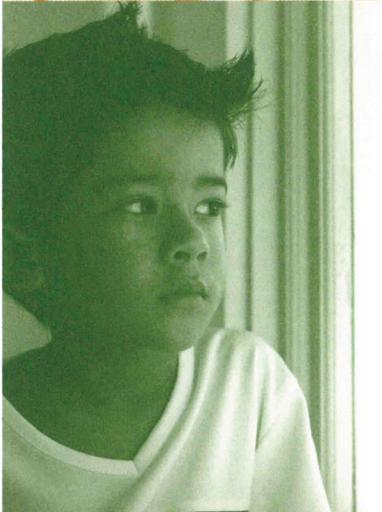


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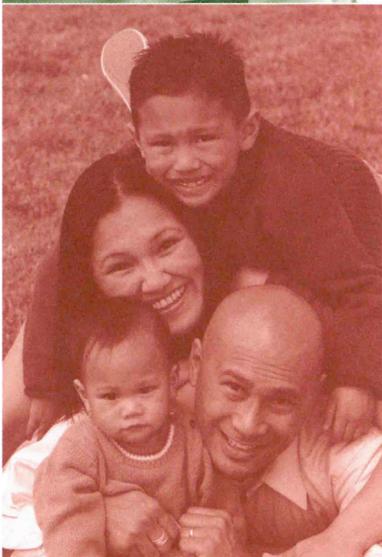


Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood Freedom School

2012 Summer Learning



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Lue Thao

Summary

The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood received funding from the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative to provide summer learning programming using the Children's Defense Fund's Freedom School approach to students living in the Promise Neighborhood area in Saint Paul. This report describes the characteristics of the students, their attendance in the program, and their social skills and academic outcomes. In addition to these Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood (SPPN) Freedom School students, some students who attended the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches (SPACC) Freedom School during the same period and who lived in the Promise Neighborhood area are included in the academic outcome evaluation. The program was offered for a total of 30 days during the 2012 summer.

Most of the student participants in the Freedom Schools (71%) were African American students. The number of girls and boys were almost the same and most of the participants were in elementary school.

Key findings

Freedom School sets goals toward getting students to attend the program consistently and improving their social skills and academic performance. Attendance and academic outcome goals were assessed for the SPPN and SPACC Freedom Schools and social skill goals were assessed for the SPPN Freedom School only.

Attendance

The target for the attendance goal is that 70 percent of students will attend consistently, meaning 15 programming days or more. Results show that most students attended the program consistently. Almost all students (85 percent of SPPN and 96 percent of SPACC students) attended the program 15 days or more.

Social skills

On social skills, the SPPN Freedom School program has two target goals:

- 70 percent of consistent participants will improve or maintain **positive self-esteem or self-confidence**.
- 70 percent of consistent participants will improve or maintain **positive behaviors or social skills** within the program.

Results show that most of the consistent participants (between 88 percent and 96 percent) improved or maintained positive self-esteem or self-confidence within the program, as measured by parent, student, and staff surveys. Staff also rated 75 percent of consistent participants and parents rated 91 percent of consistent participants as having improved or maintained positive behaviors or social skills within the program.

Academic skills

Freedom School also works toward improving or maintaining student academic skills (i.e., preventing summer learning loss). Results are reported for students who attended the Saint Paul Public Schools and took the district's assessments, measuring the change of student reading and math skills from spring to fall 2012.

Results show that Freedom School students declined slightly in their math and reading scores, on average. Similar results were found when examining only the African American students in Freedom School. Other Saint Paul Public School students who did not attend Freedom School and other known summer learning programs scored similarly to the Freedom School students.

Other results based on parent, student, and staff surveys

Parents, students, and staff viewed the program favorably. Overall, SPPN Freedom School parents and staff viewed that most students made improvements in other social skills and behaviors (i.e., student ability to resolve conflicts, interest in new activities, ability to follow rules or limits set by parents or staff) and in their attitudes toward learning as results of the program. Most SPPN Freedom School students felt that they like school and learning; have the ability to make a difference in their lives, family, community, country, and the world; and that they plan to go to college. All parents reported that they are satisfied with the program and that they would recommend the program to their friends.

Conclusion and issues to consider

Freedom School met their targets on retaining students and improving their social skills. Student academic skill results declined slightly from spring to fall 2012. A similar pattern of academic skill results were seen for African American students in Freedom School and other same grade African American students in Saint Paul Public Schools who did not attend Freedom School and other summer programming. However, we do not know if the other students attended other summer programming. Results using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests also showed the SPPN Freedom School students declined in their reading scores from the beginning to the end of the program.

It would be useful for the future evaluation to get individual student scores from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests for Freedom School students. The Reading Tests could provide better estimates of Freedom School impacts on student academic skills because the tests are conducted at the beginning and end of the program and it is used by all Freedom School programs nationwide. This would need to be coordinated with the Children's Defense Fund national office.

In addition, the scope of this evaluation does not include an implementation evaluation and therefore, we do not know the extent to which Freedom School curriculum and approach were implemented in the SPPN Freedom School. Consistent with reviews of research studies (e.g., Cooper et al., 2000; McCombs et al., 2011; Terzian et al., 2009), Freedom School provides components of best practices for summer learning programs, which include providing high quality academic enrichment; involving parents in children's learning; having experienced and trained program staff; smaller class sizes with 10 students per adult staff; making learning fun, interactive, and hands-on; and maximizing student participation and attendance. Future evaluation of the local Freedom School should include assessment of implementation fidelity. Program staff may also want to align school-year and summer curricula (McCombs et al., 2011). To this end, it may be helpful to have program staff who understand the school-year curriculum and assessments work in the program.

Overview

Research indicates that, on average, students lose skills over the summer. However, not all students experience summer learning losses. Children from higher income families continue to learn during summer while the lower income children learn either little or lose ground. Also, it seems that summer learning loss is cumulative; over time, the difference between the summer learning rates of low-income and higher-income students contributes to the achievement gap (McCombs et al., 2011).

The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood (SPPN) received funding from the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative to provide Freedom School summer learning programming to students living in the Promise Neighborhood area in Saint Paul. Freedom School model provides specific curriculum with five essential components: high quality academic enrichment; parent and family involvement; social action and civic engagement; intergenerational servant leadership development; and nutrition, health, and mental health. The purpose of this program is to prevent summer learning loss and to provide an enriching summer learning opportunity for African American and other youth, to ultimately address the achievement gap. The Promise Neighborhood Freedom School was implemented for the first time in SPPN in summer 2012.

This report describes the characteristics of students attending the SPPN Freedom School during 2012 summer, their attendance in the program, and their social skill and academic outcomes. The social skills were measured by parent, staff, and student surveys. The surveys were created by the Children's Defense Fund and modified slightly by the program coordinator to better align the survey items with the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood goals. The academic outcomes are measured by changes in Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores from spring to fall 2012. MAP scores were provided by the Saint Paul Public Schools' Research, Evaluation, and Assessments department.

In addition to SPPN, some students who attended the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches (SPACC) Freedom School in summer 2012 and who lived in the Promise Neighborhood are included in the academic outcome evaluation.

Student characteristics

Characteristics of students enrolled in Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood Freedom School in summer 2012 are presented in Figure 1. There were a total of 173 students. Nearly all students were in the elementary school ages, with 96 percent of the students six through eleven years old.

The largest group of students was Black/African American (71%). Biracial/Multiracial; Asian/Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander; and other group, which includes White/Caucasian and American Indian, were almost the same proportions (9-10% for each group). The number of boys and girls was almost the same.

1. SPPN Freedom School student characteristics (N=173)

	Number	Percent
Age of students served		
5 and younger	Too few to report	
6-8	104	60%
9-11	63	36%
12-17	Too few to report	
Student race		
Black or African American ^a	122	71%
Asian/Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	16	9%
Biracial/Multiracial	18	10%
Other ^b	17	10%
Student ethnicity		
Hispanic	14	8%
Non-Hispanic	159	92%
Gender		
Female	86	50%
Male	87	50%

Source: Sprockets database

^a Includes 10 students who indicated themselves as African-born or recent immigrants.

^b Includes White/Caucasians and American Indian because the number in each group is too small.

Program attendance

In summer 2012, SPPN and SPACC Freedom Schools offered a total of 30 days of programming. Freedom School sets a goal of having 70 percent of the students participate in the program consistently, meaning 15 days or more. Results show that most students (85%) in SPPN Freedom Schools (147 out of 173 students) were considered as consistent participants. In addition, there were 51 students who attended the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches (SPACC) Freedom School and lived in the Promise Neighborhood (based on Saint Paul Public School data). Almost all (96%) of the SPACC students were consistent participants.

Social skill outcomes

SPPN Freedom School sets two target outcomes on student social skills:

- 70 percent of consistent participants will improve or maintain **positive self-esteem or self-confidence**.
- 70 percent of consistent participants will improve or maintain **positive behaviors or social skills** within the program.

To assess student social skills, SPPN collected parent, student, and staff surveys. The parent survey asked parents about their perspectives on changes in students' social skills (i.e., whether students improved, stayed the same, became worse), as a result of students' participation in the program. The student survey asked students about their perspectives on their social skills and if they feel they can make a difference in their family, community, country, and their world. Similar to the parent survey, staff were asked about their perspectives on changes in students' social skills as a result of students' participation in the program. Surveys were administered once at the end of the program. Parent survey was collected primarily during a parent night. Students completed their survey in one of their session and staff completed their survey during one of their class preparation time. As mentioned earlier, the surveys were based on Children's Defense Fund surveys, and modified slightly to meet local needs and interests.

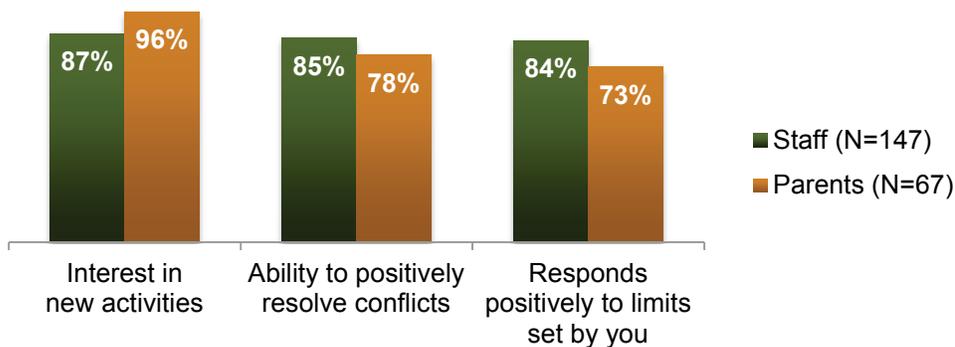
Parents of 67 students completed the parent survey and 61 students completed the student survey. All surveys completed by parents and students reflected students who participated in the Freedom School consistently (meaning 15 or more days). The staff survey was completed for 147 consistent student participants and 14 non-consistent student participants. Based on the total number of consistent participants, the survey response rates are: 46 percent for the parent survey, 41 percent for the student survey, and 100 percent for the staff survey.

Results of the surveys show that parents, students, and staff rated most students who consistently participated in the program as having improved or maintained a positive self-esteem or self-confidence within the program (between 88 percent and 96 percent of students received these ratings). Staff also rated 75 percent of these students and parents rated 91 percent of these students as having improved or maintained positive behaviors or social skills within the program (Figures A1 and A2).

Other social skills results

This section summarizes additional survey results related to students' social skills. Results are reported for consistent participants in the SPPN Freedom School only. Figure 2 shows that most parents reported that their children improved or did not need to improve in their interest in new activities, their ability to positively resolve conflicts and to positively respond to limits set by parents. However, parents also reported that about one-fourth of their children did not make any improvement in their ability to positively resolve conflicts (22%) and in their ability to positively respond to limits set by parents (27%). Staff reported that most students improved or did not need to improve on these skills (84-87%).

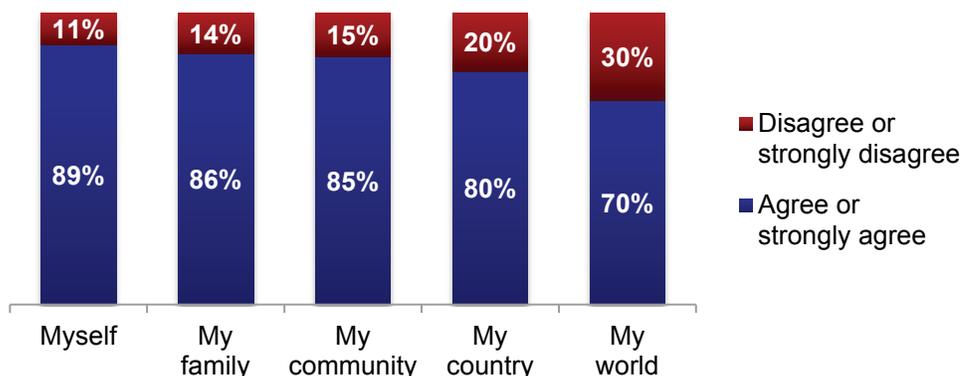
2. Other student social skills^a: percentage of students who improved or did not need to improve



^a SPPN Freedom School consistent participants only. Percentages of parents and staff who answered "improved" or "did not need to improve" on survey items.

Students reported that they have the ability to make a difference. Most students felt that they can make a difference on themselves (89%), their family (86%), community (85%), country (80%), and the world (70%).

3. Student perceptions on their ability to make a difference^a (N=61)



^a SPPN Freedom School consistent participants only.

Academic outcomes

Freedom School is interested in preventing summer learning loss. Figures 4-6 show changes in academic performance (mean scores) for Freedom School students who attended the Saint Paul Public Schools and took the spring 2012 and fall 2012 district's assessments (Measures of Academic Progress – MAP). Students' results are reported only for the consistent participants (those who attended 15 or more days in Freedom School) because the number of non-consistent participants is too small (fewer than five students in each SPPN and SPACC). Also, results are not analyzed by student characteristics and grade levels because the number of students with test data is small.

Figure 4 shows the reading and math results for the SPPN Freedom School students. Results show that students made a slight decrease in reading scores and maintained math scores from spring to fall 2012, on average.

4. School academic assessment results ^a: SPPN Freedom School

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	N	Mean Scores		Change
		Spring 2012	Fall 2012	
Reading	29	191.8	190.2	-1.7
Math	31	196.7	196.2	-0.5

^a Consistent participants only.

From spring to fall 2012, SPACC results show that students maintained their reading scores and made a slight decline in math scores, on average (Figure 5).

5. School academic assessment results ^a: SPACC Freedom School

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	N	Mean Scores		Change
		Spring 2012	Fall 2012	
Reading	20	208.0	208.1	+0.1
Math	20	217.7	215.8	-2.0

^a Consistent participants only.

Figure 6 shows the results for all Freedom School students (i.e., SPPN and SPACC combined). Results show that students made a slight decrease in their reading and math scores from spring to fall 2012, on average.

6. School academic assessment results ^a: SPPN and SPACC Freedom School

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	N	Mean Scores		
		Spring 2012	Fall 2012	Change
Reading	49	198.4	197.5	-1.0
Math	51	204.9	203.9	-1.1

^a Consistent participants only.

Similar results were found when we examined only the African American students in Freedom School. That is, African American students who attended consistently, on average, made a slight decline in reading and math (an average of -1.0 and -0.8, respectively).

We also examined academic results of other same grade students in Saint Paul Public Schools living in Promise Neighborhood who did not attend any summer academic program that we are aware of (the district's summer program and Believe Achieve tutoring program). However, we do not have a way to know if these other Saint Paul Public Schools' students attended other programs during the summer. Results show that these students maintained their reading scores and made a slight decline in math scores from spring to fall 2012, on average (an average of -0.1 and -1.7, respectively). Similar results were also found when we examined the academic performance of just the African American students in this group (an average of -0.3 in reading scores and -1.9 in math scores). It also should be noted that MAP is collected in late spring and early fall. This means that the difference in relative gains and losses could be a function of the time interval (approximately 4 months) and not accurately reflect the impacts of Freedom School which was offered only for six weeks during the summer.

Children's Defense Fund (CDF) also assessed the SPPN Freedom School students using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests. The Reading Tests were administered by the Freedom School staff to students at the beginning and the end of the program and the scores were analyzed by CDF. According to CDF, SPPN Freedom School students showed one-month loss in their reading scores from the beginning to the end of the program. This information was provided to the SPPN Freedom School staff by Children's Defense Fund via a phone call. The individual student scores were not made available to Wilder Research for the purposes of additional analysis for this evaluation.

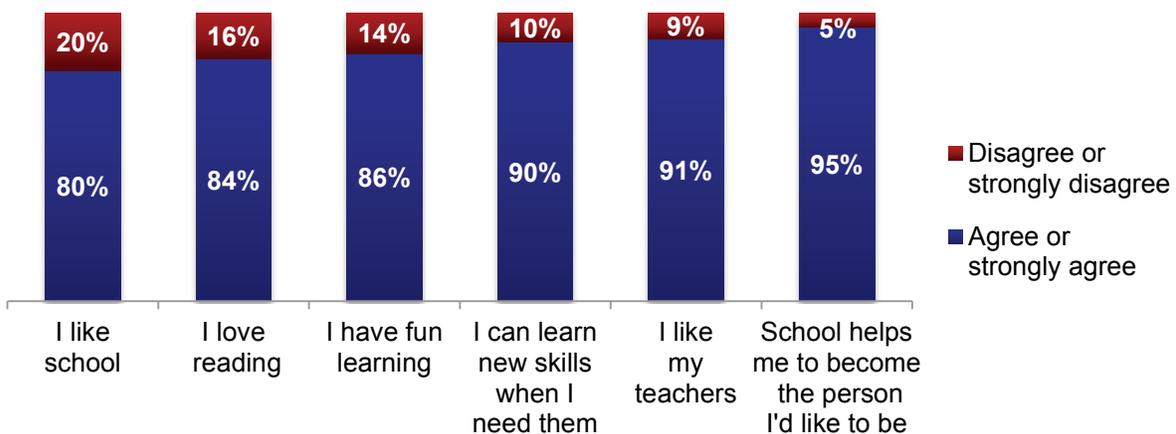
Other academic results

This section summarizes the survey results on student perceptions on their learning experiences and future academic plans. Additionally, parents and staff rated changes in students' attitude toward learning during the program. Results are reported for the SPPN Freedom School students who attended the program consistently.

Student perceptions on learning experiences and future aspirations

In the survey, students were asked about their perceptions of their own learning experiences. Most students felt that school helps them to become the person they would like to be (95%). They also reported that they like their teachers (91%), can learn new skills when they need them (90%), have fun learning (86%), love reading (84%), and like school (80%) (Figure 7).

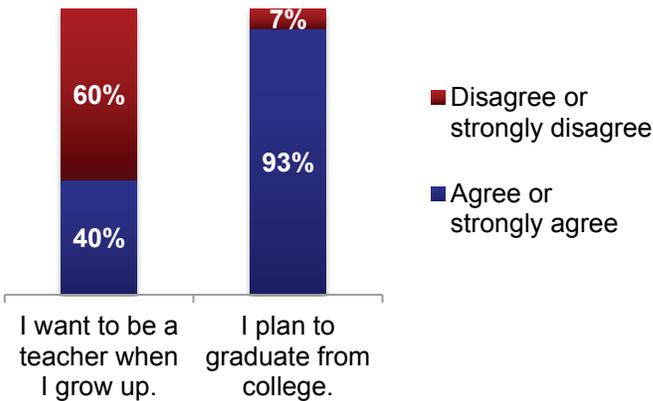
7. Student perceptions of their learning experiences^a (N=61)



^a SPPN Freedom School consistent participants only.

In terms of their future plans, nearly all students (93%) reported that they plan to graduate from college. Fewer than half of the students (40%) reported that they want to be a teacher when they grow up (Figure 8).

8. Student perceptions of their future aspirations ^a (N=61)

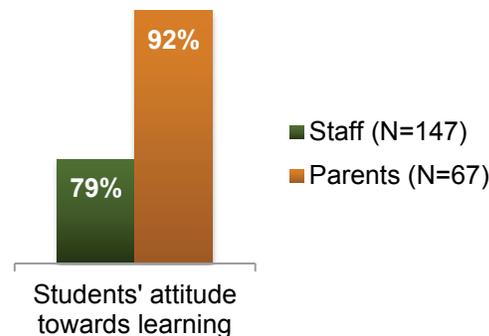


^a SPPN Freedom School consistent participants only.

Parent and staff perceptions on student attitude toward learning

Staff reported that the majority of the students (62%) improved in their attitude toward learning. Additionally, 17 percent of the students did not need to improve in their attitude toward learning. Likewise, parents reported that their children (82%) improved or did not need to improve (8%) in their attitude toward learning.

9. Student attitude toward learning: percentage of students who improved or did not need to improve^a



^a SPPN Freedom School consistent participants only. Percentages of parents and staff who answered "improved" or "did not need to improve" on survey items.

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Terzian, M., Moore, K.A., & Hamilton, K. (2009). *Effective and promising summer learning programs and approaches for economically-disadvantaged children and youth: A white paper for the Wallace Foundation*. Retrieved March 30, 2012 from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Documents/Effective-and-Promising-Summer-Learning-Program.pdf>.

Appendix

A1. Staff perceptions of student social skills

Please indicate whether Freedom School has impacted child in the following areas:		Consistent participants (N=147)	Not-consistent participants (N=14)	All participants (N=161)
Attitude towards learning	Did not need to improve	17%	7%	16%
	Improved	62%	64%	62%
	Stayed the same	21%	29%	22%
	Became worse	0%	0%	0%
Positive behaviors and social skills	Did not need to improve	15%	14%	15%
	Improved	60%	57%	60%
	Stayed the same	22%	21%	22%
	Became worse	3%	7%	3%
Interest in new activities	Did not need to improve	14%	14%	14%
	Improved	73%	73%	73%
	Stayed the same	13%	13%	13%
	Became worse	0%	0%	0%
Ability to positively resolve conflicts	Did not need to improve	14%	7%	13%
	Improved	72%	71%	72%
	Stayed the same	12%	7%	13%
	Became worse	2%	0%	3%
Self-confidence	Did not need to improve	14%	14%	14%
	Improved	82%	57%	80%
	Stayed the same	4%	21%	6%
	Became worse	0%	7%	1%
Responds positively to limits set by you	Did not need to improve	14%	21%	14%
	Improved	70%	57%	69%
	Stayed the same	13%	7%	12%
	Became worse	3%	14%	4%

Note: Include only SPPN Freedom School students. Consistent participants attended 15 or more days and Not -consistent participants attended fewer than 15 days.

A2. Parent perceptions of student social skills

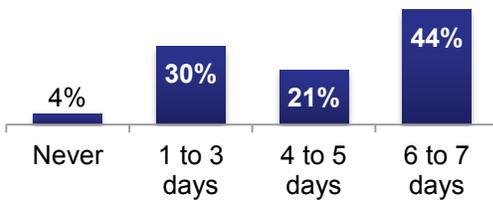
Please indicate whether Freedom School has impacted child in the following areas:		Consistent participants (N=67)
Attitude towards learning	Did not need to improve	10%
	Improved	82%
	Stayed the same	8%
	Became worse	0%
Positive behaviors and social skills	Did not need to improve	5%
	Improved	87%
	Stayed the same	9%
	Became worse	0%
Interest in new activities	Did not need to improve	6%
	Improved	90%
	Stayed the same	3%
	Became worse	0%
Ability to positively resolve conflicts	Did not need to improve	5%
	Improved	73%
	Stayed the same	23%
	Became worse	0%
Self-confidence	Did not need to improve	6%
	Improved	82%
	Stayed the same	12%
	Became worse	0%
Responds positively to limits set by you	Did not need to improve	8%
	Improved	65%
	Stayed the same	28%
	Became worse	0%

Note: Include only SPPN Freedom School students.

Additional Promise Neighborhood measures

When asked how often they read each week during the last month, 44 percent of students reported that they read six to seven days a week (every day or almost every day) and 21 percent of students reported they read four to five days a week. About one third (34%) of the students read fewer times, including a few students (4%) who reported that they did not read at all.

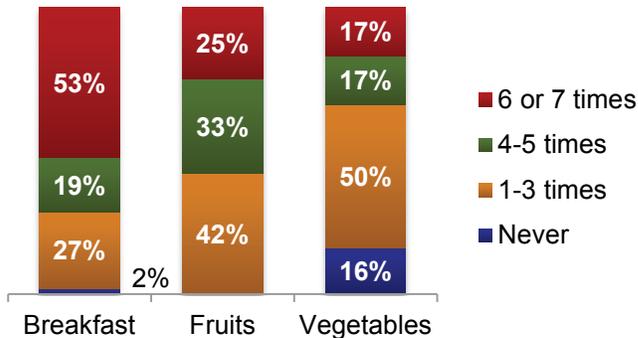
A3. Number of days students read each week ^a (N=61)



^a SPPN Freedom School consistent participants only.

Students were also asked how often they eat breakfast, fruits, and vegetables each week. Slightly more than half of the students (53%) reported that they eat breakfast six to seven times a week (every day or almost every day). This means that almost another half of the students (48%) did not eat breakfast every day. Fifty-eight percent of students reported that they eat fruits and 34 percent of the students reported that they eat vegetables four to five times a week (Figure A3).

A4. Number of times students eat breakfast, fruits, and vegetables each week ^a (N=61)



^a SPPN Freedom School consistent participants only.