a particular school, used a door-to-door recruitment approach. As a result, the program was more likely to recruit families who are neighborhood residents. Families learned about Project Voice in a variety of ways, such as referrals from partner organizations, flyers at local schools, and family events. As a result of these wide-reaching recruitment strategies, families who learned about the project may have been less likely to actually reside in the project's primary geographical areas of focus.

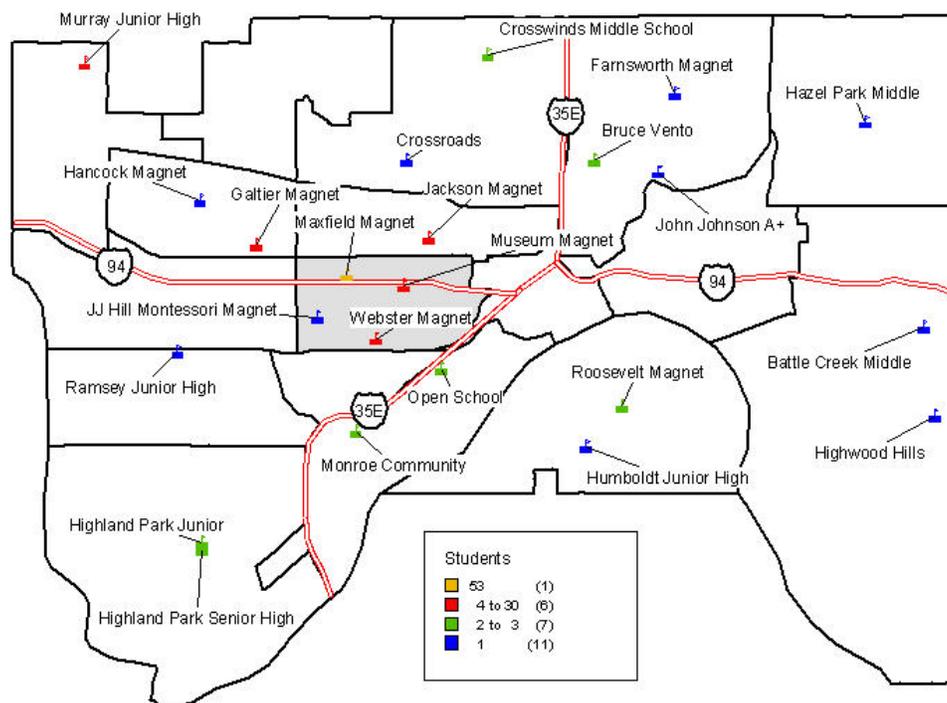
Schools attended

Combined, the projects provide service to youth who attend 86 different schools.

The name of the school the child attended was documented for most of the participating youth (89%). The 86 different schools included 53 elementary schools, 9 junior high schools, 14 high schools, and 6 alternative programs. Overall, the schools attended by the largest number of project participants were Barak and Michelle Obama Elementary School (N=58), Maxfield Elementary (N=58), Bruce Vento Elementary (N=48), Farnsworth Elementary (N=48), and Benjamin E. Mayes Elementary (N=44). A complete list of schools attended by project participants can be found in the appendix.

GIS mapping was also used to depict how many youth attend SPPS District schools within the neighborhoods targeted by each project, as well as in other neighborhoods throughout the city. Overall, BFL had participants enrolled in the fewest number of schools (N=7), when compared to both East Side Heritage (N=42) and Project Voice (N=25) (Figures 7-9). These diagrams give some indication of how difficult it may be for project staff, especially staff from East Side Heritage and Project Voice, to build relationships in all the schools attended by participants. Many of the schools included in these figures are attended by fewer than five students, posing challenges to build relationships within each school and work effectively with school staff to help parents address concerns around grade, attendance, and student behavior.

9. GIS map: Project Voice, location of school attended



The broad geographic reach of these projects may pose some logistical and programmatic challenges, specifically regarding transportation, considering where and when to offer services to youth who are busing outside of the neighborhood for school, and in determining how project staff can effectively partner with a large number of schools.

School transfers

Although the database included a field for program staff to report whether a school transfer occurred during the past academic year, this information was reported for only one-quarter (26%) of the youth served. Within this subset of youth, a total of 46 participants transferred to a different school within the past 3 months, while 11 transferred to a different school within the last academic year (Figure 10). The reasons identified for school transfers including the child/family moving (45%) and the family choosing a different school or academic setting (9%). None of the youth were identified as transferring to a different school due to expulsion or repeated behavioral concerns.

10. Students who transferred to a new school in the last academic year

Last school transfer	Project Voice (N=263)		BFL (N=69)		East Side Heritage (N=421)		All projects (N=753)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In last academic year	2	1%	0	0%	9	2%	11	1%
In last 3 months	35	13%	10	15%	1	<1%	46	6%
None	16	6%	7	10%	112	27%	135	18%
Missing/Unknown	210	80%	52	75%	299	71%	561	75%

11. Reason for student transfers

Reasons for transfer	Project Voice (N=37)		BFL (N=10)		East Side Heritage (N=10)		All Projects (N=57)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Child/family moved	18	50%	1	9%	7	64%	26	45%
Family chose different school/ academic	5	14%	0	0%	0	0%	5	9%
None given	3	8%	0	0%	0	0%	3	5%
Unknown	1	8%	9	55%	3	9%	13	23%

Needs of youth and families at intake

The demographic information gathered by each project indicates many youth and families served by each project have low incomes. In addition, baseline reading assessment data and MCA-II reading and math achievement level scores (described in later sections in the report), demonstrate many youth, even children in Kindergarten, are falling behind at school. Three overarching concerns impacting youth and families in the targeted neighborhoods emerged during the key informant interviews conducted with project staff and stakeholders.

Current economic climate

Changes in the state and national economy have had a major impact on the stability of families who live in the three neighborhoods targeted through these interventions. Stakeholders noted housing and employment as major issues that families are concerned about. A number of project staff noted that families are struggling to meet their basic needs. While each project can provide some support to families in crisis situations, none

are equipped with the resources to offer emergency assistance, job training, or housing support to families.

Transportation

Each project does have a primary site where a number of resources are available to parents. However, not all programs are run out of the host site, and some are less accessible by major bus routes than others. One stakeholder pointed out that the transportation issue is further complicated by students attending a variety of schools, which may not be located in their neighborhoods. All projects offer a combination of school-based and community-based services. However, it can be challenging to determine when and where to offer programming so that it is most accessible to youth.

East Side Heritage does have a van it can use for activities, or to provide transportation to specific services. Other options, such as taxi vouchers or bus cards, can help families have the financial resources they need to get to various services. However, the development of better public transportation system is a broader issue in the city and Twin Cities Metro.

Community connections

A number of project stakeholders also felt there are a number of neighborhood residents who are isolated from the community, meaning they do not know their neighbors, are unaware of community events or resources, and are unconnected to available services . It is important to note that while there are community strengths for residents to draw upon, a few stakeholders noted residents generally seemed less engaged in their neighborhood and the community. This led to not only lower levels of support for adults within the community, but fewer adult role models who are informally involved in the lives of youth. A few stakeholders saw the work of the projects as a way to strengthen the community and engage residents.

Concerns assessed at intake

Project Voice uses a comprehensive intake process that asks the family to identify the reasons they were interested in being referred to partner organizations, and for the project coordinator to identify risk factors they heard when meeting the family for an intake appointment. This information was not consistently collected by the other projects.

Youth behavior at school and school performance were common concerns at intake for Project Voice participants. Information about the reasons families sought referral was available for approximately half of the youth served (49%-60%). Among these families, parents/caregivers most often sought services because they had “high” or

“moderate” concerns about their child’s behavior at school (55%) or school performance (51%). Fewer parents had “high” or “moderate” concerns about homelessness/unstable housing (31%), fighting (30%), truancy (15%), or the child being at risk of out-of-home placement (8%).

12. Reasons for referral: Project Voice (N=128-159)

Reasons for referral	N	“High/ Moderate concern”		Low concern		Not a concern	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Behavioral concern at school	159	87	55%	23	15%	49	31%
School performance	143	73	51%	17	12%	53	37%
Behavioral concern at home	147	53	36%	31	21%	63	43%
Homelessness/unstable housing	144	45	31%	13	9%	86	60%
Fighting	145	43	30%	23	16%	79	55%
Truancy	139	21	15%	23	17%	95	68%
Child is at risk of out-of-home placement	128	10	8%	9	7%	109	85%

A need for increased access to community services and other types of family support was also identified as a concern for many Project Voice families at intake. The project coordinator also assessed the needs of the family for approximately one-third of the youth served by the program (31%-34%). Among these families, staff most often had “High/Moderate concern” that the parent had difficulty accessing community activities/services (71%), difficulty experiencing family support (53%), or experienced homelessness during the past six months (41%)

13. Staff concerns at intake: Project Voice (N=83-90)

Risk Factors	N	“High/ Moderate concern”		Low concern		Not a concern	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Parent had difficulty accessing community activities/services	83	59	71%	15	18%	9	11%
Parent had difficulty accessing family support	87	46	53%	6	7%	35	40%
Family experienced homelessness in the past 6 months	90	37	41%	2	2%	51	57%
Family and/or child experienced neglect	87	9	10%	7	8%	71	82%
Family and/or child experienced abuse	86	8	9%	5	6%	73	85%
Family experienced chemical abuse in the past 6 months	85	5	6%	0	0%	80	94%

Service utilization data

Service utilization was assessed using data from each project's Access database. Project Voice, the first project to have a completed database, captured service utilization information for youth served for two years (June 2008-June 2010). Shorter data collection windows were available for East Side Heritage (January 2009-June 2010) and Building Future Leaders (February 2009-December 2009).

It should be noted that across all three projects, some services are also provided directly to parents through family events, one-on-one meetings, case management, and Parent Power. This information was tracked and reported to the Collaborative, but not captured in a consistent manner in the database across all projects. The data analyzed in this section of the report include hours for services provided directly to youth or time spent with parents where the participating child is the primary focus. Service utilization data were tracked for only two programs involved in Building Future Leaders (NdCAD and Chosen to Achieve). East Side Heritage and Project Voice both developed processes to track and report service utilization data. This report summarizes only the data entered by the programs into the Access database, and does not incorporate any additional service data that may have been tracked separately by individual programs or projects.

Service intensity

Because few youth have been formally discharged from each project, the service utilization data refers to the total number of hours received by youth through June 2010. These totals may increase among youth who continue to receive services. All Project Voice and Building Future Leaders participants had at least some service utilization data available for all youth in the database, while these data were available for 317 (75%) of the youth included in the East Side Heritage database. Service utilization data for Building Future Leaders were captured and reported only for youth who received services from NdCAD and Chosen to Achieve.

The total number of service hours youth have received from each project varied considerably, ranging from 1 to over 800 hours. About one-third of the youth enrolled in East Side Heritage (36%) and half of the youth enrolled in Project Voice (50%) received no more than 10 hours of services through June 2010. The average number of hours received per child was similar for youth enrolled in East Side Heritage (mean=59 hours) and Project Voice (mean=63 hours). Because Building Future Leaders reported service utilization for only two of the programs youth participated in (NdCAD and Chosen to Achieve), their data are incomplete and not included in this figure.

Service utilization hours were also reported separately for 79 parents who received services at East Side. These parents received up to 132 hours of service, with over half (54%) receiving up to 10 hours. Separate tracking of parent services was not completed by Project Voice, as it was not identified as a data collection priority when the project Access data base was first developed.

14. Total number of service hours received by youth, through June 2010

	East Side Heritage (N=317)		Project Voice (N=263)	
	N	%	N	%
1-10 hours	98	31%	132	50%
11-40 hours	104	33%	81	31%
41-80 hours	44	14%	14	5%
81-120 hours	30	9%	2	<1%
121-240 hours	25	8%	5	2%
241-480 hours	8	3%	20	8%
Over 480 hours	8	3%	9	3%

Program involvement

In each of the three projects, youth can participate in a variety of services from the partner organizations. The degree to which youth are involved with each program and service vary based on the needs of the child, the availability of services, and level of coordination (i.e., ability to refer youth) across the partners.

PACE, the mentoring program involved with East Side Heritage, served a larger percentage of youth than the other project partners (50% of youth served, compared with 17-27% for most partners) (Figure 15). This seems to be due, in part, to the popularity of the Basketball Academy, which was attended by 170 youth (Appendix Figure A3).

Hallie Q. Brown, which is the physical home for the Hub office and Project Voice, provided services to all but one youth participant. A number of services are provided through the Hallie Q. Brown Center, including intake for most youth and families, Family Night events, transportation, and some case management services (Appendix Figure A3). As a result, most youth have received at least a small amount of services from that partner, while most of the other partners served up to one-quarter of the youth enrolled. Building Future Leaders only reported service utilization data for two of its partners, but it is interesting that none of the youth received services from both organizations.

15. Percentage of youth receiving services from each partner, by project

	N	%
East Side Heritage (N=421)		
PACE	202	50%
AAAL	112	27%
Merrick Community Services	95	23%
NdCAD	70	17%
Cultural Wellness Center	1	<1%
Project Voice (N=262)		
Hallie Q. Brown	261	100%
Walker Music West	64	24%
NdCAD	62	24%
Cultural Wellness Center	53	20%
Project Kofi	53	20%
YWCA	30	11%
Building Future Leaders (N=76)		
Chosen to Achieve	30	39%
NdCAD	46	61%

16. Service utilization, by project partner

	N	%	Average (hours)	Range
East Side Heritage (N=421)			68	1-804
PACE	202	50%	13	1-96
AAAL	112	27%	33	3-108
Merrick Community Services	95	23%	82	2-535
NdCAD	70	17%	34	6-97
Cultural Wellness Center	1	<1%	27	-
Project Voice (N=262)			63	1-846
Hallie Q. Brown	261	100%	3	1-42
Walker Music West	64	24%	6	1-23
NdCAD	62	24%	20	1-60
Cultural Wellness Center	53	20%	62	1-291
Project Kofi	53	20%	6	1-44
YWCA	30	11%	227	1-724
Building Future Leaders (N=76)			8	2-27
Chosen to Achieve	30	39%	6	2-6
NdCAD	46	61%	9	2-27

Note: Many of the agencies above may offer more than one type of service.

The utilization of the different services provided by each partner was also tracked and reported to demonstrate how the intensity of services may vary. For example, a total of 46 East Side Heritage youth participated in at least one family event through Merrick Community Center and received an average of 4 hours of that type of service through the project. The 53 participants who were involved in the Boy's Group also offered through Merrick received much higher intensity services (an average of 167 hours of service, with individual involvement ranging from 40 to 535 hours of service). These detailed tables can be found in the appendix (Appendix Figure A3-A4).

Service coordination

Few of the youth received services from three or more partners within each project. Using information captured from each project's Access database, some trends in service coordination were observed and are described below. Across all the projects, most of the youth were served by one or two project partners, rather than receiving a full range of services. Using the data available, it is not clear how well the utilization of services

aligns with the actual needs of youth and families. Additional evaluation activities could be used in the future to determine whether most participating youth are typically interested in one type of support, or whether there are barriers (i.e., transportation, limited program capacity, limited communication/coordination between partners) that impede service coordination.

Most East Side Heritage youth participants (63%) received services from one partner (Merrick Community Service, PACE, AAAL, or NdCAD) or a combination of two partners (25%). Over 40 percent of the youth who are East Side Heritage participants receive only mentoring services through PACE. Fewer youth (13%) receive services from at least 3 of the 4 project partners. It is interesting to note that although most outreach and project coordination activities are done by staff at Merrick Community Services, not all youth receive direct services from that partner.

17. East Side Heritage: Service utilization among youth participants (N=317)

	N	%
Youth served by one program	208	66%
PACE	135	43%
Merrick Community Services	23	7%
NdCAD	12	4%
AAAL	38	12%
Youth served by two programs	70	22%
AAAL & Merrick Community Center	18	6%
AAAL & PACE	19	6%
Merrick Community Services & PACE	11	4%
NdCAD & PACE	9	3%
Merrick Community Services & NdCAD	6	2%
AAAL & NdCAD	7	2%
Youth served by three programs	24	8%
AAAL, Merrick Community Services, NdCAD	10	3%
Merrick Community Services, NdCAD, PACE	9	3%
AAAL, Merrick Community Services, PACE	3	1%
AAAL, NdCAD, & PACE	1	<1%
AAAL, Cultural Wellness Center, NdCAD	1	<1%
Youth served by four (all) programs	15	5%
Merrick Community Services, AAAL, NdCAD, PACE	15	5%

As described previously, services data were only reported by two Building Future Leaders Partners, NdCAD and Chosen to Achieve. Youth enrolled in the project may also have received services from the Cultural Wellness Center or Ramsey County Human Services. Although the information presented in this report is incomplete, it is important to note that youth enrolled in the project were only involved in NdCAD or Chosen to Achieve (Figure 18). None of the 76 youth received services from both programs.

18. Building Future Leaders: Service utilization among youth participants (N=76)

	N	%
Youth served by one program	76	100%
NdCAD	46	61%
Chosen to Achieve	30	40%

Project Voice uses a centralized intake process with a single care coordinator based out of Hallie Q. Brown. A majority of Project Voice youth participants (52%) receive services from Hallie Q. Brown and other partner, while approximately one-third of the youth (31%) received services from only one program (Hallie Q. Brown). Although rare, there are a few children who are engaged in services offered by all project partners.

19. Project Voice: Service utilization among youth participants (N=262)

	N	%
Youth served by one program	80	31%
Hallie Q. Brown	80	31%
Youth served by two programs	136	52%
Hallie Q. Brown, Cultural Wellness Center	42	16%
Hallie Q. Brown, Project Kofi	40	15%
Hallie Q. Brown, Walker West Music	26	10%
Hallie Q. Brown, NdCAD	26	10%
Hallie Q. Brown YWCA	2	>1%
Youth served by three programs	16	6%
Hallie Q. Brown, NdCAD, Walker West Music	5	2%
Hallie Q. Brown, NdCAD, Project Kofi	3	1%
Hallie Q. Brown, Cultural Wellness Center, Walker West Music	2	>1%
Other combinations	6	2%
Youth served by four programs	25	10%
Hallie Q. Brown, NdCAD, Walker West Music, YWCA	21	8%
Hallie Q. Brown, Cultural Wellness Center, Project Kofi, Walker West Music	2	>1%
Other combinations	2	>1%
Youth served by five or more programs	5	2%
Hallie Q. Brown, NdCAD, Project, Kofi, Walker West Music, YWCA	2	>1%
Other combinations	3	1%

Participant outcomes

Reasons for discharge

Very few of the youth were formally discharged from any of the projects. Among the 41 youth who were discharged from Project Voice and Building Future Leaders, their involvement with the project ended due to successful completion of the program (39%), the child moving out of the area (32%), a family crisis (2%), or other unknown/undefined reasons (27%) (Figure 20). East Side Heritage did not formally discharge any youth from the project. The low number of discharged tracking during the first two years of the project may indicate the need for greater administrative support to update the database, or a need for each project to establish a definition for discharge that can be used consistently. There may be some hesitancy among staff to categorize youth and families as discharged, as they want to services and support can continue to be available to youth and families in the community.

20. Reasons for youth discharge from project

Reasons for discharge	Project Voice (N=26)		BFL (N=15)		All Projects ¹ (N=41)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Successful program completion	4	15%	12	80%	16	39%
Moved out of area	12	46%	1	7%	13	32%
Family crisis	1	4%	0	0%	1	2%
Child stopped attending without explanation	2	8%	2	13%	4	10%
Undefined/unknown reasons	7	27%	0	0%	7	17%

Note: No discharges were reported by East Side Heritage.

Experiences of youth and families

Qualitative data from key informant interviews with project staff

A series of key informant interviews were conducted from staff and stakeholders from each project and reported to the Collaborative in an interim report earlier this year (March 2010). During those interviews, staff and stakeholders were asked about their observations of ways youth and caregivers had been impacted by the services they receive.

A number of stakeholders felt it was too early to know how well the projects were working. While they felt they were doing the right types of activities to support youth and families, they did not know whether their work was going to ultimately result in academic gains for children and an improved home environment for the child and family. While the stakeholders agreed these were important goals to focus on, there was some concern that these outcomes are difficult to change and the less tangible factors that also influence school achievement and family stability are challenging to measure.

Although it was too early to report evaluation outcomes for youth and parents enrolled in each project, a number of program stakeholders described changes they were seeing in the individual youth and parents they work with. Some of the common outcomes observed by staff across all three projects included a greater sense of hope and optimism among youth and parents, improvements in students' academic achievement, and greater parent involvement and engagement in the community.

Staff from each project also gave examples of positive changes they had noticed among youth and parent participants. According to East Side Heritage staff, parents who participate present themselves differently, some have gotten jobs, and others have become more engaged with the community center by volunteering their time. Stakeholders also noted children making academic strides as a result of their involvement with Sankofa and the mentoring program, PACE. BFL stakeholders felt they were starting to see greater parent involvement in schools, as well as youth developing a greater sense of pride as they learn how to read. Similarly, Project VOICE stakeholders identified parents becoming more involved in their child's school and engaged in accessing resources to support their family. Some stakeholders also gave examples of students behaving better in the classroom, developing new interests and hobbies, and improving peer social skills.

If we can have kids excited about who they are and what they are learning, we've come a long way. If [youth have] a sense of awe and an ability to explore freely – that's what we're working towards. We're getting there. (project stakeholder)

As we hear stories about youth and parents, there is a lot of value that comes through self-confidence and self-awareness. That allows parents to navigate the system more effectively, and likely lead to other outcomes...those are the things that are harder to measure and quantify. (project stakeholder)

A few stakeholders pointed out that while the partners from each project are working together to help facilitate changes among youth and parents, the actions of families lead to changes in outcomes.

Project staff and stakeholders reported observing positive changes among youth and parents. Across all three projects, program staff observed youth making gains in their reading levels, due primarily to their involvement with Sankofa. Other changes in youth outcomes included better classroom behavior, development of new hobbies/interests, and improved peer skills. Project staff also noted a number of positive changes they had noticed among parent participants, including increased self-confidence, involvement/engagement in their child's school, and self-efficacy and engagement in accessing community resources. East Side Heritage noted some parents had gotten jobs, while others were volunteering more of their time at the community center. A few stakeholders were clear that their role was to facilitate growth through the services they provide, but true changes come through the actions of youth and families.

Qualitative data from parent and youth focus groups

Focus groups can be an important data collection tool used to explore the impact of services, especially when a program is new. Information from focus groups and other qualitative data sources can be used to not only understand the perspectives of a representative group of program participants, but to define short-term outcomes and changes participants experience that may be important to measure through future evaluation activities.

While it is important to note that the focus group participants are likely to be parents who were among the most involved, and likely the most satisfied with the services they received, the comments made by parents give a voice to the experiences of youth and families who participate in each program. Their comments describe how their involvement with each project leads to the individual changes that, in the Tri-Project logic model, are expected to ultimately lead to greater academic success among youth and reduced risk of out of home placement. Some of the key changes parents noticed in themselves and in their children included: feelings of empowerment, greater community involvement, increased comfort advocating in schools, increased knowledge and interest in culture/heritage, and changes in youth attitudes about reading.

Parents who participated in the focus groups had overwhelmingly positive things to say about each project. While it is important to note that the participants of the focus groups are likely to be parents who were among the most involved, and likely the most satisfied with their involvement, the comments made by parents give a voice to the experiences of youth and families who participate in each program. Their comments describe how their involvement with each project leads to the individual changes that, in the Tri-Project logic model, ultimately lead to greater academic success among youth and improved safety.

Overall, focus group participants had a hard time isolating the different components of each program. It was difficult to untangle what elements of the program the parents and youth found most helpful, with the exception of Sankofa, which often stood out a separate component in the parent and youth’s mind. It is unclear if all of the parents who participated in the focus groups actually had youth participating in the SPCC-funded part of the Tri-projects. It is possible that parents who participated in other parts of the Tri-projects may have been included in the focus group pool. The same is true about the youth group.

Common themes

The emphasis placed on cultural was important to parents and youth

I like that they have a cultural piece. They help [youth] identify with themselves. They use cultural materials that help with reading and spelling. They use books that have images that look like the child. That helps the child become more interested and want to learn. The child feels more empowered. (parent)

My children go to school where they don’t see many faces like theirs. It gives them a sense of pride, because they are learning from someone that looks like them. (parent)

The Cultural Wellness Center takes us back to where we came from so we can move forward to build a healthier community. It teaches us about our heritage, it teaches us about re-building a healthier community, it teaches about self, a map to wellness, self development. It just teaches us to be what we are supposed to be. (parent)

Nearly every focus group participant praised the programs for being developed with culture interwoven in each element of the program. Youth noted that there was something unique about the program, one noting that none of his teachers at school looked like him, and that it was nice that the program staff “looked” like him. Parents echoed this and noted that the program gave their children positive role models and positive information about African-American culture.

Parents became engaged in the community

The programs here like Family night are teaching us to be community-minded- which is important. Somewhere along the line, there became a big disconnect. A lot of people are not community-minded anymore. (parent)

A number of parents identified feelings of empowerment, self-confidence, and self-efficacy that made them want to become increasingly involved in their child's education and in the community. For many parents, Parent Power played an integral part in helping them understand why reading is important to their child's success in school and how to effectively communicate with teachers about their child's reading skills.

Parents and youth were more engaged in the child's school

There was a period when my son stopped liking school. He used to hate it. It was really bad. When I got him in the programs like the Heritage Center, Sankofa and all these programs I am seeing zest in him again like he wants to just reach. That makes me want to be more involved. I just want to help him. I am glad they are there for them. It is so important to have something to encourage them and to push them and make them want to thrive and succeed. They need that. (parent)

For me the program helped me in a number of ways. It helped me and my son connect with the faculty and the teachers. (My son) had a hard time understanding what was expected of him. I had a hard time trying to understand what their roles were. ...The program helped me to establish a connection to his teachers and social workers. (parent)

I feel empowered not to leave it up to my child's school or his teachers. (parent)

Many of the parents felt they could communicate with the schools better since working with the Tri-projects. They consistently mentioned that they felt empowered and better versed in how to approach school officials and what their role was as a parent (in their child's education).

Youth had a less favorable outlook about school. Many of the youth felt that their teachers did not support them. Some felt that all the teachers cared about was "the period ending so they could go home." A number of youth discussed that they felt their teachers were not there to help them in school or would be irritated with them if they asked them a question, so they chose not to engage or build relationships with some of their teachers. Youth felt that their schools generally do not care about their success and may be there just to punish them.

Parents feel supported by the community, project staff

It is more of a close-knit group. You get one-on-one attention. (parent)

In general, you have your community behind you, supporting you. It creates an opportunity for someone who knows [about the topic] to go with you and help you better represent yourself. (parent)

Parents frequently noted that the program identified and got them connected to different community agencies, ones that they never had even heard about. Parents felt that having these additional community resources gave parents additional places to go and seek help. They also mentioned that knowing *how* to access resources and ask for help was something very useful they gained through Parent Power and other program elements.

Youth improved their reading skills

When [my grandson] first started the program he couldn't read – he could not pronounce or breakdown his words [e.g., the, which, and]. Sankofa showed him how to do all this. Now all he does is read; he loves reading now. He is reading well above his level. He's in 2nd grade now and is reading at a 6th grade level. He has become a better person. He has changed his attitude. (grandparent)

Parents frequently mentioned that Sankofa and NdCad made a strong impact on their child's life. They mentioned how it improved their reading skills, grades and confidence. Increased self-esteem was specifically mentioned a number of times when parents were asked to explain what changes they saw in their youth due to Sankofa. A number of parents also mentioned how Sankofa had indirectly affected their families. Of the youth who participated in Sankofa, each offered positive feedback about the program and mentioned that they felt that they could read much better while going through the program.

Projects overcame a key barrier to participation by providing transportation

The program will come and get us and take us back home, even if my mom is working. (youth)

Parents often mentioned that transportation can be a huge barrier. Because the programs offered transportation services, both parent and youth felt that they were able to participate in more events because they did not need to figure out how to get to an event if they did not have personal transportation or cash to pay for the bus. Youth found it to be helpful that there are people who will help them get to a group or activity, especially in the winter when it is cold and gets dark early.

A few parents offered suggestions about ways the programs could be improved.

Some parents were approached directly about the project, while others saw a flyer. Some of the youth mentioned they heard about the program from a neighbor or friend, while some parents stated that they found about the Tri-projects from the school.

Many of the parents expressed that they wished there was more space available in the program they participated in. Some mentioned that they wanted to have their family member or neighbor participate in the program, too, but they were unsure if there was enough room and if they allowing new participants.

A number of parents felt more could be done to let other families in the community know about each project. Parents appreciated the transportation assistance provided by the projects, but some felt more was needed.

Not all focus group participants seemed aware of the array of services available through each project. As parents shared their experiences during the focus group, most were familiar with the services provided by NdCAD (Sankofa and Parent Power). However, parents also discussed agencies and services that other parents were not aware of. This may indicate that parents may not have received information about all the services the partners provide, or may need ongoing reminders of the types of resources they can access in the community.

Reading assessment results – Sankofa participants

The reading levels of youth who participate in the Sankofa reading program at the beginning and end of the program using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Guided Reading Level (GRL) test. These comprehensive assessments are administered by program staff to assess specific areas that contribute to reading skills and comprehension, including phonemic awareness, letter cognition, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and reading engagement. The tests determine the highest level to which a child can read with a minimum of 90 percent accuracy and 70 percent comprehension. The Saint Paul Public School district has developed a crosswalk describing expected DRL/GRA scores at specific time intervals within each grade level, allowing programs to determine whether the child's reading level is below, meets, or is above the expected reading level for the appropriate time interval.

A total of 195 youth participated in Sankofa, including 81 youth from East Side Heritage, 64 from Project Voice, and 50 from Building Future Leaders. A majority of the youth (80%) who participated in Sankofa were in grades Kindergarten through 4th Grade (Figure 21). Few youth were in 7th or 8th Grade (1% and 2% of youth participants, respectively).

21. Grade level of Sankofa participants at intake (N=195)

Grade	N	%
Kindergarten	26	13%
1	30	15%
2	28	15%
3	31	16%
4	38	20%
5	19	9%
6	17	10%
7	4	2%
8	2	1%

GRA and DRL were reported separately for all Sankofa participants, but, when used to report whether the child met, exceeded, or fell below their expected reading level as defined by SPPS, yielded very similar results. Therefore, this section of the report focuses only on the students' DRA assessment results. A total of 188 youth took part in a pre-program reading assessment, while fewer (N=141) also completed the assessment after completing the program.

Across most grade levels, more than half of the youth were reading below grade level when they began the Sankofa program. This was true even among early readers; half of all Kindergarten students (50%) and nearly three-quarters of all 1st Grade students (72%) were reading below grade level when the program began (Figure 22). The intake assessment data also indicate that over one-quarter of the students who were enrolled in the Sankofa program (28%) were reading above the level expected for their grade. However, when combined, 52 percent of all youth served were reading below the level expected for their grade level.

22. DRA Expected level by grade, at intake

Grade	N	Pre-test Expected Level		
		Above	Meets	Below
Kindergarten	26	8%	42%	50%
1	29	7%	21%	72%
2	25	36%	12%	52%
3	30	30%	17%	53%
4	36	36%	17%	47%
5	17	35%	59%	6%
6	19	58%	32%	11%
7	3	1	1	1
8	2	0	1	1
Total	187	28%	19%	52%

* Numbers are shown instead of percentages where N<10.

The number of youth reading above expected grade level increased somewhat at discharge. A total of 141 youth (75% of all program participants) completed the Sankofa program and final reading assessment. The total number of youth who read above the expected reading level increased from 53 at intake to 62 at discharge (Figure 23).

23. Percentage of Sankofa participants who read above, at, or below expected reading level at intake, discharge (N=187)

Expected level	DRA			
	Intake assessment		Discharge assessment	
	N	%	N	%
Above	53	28%	62	33%
Meets	36	19%	26	14%
Below	98	52%	53	28%
Assessment not completed	0	0%	46	25%

Improvements in reading levels were made by students in most grade levels. Across most grade levels, the percentage of youth who read at a level above or at their expected reading level increased (Figure 24). However, in some grade levels (Grades 3, 5, and 6) over one-third of the students who began the program did not complete the final reading

assessment. These missing data make it more difficult to assess outcomes among all youth served.

24. DRA Expected level by grade (N=187)

Grade	N	Reading level at intake			Reading level at discharge			
		Above	Meets	Below	Above	Meets	Below	Assessment not completed
Kindergarten	26	8%	42%	50%	27%	54%	4%	15%
1	29	7%	21%	72%	10%	17%	62%	10%
2	25	36%	12%	52%	40%	8%	48%	4%
3	30	30%	17%	53%	27%	63%	17%	47%
4	36	36%	17%	47%	47%	3%	25%	25%
5	17	35%	6%	59%	41%	0%	24%	35%
6	19	58%	11%	32%	42%	0%	16%	42%
7	3	1	1	1	2	0	0	1
8	2	-	1	1	0	-	-	0
Total	187	28%	19%	52%	33%	14%	28%	25%

* Numbers are shown instead of percentages where N<10.

Most Sankofa participants demonstrated improvements in reading skills. Overall, one-quarter of the youth who participated in Sankofa and were reading below or at their grade-appropriate reading level improved their skills to read at or above reading level at discharge. Although one-third of the participants (36%) continued to read at a level below that for their grade, most gained new reading skills as demonstrated by higher scores on the DRA/GRL assessment.

25. DRA/GRL Level Change and Pre-Post Expected Level Change (N=141)

Levels	Level Change		Pre-Post Expected Level Change				
	N	%	Maintained: Below expected reading level	Maintained: Meets expected reading level	Maintained: Above expected reading level	Reading level increased	Reading level decreased
Maintained	26	18%	4%	4%	10%	0%	1%
6 Levels	2	1%	0	0	0	2	0
5 Levels	3	2%	1	0	0	2	0
4 Levels	14	10%	4%	0%	1%	4%	1%
3 Levels	26	18%	6%	0%	4%	9%	0%
2 Levels	24	17%	4%	1%	5%	7%	0%
1 Level	46	34%	16%	3%	11%	2%	1%
Total	141	100%	36%	8%	31%	24%	2%

* *Fifty-four participants did not complete post-tests. This was not factored into the "Level Change" percentages.*

** *Under "Pre-Post Expected Level Change," numbers are shown instead of percentages where N<10.*

Evaluation participants

Staff from each project were responsible for recruiting youth for the evaluation and obtaining informed consent from the child's primary caregiver to allow the release of information from Ramsey County Human Services and the Saint Paul Public Schools district. The informed consent forms were developed in Fall 2009 and each project was asked to recruit as many families as possible, with a goal of obtaining consent for at least 50 youth.

Participants were included in the evaluation if they had signed informed consent forms and were also included as project participants in the project database prior to March 1, 2010. A total of 42 Project Voice and 50 East Side Heritage participants were included into the evaluation. Building Future Leaders submitted informed consent forms for eight participants, five of whom were not listed in the project database and one who had also been an active participant of another program. Because no project-specific analyses could be conducted for this small group, they were excluded from the outcome evaluation analyses.

Demographic characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the evaluation subgroup were comparable to those of the total population of youth served. Two-thirds of the youth who participated in the evaluation were male (62%) (Figure 26). Over half of the youth (55%) were 10 years of age or younger, and ranged in age from 3 years to 15 years old. Most of the youth (83%) attended a school in the Saint Paul Public School district. Youth from this subgroup were enrolled in 40 different schools at intake, with no more than five youth enrolled in any of the schools. One child was also home schooled. Only one student in the evaluation subgroup was formally discharged from one of the projects prior to June 1, 2010.

26. Evaluation subgroup: Youth demographic characteristics

	East Side Heritage (N=50)		Project Voice (N=42)		Combined (N=92)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender						
Male	29	58%	28	67%	57	62%
Female	21	42%	13	31%	34	37%
Missing/Unknown	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%
Race						
African-American	46	92%	39	93%	85	92%
Bi-/Multi-racial	0	0%	2	5%	2	2%
Missing/Unknown	4	8%	1	2%	5	5%
Age at intake						
0-5	2	4%	2	5%	4	4%
6-10	28	56%	19	45%	47	51%
11-14	15	30%	18	43%	33	36%
15-18	1	2%	1	2%	2	2%
Missing	4	8%	2	5%	6	7%
Type of school attended						
Saint Paul Public School	40	80%	36	86%	76	83%
Public school, not SPPS	3	6%	1	2%	4	4%
Charter school	4	8%	1	2%	5	5%
Missing	3	6%	4	10%	7	7%

Service utilization

Youth enrolled in the evaluation received varying levels of direct service through either project. Service utilization data were available for all 42 Project Voice youth (100%) and 43 East Side Heritage youth (86%) who were enrolled in the evaluation. On average, East Side Heritage participants received 104 hours of service, while Project Voice participants received somewhat more (127 hours). In both programs, the total number of service hours the child directly received varied considerably, with some youth receiving less than 10 hours while others received over 700 hours of service.

27. Service utilization, evaluation subgroup

	N	%	Average (hours)	Range
East Side Heritage	43	100%	104	3-733
AAAL	29	67%	34	3-96
NdCAD	29	67%	31	6-97
Merrick Community Services	20	47%	58	3-487
PACE	19	44%	19	1-81
Project Voice	42	100%	127	1-785
Hallie Q. Brown	41	98%	7	1-42
Walker Music West	19	45%	9	2-23
Cultural Wellness Center	12	29%	62	0-291
Project Kofi	12	29%	6	0-40
NdCAD	10	25%	14	2-38
YWCA	5	13%	248	1-724

Approximately one-third of the youth enrolled in the evaluation received services from three or more project partners. Among East Side Heritage participants, 30 percent of youth received services from three or four of the project partners. Seven of the youth enrolled in the evaluation did not have any direct service hours assigned to them in the Access database. Because this project typically enrolls youth by household, this may mean they are part of a household where a sibling or parent has received direct services. However, it is also possible that some direct service hours were not captured or entered into the project database. One-third of the Project Voice evaluation participants (33%) received services from three or more partners, with only one child receiving services from all six partners. As described in the service utilization section for all participants, Project Voice has a formalized intake process that has been used for the vast majority of project participants. Some of the youth enrolled in the evaluation have participated in the intake process, but have not received other direct services from the main project partners.

28. Service coordination, evaluation subgroup

	East Side Heritage (N=50)	Project Voice (N=42)
	N (%)	N (%)
No documentation of services	7 (14%)	0 (0%)
One program	12 (24%)	7 (17%)
Two programs	16 (32%)	21 (50%)
Three programs	8 (16%)	6 (14%)
Four programs	7 (14%)	3 (7%)
Five programs	N/A	4 (10%)
Six programs	N/A	1 (2%)

Note: Youth participants from East Side Heritage can participate in services from a maximum of four partner programs, while Project Voice has six active program partners.

Youth outcomes

Reading assessment scores

A total of 20 youth, 15 East Side and 5 Project Voice participants, who were enrolled in the evaluation participated in the Sankofa program. These Sankofa participants ranged in grade level from Kindergarten to 8th Grade. When assessment results were compared for the 16 youth with pre-post data available, the number of youth who exceeded the expected grade-appropriate reading level increased from four at intake to nine at discharge (Figure 29).

Overall, the expected grade-appropriate reading level category (below expectations, meets expectations, or above expectations) improved for one-quarter (25%) of the youth served, while others maintained the same level (50%) and the achievement category for one student declined (5%). On average, Sankofa participants increased their reading and comprehension skills an average of 1.9 DRA levels, with some youth increasing their DRA levels by as many as four levels. Among the 16 youth with pre-post data available, only two youth, one in 5th and another in 8th grade, did not achieve any gains in DRA levels.

29. Evaluation subgroup: changes in reading level, by Sankofa participant (N=20)

Expected level	DRA			
	Pre-test		Post-test	
	N	%	N	%
Above	4	20%	9	45%
Meets	8	40%	2	10%
Below	8	40%	5	25%
Unknown	0	0%	4	20%

Involvement in child-serving systems

Caregivers of 80 youth (40 from East Side Heritage and 40 from Project Voice) signed release forms allowing the Ramsey County Human Services Department to release information describing the types of services the child and family had accessed. The Ramsey County Human Services Department provided descriptive information summarizing the types of services each child and his/her family received prior to, and while involved in the project. The October 2009 cutoff date was chosen by the County, as it is the point when many youth began receiving project services. Most families (86%) had received financial assistance from the County at some point, but fewer (48%) received this assistance after becoming involved in the project (Figure 30). Overall, few of the youth were involved with youth delinquency, children’s mental health, adoption/guardianship, or developmental disabilities services.

30. Involvement with Ramsey County child serving systems

	Involved prior to October 2009		Involved after October 2009		Involved at any point (through June 30, 2010)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Financial assistance	74	86%	42	48%	74	86%
Child protection	27	31%	17	20%	34	39%
Delinquency	5	6%	2	2%	6	7%
Children’s mental health services	2	2%	1	1%	3	3%
Adoption/Guardianship	2	2%	0	0%	2	2%
Developmental disabilities services	1	1%	1	1%	2	2%

Note: Youth involved with the juvenile justice system, including All Children Excel.

Data from the Ramsey County Human Services Department was analyzed to determine how many youth entered the child protection system or were placed out of the home after receiving project services. These data simply confirm that a case has been opened for the child's family. The type of issue that led to involvement in the child protection system was not available from the County for the purposes of this evaluation. Without additional information, it is difficult to assess how the specific activities of each project contributed to the prevention of potential child protection involvement or out of home placements.

New child protection cases were opened for 10 youth, with only one of these children having been involved with the child protection system in the past. One-third of the youth who were enrolled in the evaluation were involved with the child protection system prior to intake. As of June 1, 2010, child protection cases were open for only seven youth.

As of June 1, 2010, none of the youth were residing in an out-of-home placement setting. A total of nine youth had a history of at least one out of the home placement prior to their involvement with the project. Only two children were placed out of the home for brief stays (1 day and 3 days) after receiving services.

31. Child protection involvement, out of home placements

	East Side Heritage (N=45)		Project Voice (N=40)	
	N	%	N	%
Child protection status				
Open child protection case prior to intake	16	36%	13	33%
Open child protection case at intake	3	7%	3	8%
New case opened during first 6 months of service	0	0%	6	15%
New case opened after six months of service	4 ^a	9%	0	0%
Currently involved with child protection (June 1, 2010)	3	7%	4	10%
Out of home placement status				
Out of home placement prior to intake	4	9%	5	13%
Out of home placement at intake	0	0%	3	8%
Out of home placement during first 6 months of services	0	0%	1 ^b	3%
Out of home placement after 6 months of services (through June 1, 2010)	1 ^c	2%	0	0%

^a One of these children had been involved with child protection prior to intake.

^b Child was in an out of home placement for 3 days.

^c Child was in an out of home placement for 1 day.

Academic outcomes

Attendance, suspension, and MCA-II scores were requested for 78 youth (46 East Side Heritage and 32 Project Voice participants) whose caregivers gave consent for the Saint Paul Public School District to release this information. Because both projects enroll youth throughout the academic year, enrollment cutoff points were established to determine which academic year would be used as a baseline measure. Information from the past academic year was used as a baseline for all youth enrolled in a project between the close of the academic year and calendar year (June 15-December) while information from the student's current academic year was used for all youth enrolled on or after January 1st. Attendance and suspension data were provided by the District for the 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10 academic years. However, baseline and follow up data were not available for all youth because of the date of their enrollment into the project or because they were not enrolled in a school in the SPPS District.

School attendance

Rates of attendance were calculated for all youth participants who were enrolled for at least half of the semester (90 days or more) within the SPPS District. Most students were enrolled for the full academic year (173 or 175 days). To assess potential differences in attendance, a threshold of 10 missed days of school during the academic year (94% attendance rate) was used.

When data from all youth were examined, attendance rates were available for 42 youth prior to their involvement with either East Side Heritage or Project Voice, and 51 youth after they had been enrolled in the project at least four months. Approximately half of the youth had attended school 94 percent of days enrolled or more prior to (52%) and after (53%) becoming involved with the project.

32. Evaluation subgroup – school attendance

	Prior to project involvement (N=42)		After project involvement (N=51)	
	N	%	N	%
Attended 94% or more of days enrolled	22	52%	27	53%
Attended 90%-94% of days enrolled	10	24%	14	28%
Attended less than 90% of days enrolled	10	24%	19	20%

Matched attendance data were available for 32 youth (17 East Side Heritage and 15 Project Voice participants). Among East Side Heritage participants, the number of youth who attended at least 94 percent of days enrolled increased after being involved with the project from 9 to 10 students (Figure 33). Similarly, the number of youth from Project Voice who attended school at least 94 percent of days enrolled increased from 6 to 7. Among these youth, on average, students attended school 93 percent of days enrolled both prior to and following their enrollment in the project. Data from a larger cohort of youth are needed in order to determine whether any changes in attendance are significant.

33. Evaluation subgroup – matched school attendance results

	Prior to project involvement		After project involvement	
	N	%	N	%
East Side Heritage (N=17)				
Attended 94% or more of days enrolled	9	53%	10	59%
Attended less than 94% of days enrolled	8	47%	7	41%
Project Voice (N=15)				
Attended 94% or more of days enrolled	6	40%	7	47%
Attended less than 94% of days enrolled	9	60%	8	53%

School suspensions

Most of the youth who participated in the evaluation were not suspended from school prior to (71%) or after (77%) their involvement with the project (Figure 34). A total of 12 youth had been suspended at least once prior to becoming involved in the project, as were 12 youth after being involved with the project. No children were suspended more than four times during an academic year.

34. Evaluation subgroup – school suspensions

	Prior to project involvement (N=42)		After project involvement (N=52)	
	N	%	N	%
No suspensions	30	71%	40	77%
One suspension	9	21%	5	5%
Two suspensions	2	5%	6	6%
Three suspensions	0	0%	1	2%
Four suspensions	1	2%	0	0%

A majority of youth from both projects had not been suspended prior to or after their involvement with the project. Matched pre-post attendance data were available for 33 youth (17 East Side Heritage and 16 Project Voice participants). Among East Side Heritage participants, four students were suspended less often after being enrolled in the project while four were suspended more often (Figures 35-36). The data suggest Project Voice services have a positive effect in reducing the number of suspensions. Nine students from Project Voice avoided suspensions prior to and following their enrollment into the project, while fewer were suspended less often (N=5) or as often (N=2) after being enrolled in Project Voice. However, due to the small number of youth with pre-post data available, it is not known whether these changes are significant.

35. Evaluation subgroup – matched suspension data

	Prior to project involvement		After project involvement	
	N	%	N	%
East Side Heritage (N=17)				
Never suspended	13	76%	13	76%
Suspended once	3	18%	3	18%
Suspended more than once	1	6%	1	6%
Project Voice (N=16)				
Never suspended	9	56%	14	88%
Suspended once	5	31%	2	13%
Suspended more than once	2	13%	0	0%

36. Evaluation subgroup – changes in frequency of suspensions

	Youth with matched suspension data (N=33)	
	N	%
East Side Heritage (N=17)		
Never suspended	10	76%
Suspended less often after project involvement	4	18%
Suspended more often after project involvement	3	6%
Project Voice (N=16)		
Never suspended	9	56%
Suspended less often after project involvement	5	31%
Suspended as often after project involvement	2	13%
Suspended more often after project involvement	0	0%

Math and reading achievement

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA-II) scores were requested from the Saint Paul Public Schools District for 78 youth. Assessment scores were available for 38-47 youth from the 2008-09 and 2009-10 academic years. Youth who did not have assessment scores available were not in a grade level eligible for testing, did not attend a District school, or missed the assessment.

Most youth did not meet the expected achievement standards in reading or math.

MCA-II scores are placed into four categories: Exceeded standards; Met standards, Partially met standards, and Did not meet standards. Overall, less than one-quarter of the students met or exceeded standards in reading (18-25%) and math (18%) in both academic years.

37. MCA-II scores: Achievement level of students in 2009, 2010

	Reading		Math	
	2009	2010	2009	2010
Exceeded standard (E)	2 (5%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
Met standard (M)	5 (13%)	10 (21%)	7 (18%)	7 (16%)
Partially met standard (P)	9 (24%)	7 (15%)	11 (28%)	13 (30%)
Did not meet standard (D)	22 (58%)	28 (60%)	21 (54%)	23 (52%)
Total	38 (100%)	47 (100%)	39 (100%)	44 (100%)

When the results of individual students were compared over time, most maintained the same level of achievement over time. A total of 27 youth had matched baseline and follow-up MCA-II reading scores available, while fewer (N=24) had eligible math assessment scores. Approximately three-quarters of the students maintained the same achievement level in reading (78%) and math (71%). Among the youth who had test scores in a lower level after being involved with a project, achievement level in reading decreased from “Partially Met” to “Did not Meet” (N=2), “Met” to “Partially Met” (N=1), and “Exceeded” to “Met” (N=1), while achievement in math decreased from “Partially Met” to “Did not Meet” (N=3), “Met” to “Did not Meet” (N=1), and “Met” to “Partially Met” (N=2).

38. MCA-II matched scores: Changes in reading and math achievement level prior to and following project involvement

	Reading (N=27)		Math (N=24)	
	N	%	N	%
Achievement level improved	1	4%	1	4%
Achievement level maintained	21	78%	17	71%
<i>Did not meet standard (D)</i>	13	48%	8	30%
<i>Partially met standard (P)</i>	3	11%	5	19%
<i>Met standard (M)</i>	4	15%	4	15%
<i>Exceeded standard (E)</i>	1	4%	0	0%
Achievement level declined	4	15%	6	25%

Note: Among students demonstrating improvements as measured by changes in achievement level, reading achievement improved from “Partially Met” to “Exceeded” (N=1) and math achievement improved from “Did not meet” to “Partially Met” (N=1). Among youth demonstrating declines as measured by changes in achievement level, achievement level in reading decreased from “Partially Met” to “Did not Meet” (N=2), “Met” to “Partially Met” (N=1), and “Exceeded” to “Met” (N=1), while achievement in math decreased from “Partially Met” to “Did not Meet” (N=3), “Met” to “Did not Meet” (N=1), and “Met” to “Partially Met” (N=2).

Conclusions

The three projects funded by the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative were charged with the difficult task of developing ways to coordinate services across agencies and systems to meet the needs of African-American boys and their families in key Saint Paul neighborhoods. It is important to recognize the work done by the projects to increase communication and coordination across all partners is an accomplishment in itself, especially when considering this work needed to plan and implement each project was largely unfunded and required the ongoing participation of all partners.

The quantitative data used in this evaluation focused primarily on long-term outcomes (i.e., changes in school attendance, suspensions, test scores; changes in child protection involvement), which are more resistant to change than other short-term changes in individual attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs. While the results of the quantitative outcome evaluation conducted for the Tri-Project Initiative are largely inconclusive in regard to the effectiveness of each of the three projects in impacting long-term change, qualitative data focused on short-term outcomes indicate the projects are doing important work within the community to address the needs of African-American youth. Parents who participated in the focus groups felt the services they received helped them feel empowered to become increasingly active in their child's school and more engaged in the community and develop stronger sense of self-efficacy. Parents who participated in the focus groups also noticed changes in their child's interest in reading and learning and felt it was important for their children to have strong African-American role models and a greater understanding of their culture.

Although these focus group were conducted with only a small number of the parents served, their description of the changes they noticed in themselves and in their children were consistent with the changes program staff noticed during their interactions with participating families. While these findings alone do not demonstrate the projects will be successful in achieving the long-term outcomes identified by the Collaborative, these promising short-term outcomes (i.e., increased parent involvement in the child's school; increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, cultural self-identity among youth and parents; greater interest in learning among youth) are valued by parents and are thought to give youth and families the foundation needed to help youth become successful in school and supported at home.

The evaluation results also highlight a number of areas where the work of the projects can be further enhanced through greater coordination across partners, increased system-level support, and improved data collection to measure meaningful indicators of change.

Lessons learned

The interim report completed in March 2010 highlights some key lessons learned after conducting a series of key informant interviews with project staff and stakeholders. Many of these key findings continue to be relevant to the work of the projects today.

- The projects are unique in their commitment to providing youth and families with opportunities to learn about African-American culture and strengthen the community. Across all projects, there is an emphasis on providing information on African history and culture, hiring African-American men and women as staff who can be strong role models to youth and families, helping families build connections to the community, and empowering (not enabling) families.
- Considerable time is needed for outreach and relationship-building with families. While these one-on-one connections were considered incredibly valuable, the amount of time it takes to build connections, and limited funding to support these activities was considered a challenge to some.
- Improvements could be made to enhance the infrastructure of each project, including communication and coordination of services. Although youth and parents are receiving access to important services, more work is needed to fully coordinate services across partners. Communication following referrals can be enhanced, as can ongoing sharing of information across partners.
- Funding or other support is needed to support indirect service and administrative activities, specifically outreach and communication with system partners, care coordination, and evaluation activities.

A number of additional lessons learned were also identified through more recent evaluation activities:

- The projects provide services and support to youth and families who attend a number of different schools and live in neighborhoods throughout Saint Paul. This poses some logistical challenges in considering how to better partner with schools, provide outreach, and ensure transportation options are available to youth and families.
- Service utilization data show that many youth receive services from one or two partners. Partners may be more likely to refer youth and families to other agencies for services, but full coordination of services across partners occurs on a limited basis.
- The qualitative data gathered through focus groups and key informant interviews indicate youth and parent participants are experiencing improvements in self-esteem,

increased engagement in school, and greater connection to the community. While these results are promising, these evaluation activities need to be expanded to identify if these types of gains are common among all project participants.

- Additional discussions are needed among partners in each project to clearly define expectations of successful youth and parent involvement and establish discharge criteria.
- Evaluation activities must be integrated into the work of all partners and include opportunities to capture both short- and long-term data.

Current challenges and opportunities

The results of this evaluation show the work of the projects are leading to promising outcomes for youth and families, but that more work is needed to refine their efforts and examine the impact of the services provided. In doing so, the projects will likely need to address three major challenges: time limitations of project partners, economic uncertainty, and the need to better demonstrate outcomes.

In order to work more collaboratively, communicate more effectively, and better meet the needs of youth and families, project partners will need to reinvest time and effort into examining their infrastructure and current processes. A challenge for each project will be to re-engage partners in these discussions; consider new communication, service delivery, and outreach strategies; and build buy-in across all partners to modify their current communication and service-delivery practices to work more effectively with one another.

The impact of the looming State budget deficit on education and human services is unknown, but may significantly reduce the services available to youth and families, especially to those living in the neighborhoods served by these projects. State and local revenue sources may be reduced and there is likely to be greater competition for grant funds among nonprofit organizations. In addition, because families who are served by the projects continue to face challenges in securing high-paying jobs, transportation, and affordable housing, the projects will continue to work with families who need a variety of services and supports. The projects will likely be challenged to try to offer more to youth and families with fewer resources.

Finally, in order to recruit new participants, engage new partners, and secure additional funding, it is important for the projects to be better able to measure the impact of their work. This will require stakeholders to consider what it means to be a participant in the project, in contrast to a recipient of a specific service; reach consensus on the short-, intermediate -, and long-term outcomes youth and parents should experience as a result of their involvement; and incorporate data collection and reporting activities into the ongoing work of all partners.

While these challenges will be difficult to address, the projects have a number of strengths to draw from. Partners of each project have demonstrated a commitment to working together to support African-American youth and families. Many recognize the important work they have done to gain the trust of community residents and are dedicated to ensuring the projects continue to have a strong presence in the community and serve a resource to youth and families. As a result of the efforts made by partners over the past two years, relationships between staff have been created or enhanced and youth and families have received services and supports they may not have otherwise accessed. Project staff and stakeholders are encouraged to build on these strengths when considering ways to adopt the recommendations offered in this report.

Recommendations

Using results from key informant interviews with project staff and stakeholders, qualitative data from parents and youth who participated in the projects, and quantitative data describing the utilization of services and impact of these services on key measures of long-term success, Wilder Research has developed a number of recommendations for the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative Board and project staff to consider.

During the past two years, the projects have experienced some common implementation and coordination challenges that could be addressed with support from the Saint Paul Collaborative. The following recommendations suggest opportunities for the Board and its staff to work more closely with the projects to address ongoing project- and system-level issues:

- **Identify and secure sustainable funding sources for project coordination and evaluation activities.** While LCTS dollars provide the projects with funding to provide direct services, this revenue source cannot be used to cover the costs associated with project coordination and evaluation activities. A sustainable source of funding will help ensure these activities are embedded into the ongoing work of each project.
- **Offer proactive technical assistance to support the projects, especially to address data sharing concerns common across partners.** Perhaps due in part to the limited amount of time project stakeholders can allocate towards service coordination, communication, and other unfunded activities, some challenges to program infrastructure have been difficult for projects to address. Data sharing and other types of communication and coordination have been challenges to all projects since their work began. While the projects have received some support to address these barriers, more proactive technical assistance to develop informed consent forms or offer models of effective communication may help the projects address these issues in a more timely manner.
- **Consider opportunities to work more directly with each project to partner with schools and child-serving systems when multi-level buy-in is needed.** Some of the other significant challenges the projects faced involved coordination with schools, the SPPS District, and Ramsey County Human Services. In their work to help youth and families get the support and resources they need, project staff work to build individual relationships with school staff, principals, and case managers. However, there may be situations, again particularly in working on data sharing and communication, where barriers need to be addressed not only at the service-delivery level, but through

agency-level policies. Members of the Board may be well-positioned to work with partners to address system-level barriers that impact the ability of the projects to provide effective services.

- **Consider redefining the evaluation sub-committee or establishing other workgroup to act as a learning community to clearly define how culturally-specific approaches are utilized by each funded project and share these lessons learned with key stakeholders.** In order to more fully describe the work of the projects and experiences of youth and parent participants, it is important to better understand how the culturally-specific approach used by these projects contribute to changes in the short-term outcomes (i.e., increased self-efficacy, cultural self-identity, a sense of empowerment) believed to lead to long-term change and identify key indicators that can be used to measure individual outcomes in these areas. This work will help all partners more clearly articulate how their approach to services helps provide youth and parents with the foundation needed to be more successful in school and home and reach consensus on the best way to measure these changes. This work of this group could also include the identification of additional key outcomes indicators that can be used to measure the effectiveness of the projects. These indicators could include those used by Minnesota Compass (e.g., the presence of caring adults), so that the work of the projects can be compared with local or regional benchmarks.

There are also opportunities for the projects to reassess the effectiveness of their work, clarify enrollment and discharge definitions, and improve communication and coordination across partners. The following recommendations offer strategies to address challenges faced by all projects:

- **Consider developing a multi-tier definition of project enrollment to differentiate between families who receive more intensive ongoing support from the project in a highly coordinated manner and those who are served by a single program partner.** The review of service utilization data demonstrates that while some youth and families access a range of services and supports through each project, others are touched by a single activity (i.e., Family Night) or service. Although the projects strive to create opportunities for all community members to have access to the resources provided by project partners, the degree to which youth and families will be impacted by the project does vary, based on their involvement. The outcomes that may be expected for youth engaged on an ongoing basis in a range of services are likely to be quite different than those who occasionally participate in services. While it is important for the projects to track how many youth and families they touch, it is also critical to more clearly define what it means to be an active project participant.

When defining enrollment, it will also be important to set clear criteria for discharge from a more intensive set of services.

- **Consider the importance of ensuring families see themselves as a participant within the full project (i.e., Project Voice) rather than of a specific service (i.e., Parent Power).** In the focus groups conducted with youth and parents, there were varying levels of knowledge regarding the array of services youth and families can access through each project. While some focus group participants saw how the projects offers a holistic set of services and supports, others knew only about one or two programs or activities they were actively involved in. This was especially true among youth who participated in the focus groups. It may be important for project partners to revisit what they feel it means to be a participant of the project and review current marketing and outreach materials to ensure all families understand the range of community resources they can access through their involvement with each project.
- **Continue to consider new strategies to inform parents, community-members, and potential funders about the project.** In the focus groups, parents heard about the projects in a number of different ways, including through flyers, information at church, and word of mouth. However, a number of parents felt they stumbled upon this information and thought more could be done to make other parents aware of the resources available in the community. Some of the parents suggested radio as a way to inform more African-American residents about the services they receive.
- **Revisit the population served by each project to identify strategic opportunities for targeted outreach to residents and enhanced partnerships with key schools.** As described previously, the projects serve youth who attend multiple schools and live in neighborhoods across the city. While the projects may not be interested in restricting access to the services they provide to residents of specific neighborhoods or students of targeted schools, there are a number of logistical challenges that result from serving such a geographically diverse population. More strategic outreach activities directed primarily to residents of the neighborhood and building partnerships with representatives from key schools may help the projects focus the scope of their work to a more manageable geographic area.
- **Revisit or establish common expectations around partner participation in meetings and communicating information across programs.** According to some partners, participation in project meetings, commitment to completing paperwork, and expectations around communication between meetings varies by partner. In addition, some confusion among partners regarding evaluation expectations may suggest more effective communication strategies need to be put into place to ensure project representatives can update all partners on important discussion items that occur during

Tri-Project meetings. Improved communication between partners can improve future evaluation activities and increase service coordination to better meet the needs of youth and families.

- **Continue to offer opportunities for families to become involved in the community through events and consider ways to further engage families through volunteer experiences.** Across all projects, stakeholders see their role not as providing services to parents, but as empowering parents to become engaged in the community. Creating opportunities for parents and youth to become involved in planning events or volunteering in other ways to support the project's work also build on this philosophy of empowerment. Developing time-limited volunteer experiences that can be added to a participant's resume can also help parents address issues related to income and employment.

Finally, there are also opportunities to enhance the existing evaluation framework to provide the Collaborative Board and project staff with useful information to better understand how the services offered by each project support youth and parent participants. The Board is encouraged to consider the following recommendations to enhance future evaluation activities:

- **Develop data collection methods to assess parent/youth satisfaction with different program components and define successful completion of each component.** With the exception of the Sankofa tutoring program, the current evaluation framework did not include approaches to gather data from individual programs involved in each project. Program evaluation can be a helpful way for individual programs to assess their effectiveness and opportunities to improve the services they provide. Because project partners have made a commitment to working together, a quality improvement model could be a useful way for partners to offer suggestions to one another to enhance services available through individual programs and the project as a whole. In moving towards a more comprehensive evaluation approach, it will be important to focus on key measures of progress and achievement in order to keep the evaluation manageable and cost-effective for the projects and minimizing paperwork burden for project participants and program staff.
- **Use a strength-based approach to more fully describe the assets of youth and families at intake, as well as changes in short-term outcomes.** The current evaluation framework can help projects gather information to understand the needs of the youth and families they serve. However, the evaluation does not include a way to capture information about the strengths and assets among youth and caregivers. As described previously, the full evaluation plan initially incorporated data collection activities intended to assess changes in participant attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors

that support academic achievement and reduce the risk of out of home placement. By developing approaches to capture information about changes in individual short-term outcomes related to self-esteem, self-efficacy, and other personal characteristics, the evaluation can better describe the personal gains youth and parents experience as a result of their participation in each project. Incorporating additional intermediate measures of success can also provide more concrete information about progress projects are making towards impacting the Collaborative's long term goals.

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Appendix

Additional figures

Characteristics of projects funded by the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative

Caregiver focus group protocol

Youth focus group protocol

A1. Collaboration Factors Inventory results, by project and combined

Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory Summary across Three Projects

Factors	Building Future Leaders (N=8)	East Side Heritage (N=6)	Project Voice (N=9)	All projects combined (N=26)
Environment	3.2	4.2	3.9	3.7
History of collaboration or cooperation in the community	2.7	3.5	3.5	3.2
Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community	3.3	4.4	3.9	3.8
Favorable political and social climate	3.6	4.7	4.3	4.1
Membership characteristics	3.5	4.5	3.7	3.8
Mutual respect, understanding, and trust	3.4	4.3	3.5	3.7
Appropriate cross section of members	3.4	4.3	3.4	3.6
Members see collaboration as in their self-interest	4.1	4.6	4.3	4.3
Ability to compromise	3.1	4.6	3.7	3.7
Process and structure	3.3	4.4	3.2	3.5
Members share a stake in both process and outcome	3.3	4.6	3.6	3.8
Multiple layers of decision-making	3.2	4.3	3.1	3.4
Flexibility	3.9	4.8	3.1	3.8
Development of clear roles and policy guidelines	3.1	4.5	3.1	3.4
Adaptability	3.5	4.1	2.9	3.4
Appropriate pace of development	2.9	4.4	3.2	3.4
Communication	3.8	4.5	3.3	3.8
Open and frequent communication	3.6	4.5	2.9	3.5
Established informal relationships and communications links	4.1	4.5	3.8	4.0
Purpose	3.5	4.5	3.7	3.8
Concrete, attainable goals and objectives	3.4	4.5	3.4	3.7
Shared vision	3.4	4.6	3.7	3.8
Unique purpose	3.6	4.3	4.1	4.0
Resources	3.4	4.1	2.9	3.4
Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time	3.2	3.5	2.6	3.0
Skilled leadership	3.6	4.6	3.3	3.7

Note: Scores of 4.0 or above indicate areas of strength. Scores between 3.0 and 3.9 are borderline items that should be discussed to identify and address any concerns among partners. Scores of 2.9 or below indicate items that should be addressed.

A2. Students' current schools (N=752)

Type of school	Project Voice (N=261)		BFL (N=69)		Eastside Heritage (N=421)		All Projects (N=752)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pre-K/Preschools								
Head Start	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
King Foundation Family Development Center	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Merrick Preschool	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	2	<1%
Elementary (including K-8)								
Academia Cesar Chavez	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	2	<1%
Ames Elementary	0	0%	0	0%	3	1%	3	<1%
Ascension Catholic School	1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
Barack and Michelle Obama (Webster)	41	16%	0	0%	17	4%	58	8%
Battle Creek	2	1%	0	0%	3	1%	5	1%
Benjamin E. Mays	29	11%	3	4%	12	3%	44	6%
Bruce Vento	2	1%	0	0%	46	11%	48	6%
Capitol Hill	7	3%	0	0%	2	<1%	9	1%
Cherokee Heights Magnet	0	0%	0	0%	7	2%	7	1%
Clara Barton Open School	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Community of Peace Academy	0	0%	0	0%	9	2%	9	1%
Como Park	0	0%	12	17%	3	1%	15	2%
Cottage Grove Elementary	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	2	<1%
Crossroads	1	<1%	0	0%	8	2%	9	1%
Dayton's Bluff	0	0%	0	0%	17	4%	17	2%
Edgerton	0	0%	0	0%	3	1%	3	<1%
Elizabeth Hall International	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Expo Magnet	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Farnsworth	1	<1%	0	0%	45	11%	46	6%
Four Winds American Indian	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Franklin	0	0%	0	0%	4	1%	4	1%
Frost Lake	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Galtier	5	2%	0	0%	11	3%	16	2%
Hancock Learning	1	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%	2	<1%
Harambee	2	1%	0	0%	1	<1%	3	<1%

A2. Students' current schools (N=752) (continued)

Type of school	Project Voice (N=261)		BFL (N=69)		Eastside Heritage (N=421)		All Projects (N=752)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Elementary (including K-8) (continued)								
Highwood Hills	1	<1%	0	0%	4	1%	5	1%
J.J. Hill	1	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%	2	<1%
Jackson	25	10%	0	0%	2	1%	27	4%
John A. Johnson	1	<1%	0	0%	26	6%	27	4%
L'Etoile du Nord	3	1%	0	0%	0	0%	3	<1%
Linwood Monroe	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	2	<1%
Longfellow Magnet	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	2	<1%
Maxfield	52	20%	0	0%	6	1%	58	8%
Mississippi Magnet	0	0%	1	1%	1	<1%	2	<1%
Museum Magnet	13	5%	0	0%	3	1%	16	2%
New Spirit School	0	0%	0	0%	6	2%	6	1%
North End	0	0%	20	29%	0	0%	20	3%
Nova Classical Academy	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Open School	2	1%	0	0%	6	1%	8	1%
Phalen Lake	0	0%	0	0%	6	1%	6	1%
Pleasantville	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Pratt	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Prosperity Heights	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Richardson	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Roosevelt	2	1%	0	0%	13	3%	15	2%
Royal Oaks	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Sheridan	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	2	<1%
St. Matthews	1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
St. Peter Claver	3	1%	0	0%	1	<1%	4	1%
University Elementary	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Urban Academy	0	0%	0	0%	3	1%	3	<1%
Wellstone	2	1%	0	0%	2	1%	4	1%
World Cultures magnet	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%

A2. Students' current schools (N=752) (continued)

Type of school	Project Voice (N=261)		BFL (N=69)		Eastside Heritage (N=421)		All Projects (N=752)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Middle School/Junior High								
Battle Creek Middle	1	<1%	0	0%	3	1%	4	1%
Hazel Park Middle	1	<1%	0	0%	3	1%	4	1%
Highland Park Junior High	2	1%	11	16%	4	1%	9	1%
Maplewood Middle	1	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%	2	<1%
Murray Junior High	4	2%	11	16%	4	1%	19	3%
Northdale	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Laura Jeffrey Academy	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Ramsey Junior High	1	<1%	0	0%	5	1%	6	1%
Twin Cities Academy	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
High School/Secondary School								
Arlington	1	<1%	0	0%	4	1%	5	1%
Central	1	<1%	0	0%	10	2%	11	1%
City Academy	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Concordia Learning Academy	0	0%	0	0%	3	1%	3	<1%
Crosswinds	2	1%	0	0%	1	<1%	3	<1%
Gordon Parks	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
Harding	0	0%	0	0%	5	1%	5	1%
Highland Park Senior High	2	1%	3	4%	1	<1%	6	1%
Humboldt Secondary	1	<1%	0	0%	4	1%	5	1%
Johnson	0	0%	0	0%	11	3%	11	1%
Sibley	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Stillwater	1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
Vessey Leadership Academy	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Washington Technology	0	0%	7	10%	3	1%	10	1%

A2. Students' current schools (N=752) (continued)

Type of school	Project Voice (N=261)		BFL (N=69)		Eastside Heritage (N=421)		All Projects (N=752)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alternative Schools/Programs								
Area Learning Center	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Crosstown Education Center	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Guadalupe Alternative Programs	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Rivereast Day Treatment Center	1	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%	2	<1%
Rondo Learning Center	1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
Youth Transition Program	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Unknown Grade Levels								
Home School	1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
Richfield	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Roseville	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
WISE	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Other/Missing								
Other	1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
Missing	35	13%	1	1%	50	12%	86	11%

A3. East Side Heritage: Types of services received by youth (N=317)

	N	Mean (hour)	Range (hour)
AAAL			
Sunday Heritage School	72	29	8-56
Summer Camp Involvement	59	38	3-108
Cultural Wellness Center			
Sankofa	1	27	-
Merrick Community Center			
Family event	46	4	2-8
Boy's Group	53	167	40-535
Group activities	1	2	-
Summer camp involvement	38	59	35-215
NdCAD			
Sankofa	70	34	6-97
Parent Power	46	6	1-16
PACE			
Basketball academy	170	14	2-96
Men Up	51	18	1-30
Boy's assembly	34	2	2-4

A4. Project Voice: Types of services received by youth (N=262)

	N	Mean	Range
Cultural Wellness Center			
Counseling	24	2	1-11
Case management	22	14	1-106
Educational advocacy and development	18	89	25-291
Employment services	4	6	1-20
Parent meeting	3	.5	.25-.5
Family skills building	2	16	1-32
Crisis intervention	1	.5	-
Family Night	1	4	-
Transportation	1	3	-

A4. Project Voice: Types of services received by youth (N=262) (continued)

	N	Mean	Range
Hallie Q. Brown			
Intake	255	2	1-2
Family Night	52	5	1-22
Case management	49	5	1-42
Counseling	32	2	1-4
Transportation	24	4	1-41
Family skills building	4	3	2-3
Crisis intervention	3	1	1
Educational advocacy and development	2	2	1-2
NdCAD			
Sankofa	41	19	3-38
After school enrichment	19	30	5-60
Parent meeting	6	6	1-8
Educational advocacy and development	2	5	2-8
Group activities	1	2	-
Project Kofi			
Life skills training	49	13	1-44
Family skills building	42	3	1-16
Group activities	41	5	1-26
Counseling	27	2	1-5
Therapy	11	6	1-22
Case management	4	1	1-2
Family Night	2	2	2
Education advocacy and development	1	1	-
Walker West Music			
Music lessons	64	6	1-23
YWCA			
Summer camp involvement	23	217	70-253
After school enrichment	14	373	43-724
Case management	4	1	1-2
Intake	3	2	2
Family Night	1	2	-
Educational advocacy and development	1	182	-

Characteristics of projects funded by the Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative

	Building Future Leaders	East Side Heritage Project	Project VOICE
Lead Partners	Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD), St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS), Ramsey County Human Services, Rice Street Library, Cultural Wellness Center	Merrick Community Services, African-American Academy for Accelerated Learning, NdCAD, Past Athletes Concerned about Education (PACE), St. Paul Park & Rec, Ramsey County Human Services	Hallie Q Brown Community Center, YWCA, Ramsey County, NdCAD, Project KOFI/Wilder Foundation, Cultural Wellness Center, Walker West Music Academy, SPPS
Geographic Focus	North End	East Side	Summit-University/Frogtown
Summary	A collaboration of the North End community of St. Paul. Brings together expertise and resources to improve academic achievement for African-American boys, increase access to referrals, provide mentoring opportunities through the research based “Chosen to Achieve” program and lend parent education support in an effort to improve child safety, improve school success and eliminate system barriers. The East Side Family Center provides support for parents (assistance with food, housing, employment).	The East Side Heritage Project offers a multifaceted approach that impacts the emotional, physical and intellectual needs of African-American boys. The core elements will be mentoring, tutoring and cultural awareness for African-American boys ages 5-14, and parent involvement. Parents will also be part of leadership training for systems change. Merrick Community Center offers emergency assistance, food shelves, case management, employment services and community events.	A service hub in the Summit-University/Frogtown neighborhood that links Ramsey County services and services provided by community agencies, in partnership with our local schools, to create an effective and seamless network of support for African-American boys and girls in K-8 and their families. Ideas and solutions voiced by the African-American community are fundamental to this new paradigm for a strength-based family-centered approach to service delivery. Hallie Q Brown has case management, afterschool programs, food and clothing assistance, and community events.
Key Staff	Education Systems Navigator Ramsey County Social Worker	Parent liaison/outreach worker Youth worker	Project Coordinator Ramsey County Child Protection Worker, Economic Assistance Worker and Public Health Nurse

The projects are community-driven, and therefore involve a variety of activities, but all three include the following core activities/strategies:

- **Parent engagement and empowerment:** Through a series of classes offered at nights and on weekends, parents are taught to support and advocate for their children, including:
 - Building literacy skills
 - Increasing cultural awareness and positive identity
 - Accessing community resources to empower themselves and their children, including: economic assistance/jobs; health insurance and health services, including mental health services; and information on accessing educational services/supports.
- **Tutoring:** each project involves the same Afro-centric, research-based literacy enrichment program that is aligned with the St. Paul Public Schools academic standards.
- **Mentoring:** several models are used, all engaging community members as mentors using existing mentoring programs to provide training and support. The mentoring approaches recruit former athletes, members of faith communities, and others to provide one-on-one connections and long-term successful relationships to participating youth.
- **Case management:** social workers, family support workers and other trained staff provide participating families with support in effectively accessing and coordinating services and support, as well as collecting evaluation data to assess the projects' effectiveness.

Caregiver focus group protocol

Overview

- As I mentioned before, you were invited to participate in this discussion group because your child and family are part of [name of program]. How would you describe this program to other parents? [Probe: What types of services are available through this program?]
- How are the types of activities and services your child receives from [name of program] different than the types of support s/he receives in school or other programs?

Reasons for seeking services

- How did you learn about [name of program]? Why did you want your child to be involved in this program?

Youth outcomes

- Are there ways this project helped your child become more successful in school? [Describe]
- In what other ways has this project helped your child?

Parent/family outcomes

- Are there ways this project has helped you become more active in your child's school or his/her learning? [Describe]
- Are there other ways this project has helped your family? [Describe]
- The projects all focus on helping families connect with resources available in the African-American community. Since you've started to be involved with [name of program], do any of you feel more connected to the community? [To parents saying yes: Can you give me an example? To parents saying no: Can you talk more about why you don't feel more connected to the African-American community?]
- Do you feel better connected to people and resources in your neighborhood? Do you feel better able to work with and access other services, including schools?
- The program also focuses on African-American culture in a variety of ways. Many of the program staff are African-American and may be mentors or role models to your children, and a number of programs focus on African and African-American culture in order to help youth develop a greater sense of cultural self-identity. Do think it has been important for your child and family to be involved in a program that does focus on African-American culture? Why or why not?

Barriers to program involvement

- Have you had any problems accessing the services offered to you or your family through this program? If so, what would make it easier for you to receive those services? If access hasn't been a problem, are there any things the program has done to make it easy for you to be involved and participate?

Overall satisfaction

- Would you recommend this program to a friend or family member? (Why or why not?)
- What other things could the project do to help your child/family?

Closing

Those are all of the topics I wanted to discuss today. Thank you for your time and for sharing your honest opinions with me. If any of you have any questions about this discussion group or final report, please feel free to ask me before you go. *[Distribute incentives]*

Youth focus group protocol

Program questions

The facilitator may ask about multiple programs, depending on the characteristics of the group.

- As I mentioned before, you were invited to this group because you have a mentor (or have gone to Sankofa/Man Up/Kofi, Walker West, etc.). How would you describe Sankofa to other youth? [Probe: What do you learn through Sankofa?]
- What do you like about [program element]?
- What don't you like about [program element]?

School

- I want to talk to you about school for a while. Raise your hand if you really like going to school every day. [To those who raised their hands: What do you like about school? To those who didn't raise their hand: What don't you like about school?]
- Are there ways that [name of program] has helped you do better in school?

Relationships

- What makes you feel safe in your school, home and community?
- Do you talk more with your parents than you did before you went through the program in general? Do you talk with them about what you are doing in the program?

Culture

- [Name of program] tried to teach youth about African and African-American culture. What types of things have you learned about African culture that you didn't know before?

Role models

- I want to talk to you about your future goals and role models a little bit. What do you want to do when you finish school? [Will you go to college? What kinds of jobs do you want to have? Where do you want to live?]
- When you think of the adults around you, are there certain people you look up to? How many of you feel like there is someone from [name of program] that you look up to? Why is that person important to you?

Closing

Those are all of the topics I wanted to discuss today. Thank you for your time and for sharing your honest opinions with me. If any of you have any questions, please feel free to ask me before you go. *[Distribute incentives]*