

Charting Outcomes:

COMMUNITY ACTIONS for HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

of Children and Youth in Ottawa



Since 2014 the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative has used the *Charting Outcomes: Community Actions for Health Development of Children and Youth in Ottawa* key indicators and corresponding data to help us monitor progress towards our goal for all children and youth in Ottawa to reach their full potential. As we enter phase two of the report, we continue to work with our partners to include 2012 and 2013 data to monitor and report on how well our community actions promote healthy development towards our ultimate goal of sustainable and systemic improvements in child and youth healthy development outcomes.

The indicator data helps us to hold ourselves accountable to our programs, services and actions but it is the collective work of organizations from across Ottawa and from all sectors who have the ability to make significant impacts. In an effort to ensure that we continue to track sustainable and systematic improvements in child and youth healthy development outcomes, we will be updating four indicators throughout 2015/16.

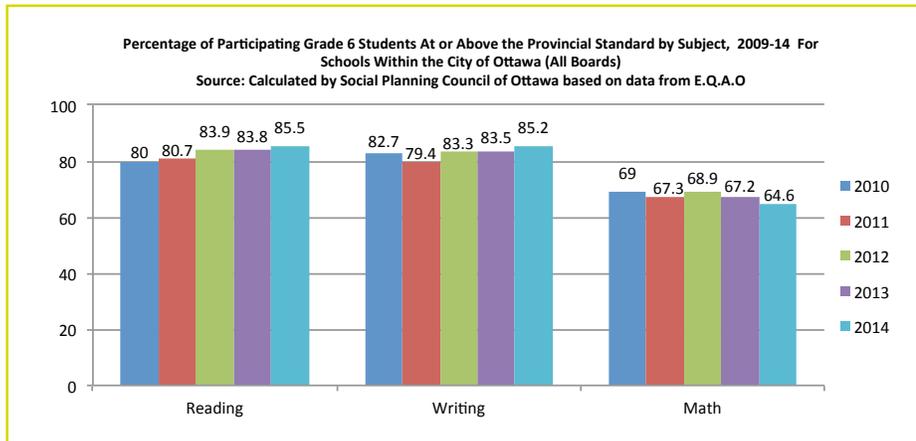
Charting Outcomes:

COMMUNITY ACTIONS to ENSURE that ALL CHILDREN and YOUTH are SUCCESSFUL in SCHOOL.

JANUARY 2016 UPDATE

Community Actions for Critical Hours Programming in Ottawa.

Indicator: Percentage of Participating Grade 6 Students At or Above the Provincial Standard by Subject within the City of Ottawa



The percentage of Grade 6 students at or above the provincial standard for reading and writing continues to improve from 2010-2014 however, there continues to be a slight deterioration in math.

Critical hours programs positively and concretely influence social and academic outcomes for children and youth, and are based on three foundational pillars:

- 1) Skill development;
- 2) Safe and supportive spaces;
- 3) Positive relationships.

Our community partners have worked for many years to offer high quality critical hours programming. In more recent years, programs in Ottawa have started to work collaboratively and share best practices to create a system of high quality critical hours programming.

HOW ARE WE CREATING CHANGE?

There is currently no systemic approach to support children during the afterschool hours or after school programming at a provincial level.¹

The Critical Hours Task Group, under the OCYI structure was established to strengthen program standards and quality in critical hours programming in Ottawa. The rise in the number of afterschool programs over the last decade points not only the need from the community, but the impact and influence that these programs can have on children and youth.

While we can confidently say that the three pillars in critical hours programming positively influences social and academic outcomes for children and youth, there exists a significant range in the funding and resources available. In an effort to address the existing disparities between programs, the Ottawa Homework Club Community of Practice was established in 2014. The community of practice includes over 40 sites who are committed to building high quality programs through training, best practices and common evaluations to ensure that we are moving toward sustainable and systemic impacts for children and youth in Ottawa.

HEALTHY KIDS COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

Ottawa has been selected as one of 45 communities across Ontario taking part in the Government of Ontario's The Healthy Kids Community Challenge. The Healthy Kids Community Challenge is a multi-year, community-led program that will unite our community with a common goal: promoting children's health through physical activity and healthy eating for children 0 to 12 years.

The Ottawa-based HKCC is being led by the City of Ottawa and working with partners from multiple sectors. It focuses on 20 priority neighbourhoods. Our community will rally around the theme, and work with partners in many sectors developing programs, policies and initiatives that promote and enable healthy behaviours.

Critical hours programs will help to not only inform the HKCC initiative, but will also benefit from the outcomes.



SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Critical hours programs foster the social and academic skills of participants. When students are engaged in high quality after school activities, they experience higher levels of intrinsic concentration and motivation.

Social and Emotional Skills

After-school programs are key spaces where students expand their socio-emotional learning horizons. Self-esteem, self-regulation, psychosocial adjustment, empathy and school bonding are some of the emotional faculties which are critical indicators of positive development and successful outcomes, and are also a focus in after-school programs.²

Academic Skills

Although critical hours programs are not strictly scholastic, they support their capacity to improve academic outcomes for participants. Activities which consist of academic enrichment or homework and requires children and youth to develop skills which are invaluable to academic success, such as persistence, focus, and sustained attention and engagement.³



SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SPACES

The second pillar which supports critical hours programming is known as “safe and supportive spaces”. Critical hours programming provides two different kinds of “safe and supportive spaces”: safe in the sense of a stable emotional climate and in terms of program space.

For critical hours programs to be considered safe it must have several components:

- 1) Staff turnover should be low,⁴
- 2) Staff training and ongoing supervision (the capacity to address academic questions, but more importantly, participants’ personal problems) should be strong and evidence based,⁵ and
- 3) Authority displayed by staff should be progressive, with lots of opportunity for participants autonomous choice.⁶

Children are vulnerable when left alone in their time outside of school. Critical hours programs provide a safe, structured space where these children can be engaged in constructive activities during these risky hours. High quality critical hours programs help children and youth establish positive, healthy behaviours which they will carry with them through their teen years and hopefully for the remainder of their lives.⁷



POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The third pillar of critical hours programming is Positive Relationships. Evidence shows that the primary reasons children return to programs is because of the relationships they build there.⁸ More than attendance, it is the peer-peer and child/youth-adult relationships that positively influence social and academic outcomes for participants.

Peer-Peer Relationships

Positive relationships with peers increases participant engagement, social competency, and relationships with peers. On peer bonding in critical hours, programs show “an increase in prosocial development in youth when peer social support is present. As peer social supports increase, prosocial behavior and self-esteem increase while conduct disorder, emotional problems, hyperactivity and indirect aggression all decrease.”⁹

Child/Youth-Adult Relationships

The development of positive relationships between program participants and the adults who staff the programs can be complex due to various dimensions of social bonding but two studies found that they are in fact the singular most important program factor to enhance social and academic outcomes for youth.¹⁰

Endnotes

- 1 BC Recreation and Parks Association. Addressing the after-school hours: An Environmental Scan of After-School Programming Outside of Licensed Childcare for Children aged 6 to 12 in B.C.
- 2 Ibid at 7.
- 3 Shernoff, David J. "Engagement in After-School Programs as a Predictor of Social Competence and Academic Performance." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45 (2010): 325-37. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 326.
- 4 Cross, Amanda, Brown, Denise C., Gottfredson, Denise M., Wilson, Melissa Rorie, and Nadine Connell. "Implementation Quality and Positive Experiences in After-School Programs." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45 (2010): 370-80. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 376.
- 5 Pierce, Kim M., Daniel M. Bolt, and Deborah Lowe Vandell. "Specific Features of After-School Program Quality: Associations with Children's Functioning in Middle Childhood." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45 (2010): 381-93. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 391.
- 6 Wright, Robin, Lindsay John, Eric Duku, Giovanni Burgos, Amanda Krygsman, and Charlene Esposito. "After-School Programs as a Prosocial Setting for Bonding Between Peers." *Child & Youth Services* 31 (2010): 74-91. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 77.
- 7 Vandell, Deborah Lowe, David J. Shernoff, Kim M. Pierce, Daniel M. Bolt, Kimberly Dadisman, and B. Bradford Brown. "Activities, Engagement, and Emotion in After-school Programs (and Elsewhere)." *New Directions for Youth Development* 105 (2005): 121-29. Wiley Periodicals, Inc. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 126.
- 8 Ibid at 126.
- 9 Wright et. al supra note 6 at 75-76.
- 10 Vandell et. al supra note 7 at 126-27.
- 11 Pierce, Bolt and Vandell, supra note 5 at 390.
- 12 Durlak, Joseph A., Roger P. Weissberg, and Molly Pachan. "A Meta-Analysis of After-School Programs That Seek to Promote Personal and Social Skills in Children and Adolescents." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45 (2010): 294-309. Society for Community Research and Action. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 302.
- 13 Viadero, Debra. "High-Quality After-School Programs Tied to Test-Score Gains." *Education Week*, 28 Nov. 2007.
- 14 Shernoff, supra note 3 at 333.
- 15 Ibid at 334.
- 16 Viadero, supra note 15.
- 17 Cross et. al, supra note 4 at 377.
- 18 Noam, Gil G., and Beth Bernstein-Yamashiro. "Youth Development Practitioners and Their Relationships in Schools and After-school Programs." *New Directions for Student Leadership* 137 (2013): 57-68. Wiley Online Library. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 67.
- 19 Deutsch, Nancy L., and Jeffrey N. Jones. "'Show Me an Ounce of Respect': Respect and Authority in Adult-Youth Relationships in After-School Programs." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23.6 (2008): 667-88. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 671.
- 20 Ibid at 675.
- 21 Shernoff, supra note 3 at 334.
- 22 Wright et. al supra note 6 at 77.
- 23 Vandell et. al supra note 7 at 124-26
- 24 Deutsch and Jones, supra note 19 at 682.
- 25 Wright et. al supra note 6 at 78.
- 26 Ibid at 87
- 27 Ibid at 76; and Gottfredson, Denise, Amanda Brown Crodd, Denise Wilson, Melissa Rorie, and Nadine Connell. "Effects of Participation in After-School Programs for Middle School Students: A Randomized Trial." *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 3 (2010): 282-313. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group. Web. 18 Dec. 2014 at 305
- 28 Noam and Bernstein-Yamashiro, supra note 18 at 65.
- 29 Ibid at 60-61.
- 30 Deutsch and Jones, supra note 19 at 678.
- 31 Ibid at 671.
- 32 Wright et. al supra note 6 at 77-78.
- 33 Viadero, supra note 15.
- 34 Gottfredson et. al at 305.
- 35 Pierce, Bolt and Vandell, supra note 5 at 390.