

Boston Community Learning Centers Evaluation Update Report E C Harvey Evaluations February 6, 2005

Introduction

Boston Community Learning Centers (BCLC) Initiative is a collective of 26 out of school time programs funded federally under the 21st Century Community Learning Center program. The Boston programs are located throughout the City's many neighborhoods in both schools and community centers. These programs are designed to provide a safe place for students between the critical hours after school. In addition, these programs combine academic activities (e.g. tutoring, homework help, literacy programs) with enrichment activities (e.g. mentoring, individual and group counseling, arts and crafts, sports, entrepreneurial activities, performance arts, civic activities). This combination of academics and enrichment activities is designed to improve student academic performance, increase their commitment to their community and society, provide career opportunities, and generally improve students' future lives by removing them from dangerous situations, encouraging them to succeed academically, reducing risk factors and increasing assets surrounding them, and providing them with growth opportunities.

Survey Method: The evaluation of the BCLC program is multi-faceted consisting of several levels of analysis and including both process and outcome analyses. Many different types of information are considered, including Boston Public School (BPS) data, BCLC data, and data collected from eight BCLC sites that are the subjects of in-depth evaluation. The data analyzed in this report was collected primarily in the 2003-2004 academic year, but data from the 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 academic years were also examined. BCLC 2003-2004 academic year sample consisted of all 3702 enrollees. A comparable sample of 4038 BPS students enrolled in schools with BCLC programs was randomly

selected from the larger BPS population by the statistical analysis software, SPSS. The BPS sample was chosen on the basis of gender, grade, and race to match the BCLC program controlling for as many variables as possible.

Gender

	BPS	BCLC
Female	49%	49%
Male	51%	51%

Race

	BPS	BCLC
Black	45%	50%
Hispanic	29.5%	31%
White	16%	10%
Asian	9%	8%
Native American	.5%	.5%

Languages Spoken (other than English)

	BPS	BCLC
Spanish	6%	5%
Chinese	0.60%	1%
Cape Verdean Creole	0.50%	1%
Portuguese	0.40%	0.40%
Haitian Creole	1.20%	0.20%
Somali	0.10%	0.10%
Vietnamese	0.50%	0%
Other/Multi	0.80%	0.30%
TOTAL	10%	8%

Surveys:

The Massachusetts Department of Education: Surveys of day teachers and after school staff (SAYO)

Survey of After-School Youth Outcomes-After School Staff Version (SAYO-S)

- Focus areas: Homework, behavior, initiative, relations with adults, relations with peers, engagement in learning

Survey of After-School Youth Outcomes-Teacher Version (SAYO-T)

- Focus areas: Academic achievement in math and ELA, Homework, behavior, initiative, engagement in learning

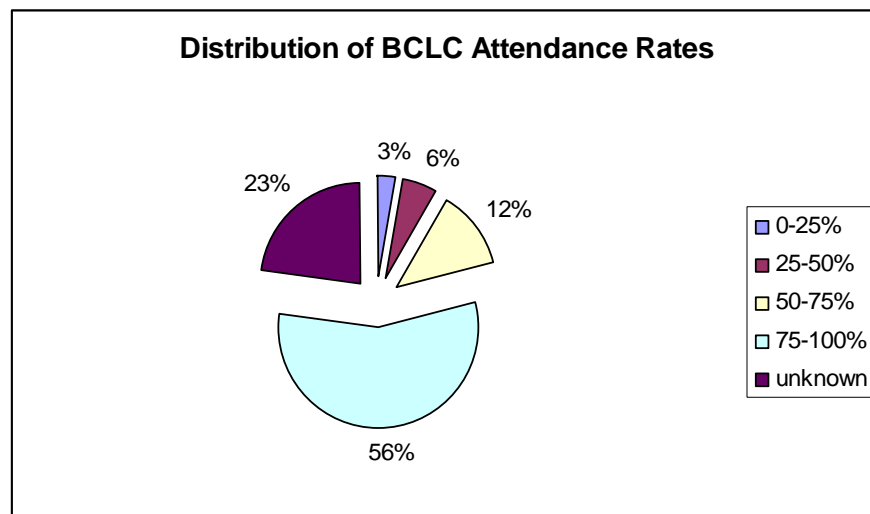
BPS - BCLC comparison group analyses: Compilation of youth data from BPS

- Demographic information Age, gender, race, grade, Special needs, free/reduced lunch, bilingualism
- Attendance
- Disciplinary actions
- Academic grades
- Standardized test scores: (MCAS, DRA, SRI, SAT)

In-depth site evaluation including surveys of after school staff and youth

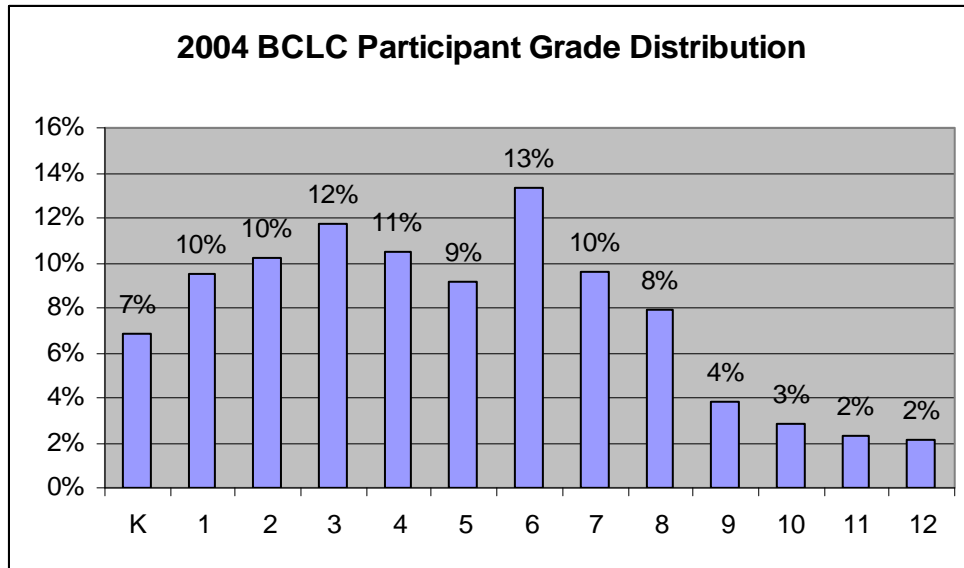
- Search Institute: 40 Assets
- Rosenberg's Self-Esteem
- Risk Behaviors
- Attitude Measures

Number of Boston Students Served and Retention Rates: Over the past three years the initiative has provided 10,180 slots for 7546 unique children. 73% have attended the program for one year, 19% for two years and 8% for three years.

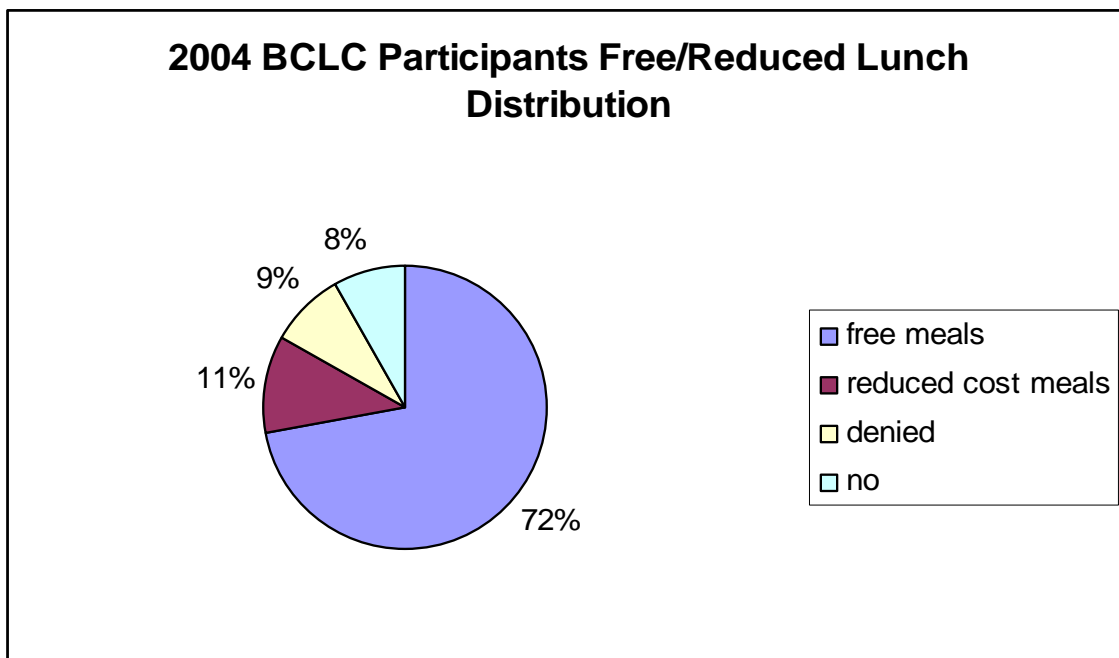


Other BCLC Demographic Information:

The distribution of grades was skewed to the left, 58% of the sample was elementary age students, 31% were in middle school and 11% were in high school. The table below shows the overall grade distribution.

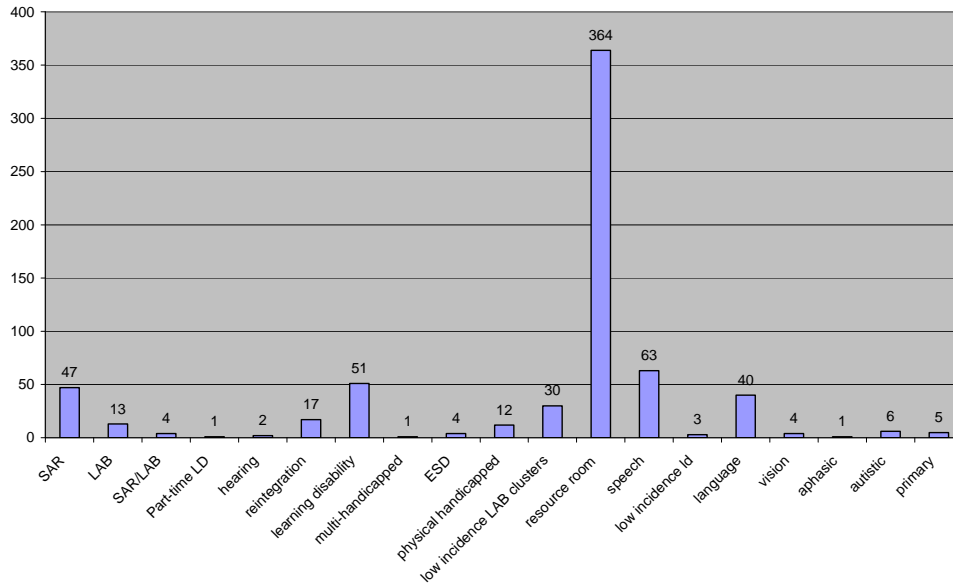


The majority of 2004 BCLC participants (83%) received free or reduced cost lunch indicating an overall low socio-economic group.

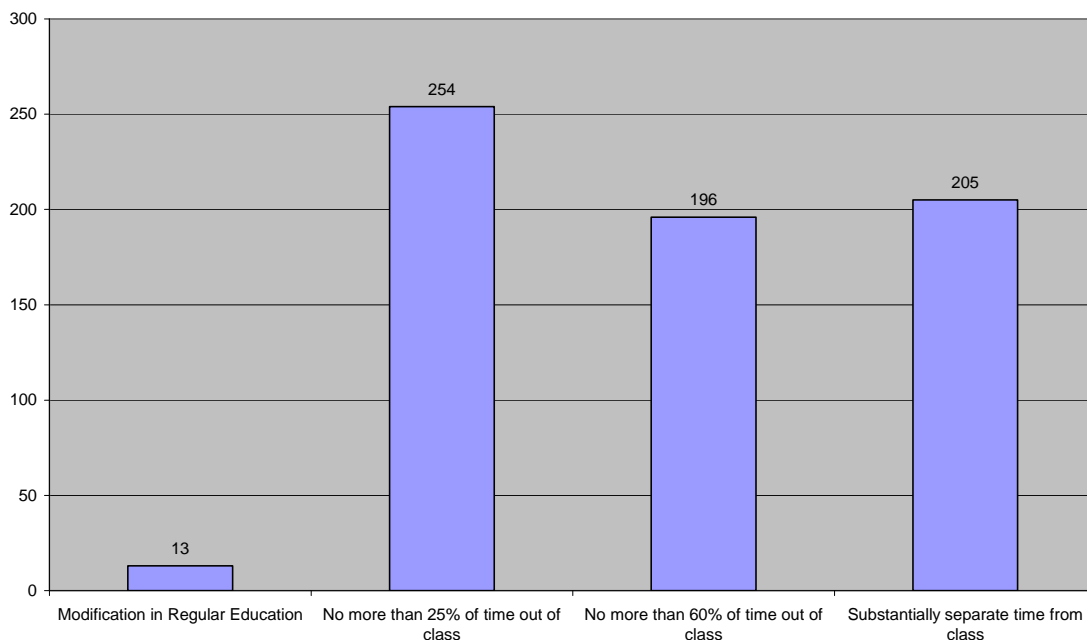


Eighteen percent of 2004 BCLC participants were enrolled in special education according to the distribution shown below. Despite the overall low incidence of special education enrollment, those who required these services were highly disabled, such that 60% of those enrolled in these services spent more than 50% of their time out of their regular classrooms.

Frequency of Special Education in BCLC 2004 by Categories



Severity of Special Education Enrollees according to amount of time spend out of class



Results

Academics/Standardized Testing:

Time effects of BCLC participation on ELA and MATH MCAS scores:

MCAS ELA scores were analyzed according to the number of years (1, 2 or 3) students participated in BCLC programs. Students showed significant improvement in MCAS ELA scores the longer they had been in the program.¹ All means fell in the “needs improvement” category of functioning, but at the high end of the category.

Number of Years	Mean
One year	230
Two year	232
Three year	235

MCAS MATH scores were analyzed in the same way according to the number of years (1, 2 or 3) students participated in BCLC programs. Students also showed significant improvement in MCAS MATH scores.² All means fell in the “needs improvement” category of functioning, but the three year group scored at the high end of the category.

Number of Years	Mean
One year	224
Two year	226
Three year	233

These findings indicate that long term enrollment in the BCLC initiative raises both ELA and MATH MCAS scores.

¹ One Way Analysis of Variance resulted in $F=17.98$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$. Post hoc Tukey HSD showed that three year BCLC students' scores were significantly higher than both one and two year BCLC students. There was no difference between one and two year BCLC students, but a trend toward a higher score for two year BCLC students.

² One Way Analysis of Variance resulted in $F=38.94$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$. Post hoc Tukey HSD showed that three year BCLC students' scores were significantly higher than both one and two year BCLC students. There was no difference between one and two year BCLC students, but a trend toward a higher score for two year BCLC students.

BPS/BCLC group comparisons of MCAS scores:

MCAS ELA scores analyzed for BCLC and BPS samples using One Way Analysis of Variance³ showed that BCLC participants scored significantly higher than their BPS counterparts. The BPS average was in the “warning”/“failing” category while the BCLC average was in the “needs improvement” category.

MCAS MATH scores also analyzed for BCLC and BPS samples using One Way Analysis of Variance⁴ showed no significant difference between BCLC and BPS samples, however, there was a trend toward BCLC participants scoring higher on average than BPS students. Unfortunately students, in general, are not scoring as high on the MATH exam as they do on the ELA exam and the means for both groups of students were within the “warning”/“failure” level of functioning.

Grade Point Average Comparison for BCLC and BPS Samples over Time:

Examination of three years of grade data for both BCLC and BPS samples revealed a trend toward higher grade point averages each year for BCLC participants. This trend was found to be significant for the 2001-2002 academic year.⁵

	BCLC	BPS
2001-2002	2.02	1.85
2002-2003	2.00	2.00
2003-2004	1.93	1.84

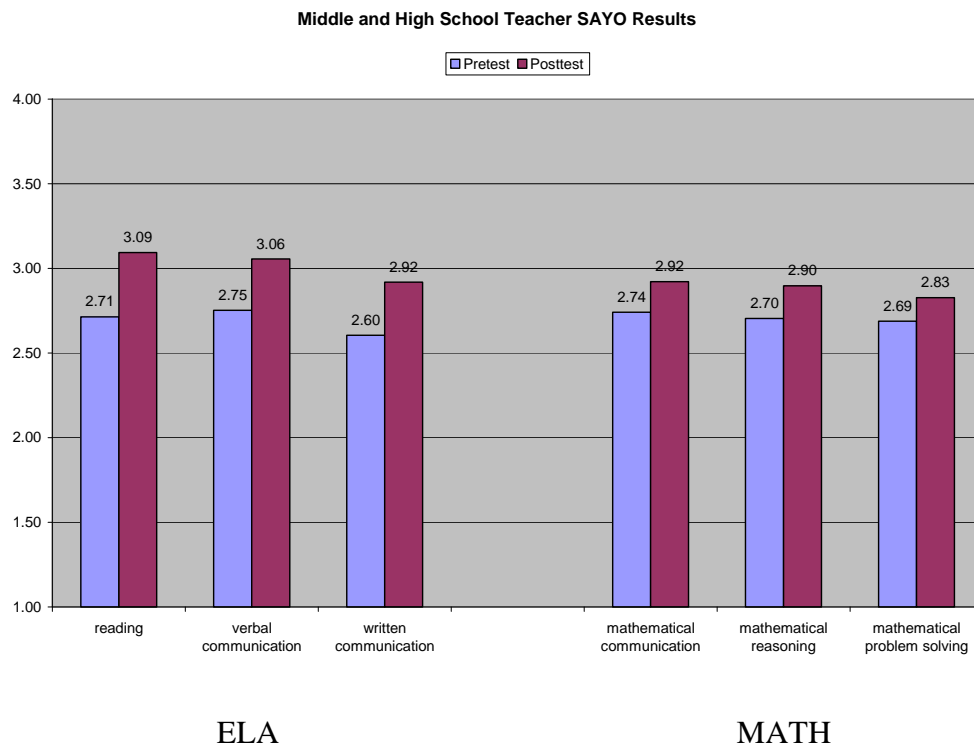
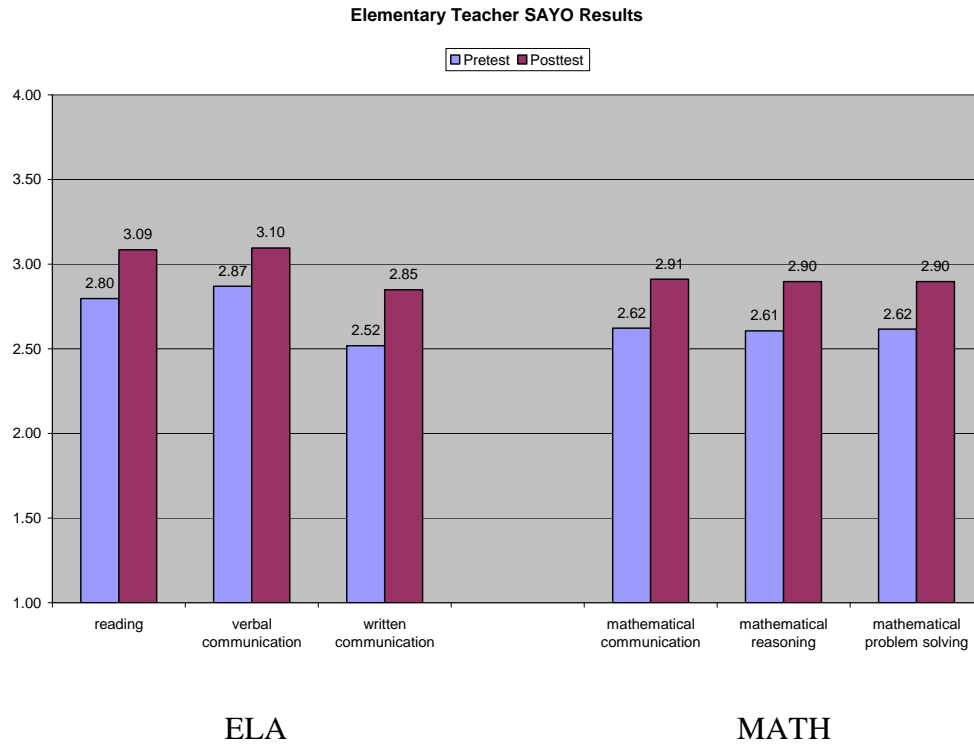
Day Teacher SAYO Academic Ratings for ELA and MATH:

³ F=27.73, df=1, p<0.05

⁴ F=1.62, df=1, not significant

⁵ F=10.75, df=1, p<0.05

SAYO surveys administered at the beginning and the end of the academic year by day teachers showed significant improvement in all areas of academic functioning for both ELA and MATH. These improvements were revealed for all levels of schooling including elementary, middle and high school.

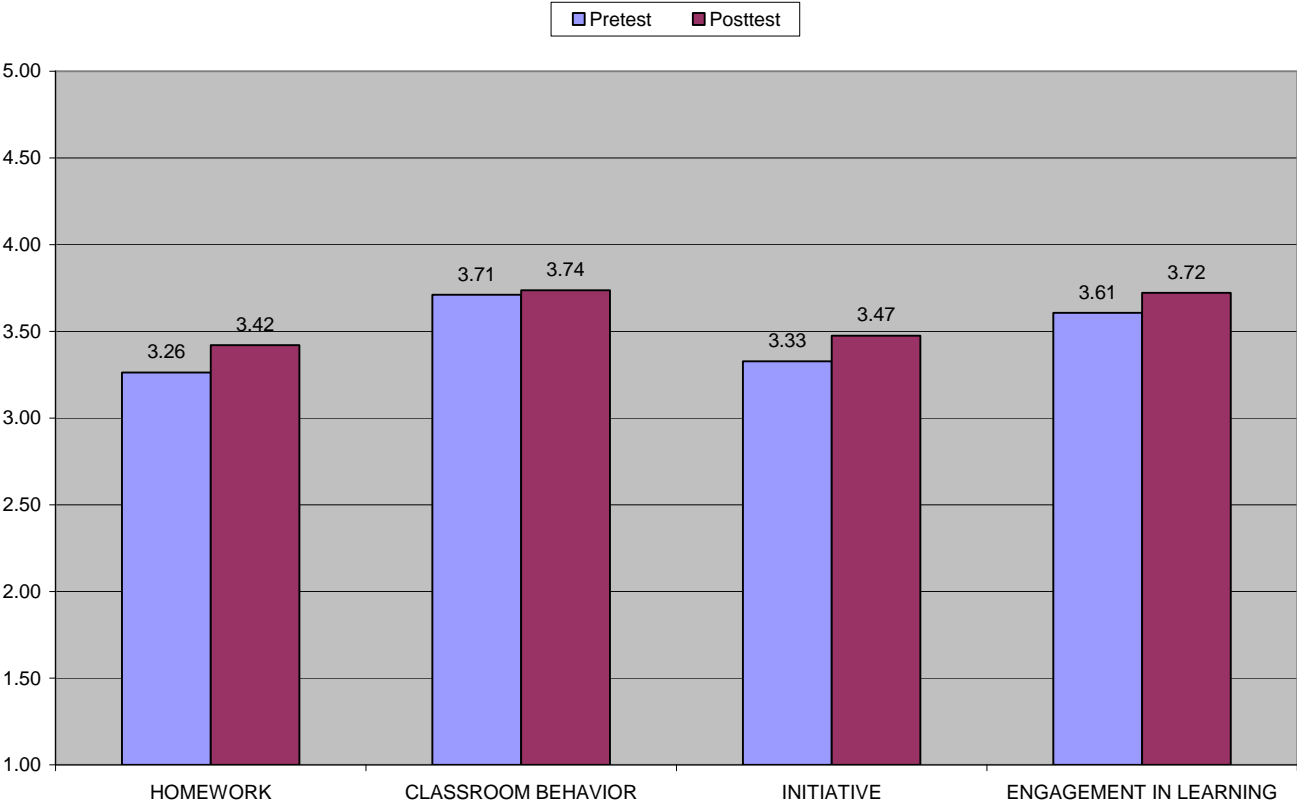


In addition, it is encouraging that BCLC participants are significantly improving academically over time and in comparison to BPS students, as many BCLC programs recruit students who are academically struggling,

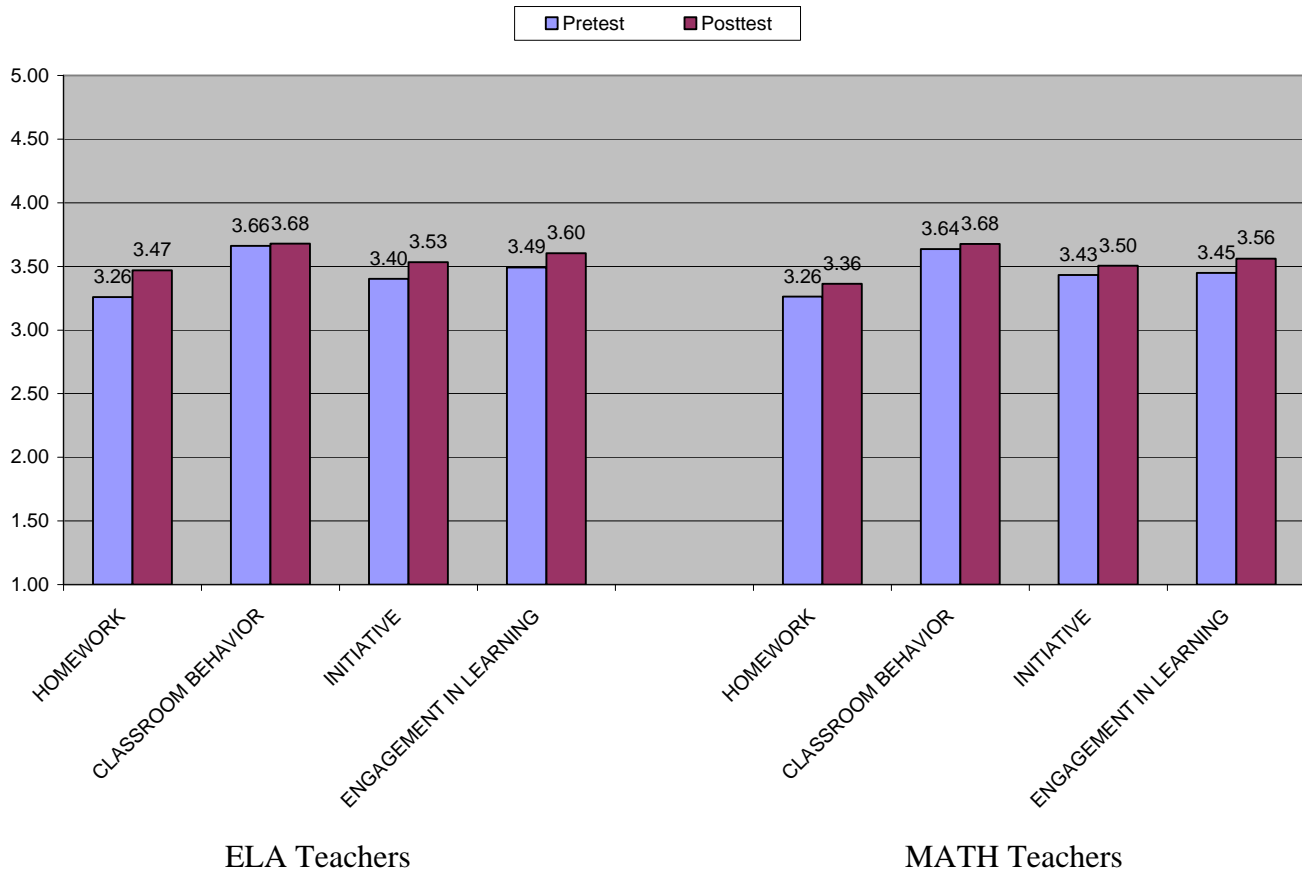
Additional SAYO Results:

Day Teachers also rated their students’ performance in the areas of homework, behavior, initiative, and engagement in learning. These ratings significantly improved from the beginning to the end of the academic year for all areas and for all school levels.

Additional Day Teacher SAYO Results: Elementary School



Additional Teacher SAYO Results: Middle and High School



Risk Factors for BCLC Students:

Violence-Related Behaviors and Experiences:

- 66% witnessed violence during the previous twelve months
- 35% of the violence was witnessed on the street
- 25% of the violence was witnessed in school
- 10% of the violence was witnessed on the MBTA
- 6% of the violence was witnessed at home
- 40% of the violence was perpetrated with fists/feet

- 18% of the violence was perpetrated with a gun
- 17.5% of the violence was perpetrated with a knife
- 14% of the violence was perpetrated with a bat or club
- 16% of the violence was perpetrated by a friend or family member

Illegal Drug Use:

- Use of alcohol decreased from 21% of BCLC middle and high schoolers sampled at the beginning of the academic year to 12% at the end of the academic year.
- Use of marijuana decreased from 12% of BCLC middle and high schoolers sampled at the beginning of the academic year to 6% at the end of the academic year.
- No other recreational drug use was reported by BCLC students.

Safety Concerns:

- 95% felt “very safe” at home.
- 87% felt “very safe” in their after school program.
- 80% felt “very safe” at school.
- 48% felt “very safe” on their street.

Assets and Attitudes:

Attitudes toward School:

- 96% felt that school is “important” or “very important”.
- 97% felt that the grades they earn are “important” or “very important”.

- 76% reported they “like” their teachers.
- 84% reported they don’t quit when their school work becomes difficult.
- 89% reported usually completing their homework.

Attitudes toward Their After School Program:

- 94% reported that they “like” their after school program.
- 86% reported that they attend their program “almost everyday” or “everyday”.

Family Relationships:

- Students at all levels reported an improvement in the number of times per week they eat dinner with their parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - 70% of Elementary students ate dinner with a parental figure 5-7 times a week.
 - 64% of Middle/High students ate dinner with a parental figure 5-7 times a week.

Other Important Information:

- 90% of students reported that they have an adult with whom they are able to discuss their problems. This represents an improvement for middle and high school youth, but no change for elementary youth.
- 87% reported that they were “as good as others”.
- 70% reported that they were “not depressed”.
- 85% reported that they were “hopeful for their futures”.

- **Participants often credited their after school program with providing a fun place to learn, complete their homework and receive help, while avoiding the dangers of the streets. They also often commented that the program staff was very nice and supportive. Participants also commonly referred to their program as a “family”.**

Summary

The BCLC program is providing a well-rounded and successful way to improve academic performance and increase the likelihood of our children growing into happy, healthy, and successful young adults.

The BCLC evaluation has shown statistically significant improvement in all areas of functioning.

Continued, and expanded funding for this program is of vital importance for the continued success of our children.