

# Out-of-School Time in Elev8 Community Schools: A First Look at Participation and its Unique Contribution to Students' Experiences in School

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Prepared for The Atlantic Philanthropies  
Prepared by Research for Action & McClanahan Associates, Inc.

July 2013

Authors

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## About Research for Action

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization. We seek to use research as the basis for the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes for traditionally underserved students. Our work is designed to: strengthen public schools and postsecondary institutions; provide research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners, and the public at the local, state, and national levels; and enrich the civic and community dialogue about public education. For more information, please visit our website at [www.researchforaction.org](http://www.researchforaction.org).

## About McClanahan Associates, Inc.

At McClanahan Associates, Inc., we are committed to strengthening programs based on flexible, yet rigorous, evaluation practices that help organizations and funders achieve their mission of improving people's lives. We work closely with the organizations we partner with – capitalizing on their deep knowledge of the local context, the population they serve, and their own program – and generating information and recommendations for our clients that are understandable, practical, and useful. Our staff is comprised of expert researchers, evaluators and technical assistance providers. As a team, we believe that meaningful evaluation efforts respond to each program's unique needs, align with the developmental stage of the program, and produce information that is immediately relevant to practitioners.

## Acknowledgements

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## Executive Summary

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### Introduction

A solid, high-quality education is a key to successful adulthood; however, young people from low-income families and communities often face a myriad of educational and academic challenges that put them at risk for ongoing disadvantage. Community schools are an approach that has been adopted to respond to this educational crisis. By partnering with local agencies, community schools provide students and families with access to healthcare services, educational enhancement and recreational opportunities, family economic supports such as workforce development and income tax assistance, and other programming, like educational advocacy activities, leadership opportunities, child care, and others, to increase student outcomes and overall quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

### About Elev8

In 2007, The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic) made an investment in its first five community schools in the State of New Mexico. Over the years that followed, Atlantic invested in developing community schools in three additional locations —Chicago, Baltimore, and Oakland—totaling about 20 schools across all four regions.

For this initiative, now known as Elev8, Atlantic selected agencies with deep local roots to serve as regional leads. Each of these grantees has developed and implemented flexible, full-service community school models in up to five schools, focusing on middle-grade students in low-performing schools in their region. Elev8 schools employ a team of Out-of-School Time (OST) staff, family advocates, medical professionals, a site director, and others, as dictated by their model.

### About this Study

Since 2008, Atlantic's evaluation effort had focused on generating information to help create and sustain the strongest initiative possible. As a result, the first five years of the evaluation were designed to ensure that the model was robustly implemented, and to assist the local sites in utilizing evaluation information to strengthen their efforts. However, Atlantic and their grantees are now seeking to document how students fare in the program, and to contribute to the literature on community schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Bireda, S. (2009). A Look at Community Schools, Center for American Progress. Retrieved November 29, 2012 from [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/community\\_schools.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/community_schools.pdf)

With this in mind, the evaluation team set forth to explore what questions we could answer with the data we had in hand. As a significant investment is made in OST activities in Elev8 and other community school models, this report takes a preliminary look inside the “black box” of community schools, thereby providing important information to the field about the relative value of OST within a community school model. This study answers the following questions:

- Who participates in OST in Elev8 schools?
- What are their patterns of participation?
- How do Elev8 OST participants compare to students in Elev8 schools who do not participate in Elev8 OST (called “non-OST” or “non-participants” in this report)?
- How is participation in Elev8 OST related to students’ experiences of school?

To answer these questions, we used data from three main sources:

- Administrative records containing student demographic data;
- OST participation data (the “participation data”); and,
- Self-report data from our annual survey of students in Elev8 schools.

More details on the data sources and survey administration can be found in the appendices of the full report.

## Community Schools and OST—What We Know

While community schools have existed for almost a century, rigorous evaluation of the impact of this educational model is limited, but growing. Research points to three indicators that suggest that community schools are a promising approach.<sup>2</sup> They include:

- Improved academic performance;
- Improved behavior; and,
- Increased parental involvement.

OST activities are a central component of community schools and, while not a lot is known specifically about OST in the context of community schools, the literature on the impact of school- and/or community-based OST programs is quite robust, though results are mixed. Many programs demonstrate increased academic achievement, positive youth development, and reductions in harmful behaviors, such as drug use.<sup>3</sup> However, some studies report more limited benefits to students who participate in OST programs. Research suggests that participation rates vary in response to student motivation;<sup>4</sup> the needs of the family; whether that is quality childcare or academic support; and, program availability.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a review, see Dryfoos, J.G. (2000). Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date. Coalition for Community Schools.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, H.B. (2004). Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 7.

<sup>4</sup> Bodilly, S.J. & Beckett, M.K. (2005). Making Out-of-School-Time Matter. RAND Research Brief Education. Retrieved from [www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG242](http://www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG242)

<sup>5</sup> Hynes, K. & Sanders, F. (2010). The changing landscape of afterschool programs. *Afterschool Matters* (June).

## Participation in Elev8 OST Programming

Elev8 OST is an essential component of the Elev8 initiative. However, the exact nature of the programming varies by region and school. All Elev8 schools provide both recreational and academically focused OST programming.<sup>6</sup> Students come into the OST program in a variety of ways. In most cases, participation in Elev8 OST activities is open to all students who are interested. In a handful of schools, however, students struggling academically are exclusively targeted for Elev8 OST programming which, in those schools, is focused on academics. Additionally, some Elev8 schools offer non-Elev8-funded OST activities to students, so a student not enrolled in Elev8 OST may still have the opportunity to participate in other school-based OST activities that are not reflected in our data.

### Who Participates in Elev8 OST Activities?

The demographic characteristics of participants are displayed in Table ES-1.

*Representative of the regions in which Elev8 is located, students who participate in Elev8 OST are primarily low-income students of color. Female students and middle schoolers in the younger grades are most likely to participate.*

- **Racial and ethnic characteristics:** Representative of the regions in which Elev8 is located. Elev8 OST participants are primarily students of color.
- **Gender:** Elev8 OST participants are more likely to be female than male; however, gender breakdowns vary by site.
- **Income status:** The bulk of students who participate in Elev8 OST, as well as those who attend Elev8 schools, are from low-income homes.<sup>7</sup>
- **Grade level:** Elev8 targets middle-grade students. Overall, the data shows that younger students are more likely to participate than older students. This condition holds true in many OST programs nationwide.

Table ES-1: Characteristics of Elev8 OST participants

CHARACTERISTIC	Region A		Region B		Region C		Region D	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>								
African American	285	93.1	523	48.7	109	37.7	41	5.1
Asian	0	0	3	0.3	13	4.5	8	1.0
Hispanic	0	0	533	49.7	148	51.2	353	43.7
Native American	0	0	3	0.3	0	0	267	33.0
Other	12	3.9	8	0.8	19	6.6	21	2.6
White	9	2.9	3	0.3	0	0	118	14.6
<b>GENDER</b>								
Female	158	51.6	563	52.5	144	49.8	435	53.8
Male	148	48.4	510	47.5	145	50.2	373	46.2

<sup>6</sup> Only one region provided data that documents the actual types of OST programs that students participate in. That data is provided later in this report.

<sup>7</sup> We gauged income status by using free or reduced-price lunch eligibility as a proxy for income (denoted FRL and NON-FRL herein).

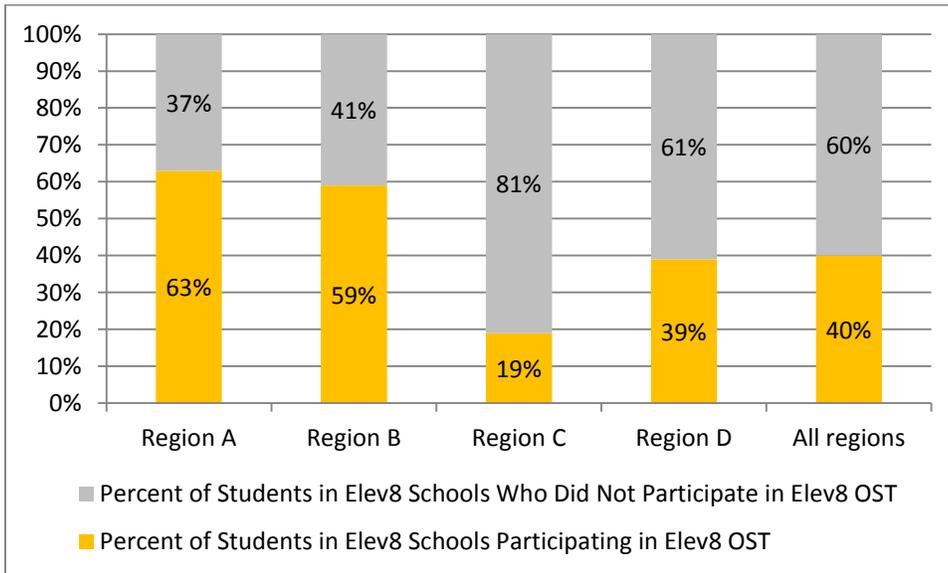
FRL STATUS								
FRL	0	0	989	92.2	237	82.0	661	81.8
NON-FRL	0	0	50	4.7	1	0.4	118	14.6
Not Sure	306	100.0	34	3.2	51	17.7	29	3.6
GRADE LEVEL								
5th Grade	70	22.9	20	1.9	0	0	3	0.4
6th Grade	105	34.3	248	23.1	97	33.6	199	24.6
7th Grade	70	22.9	397	37.0	74	25.6	307	38.0
8th Grade	48	15.7	382	35.6	63	21.8	282	34.9
Other	13	4.3	26	2.4	55	19.0	17	2.1

### What are Students' Patterns of Participation in Elev8 OST?

As can be seen in Figure ES-1, across all regions, about four in ten students in middle grades in Elev8 schools participated in Elev8 OST activities at least once during the 2010-11 school year.<sup>8</sup> However, participation varied by region. This is due, in part, to differences in program focus.

*About four in ten middle-grades students in Elev8 schools participated in Elev8 OST activities at least once during the 2010-11 school year.*

Figure ES-1: Elev8 OST participation rate by region and overall during the 2010-11 school year



<sup>8</sup> Grades targeted for Elev8 are primarily the middle grades: 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. However, there is variation by school. In Baltimore, for instance, some 5<sup>th</sup> graders are included in Elev8 because the school configuration is K-8. In Chicago, there is a school that only serves 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. In Oakland, some campuses include 9<sup>th</sup> graders and therefore some 9<sup>th</sup> graders receive programming. Data are from 2011 Elev8 participation summary.

- **Participation in days:** Across regions, students participating in Elev8 OST attended the program for an average of 43 days, ranging from 1 to 143 days in 2010-2011. This compares favorably to the average number of days students in Providence’s After Zone participated in OST programming.<sup>9 10</sup>
- **Participation in months:** Students participating in Elev8 OST did so for 5.3 months of the school year on average. Across regions, participation averages ranged from 3.8 to 6.3 months.
- **Breadth of participation in activities and services:** Only one region had data on the types of Elev8 activities students engaged in; on average, students in this region participated in two to three different types of Elev8 OST activities. Across all regions, just under a quarter of students in Elev8 schools both participated in Elev8 OST and took advantage of the school-based health center, another key Elev8 service.

## How Do the Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Non-Participants Compare?

Across regions there are differences between students who opted to participate in Elev8 OST activities for at least one day and those who did not. Students who participated in Elev8 OST are more likely to be African American and less likely to be Hispanic than non-participants. They are also more likely to be in the younger grades than their non-OST participating peers. There are no statistically significant differences in gender or income status between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants.

*Students who opted to participate in Elev8 OST were more likely to be African American and to be in younger middle school grades than those who opted not to participate.*

## How Is Participation in Elev8 OST Related to Students’ Experiences of School?

This evaluation examines the relationship between student participation in Elev8 OST programs and two school experience outcomes we had access to in our data: 8<sup>th</sup> grade students’ high school transition planning and attitudes toward school. After taking into account pre-existing differences in student race/ethnicity, gender, student socioeconomic status, and schools students attended, our analyses suggest the following:

- Among those who participated in Elev8 OST, higher levels of participation are associated with more positive high school planning outcomes. More specifically:
  - ✓ Students who attended more days in Elev8 OST were more likely to participate in a wider range of high school planning activities.
  - ✓ Engaging in more high school planning activities is associated with a greater likelihood of having a plan for high school.

<sup>9</sup> In the 2008-09 school year, middle schoolers in the After Zone program participated for an average of 24 of the 96 days of OST programming available to them. Over 80 percent participated in no more than half of the available days (Kauh, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Little, P.M.D & Harris, E. (2003). A Review of Out-of-School Time Program Quasi-Experimental and Experimental Evaluation Results. In Out of School Time Evaluation Snapshots. Number 1. Harvard Family Research Project. Kauh, T. (2011). AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence’s Citywide After-School System. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

- ✓ Students who attended more days of Elev8 OST are more likely to report planning to apply for a competitive college preparatory high school (defined as a selective enrollment—public or private—or charter high school).<sup>11</sup>
- The Elev8 program is a whole-school model and as such it might benefit all students who attended Elev8 schools, including OST participants and non-participants. According to our analysis:
  - ✓ Both Elev8 OST participants and non-participants reported high levels of efficacy<sup>12</sup>, liked schools they attended, and valued school highly.
  - ✓ More than two thirds of students in Elev8 schools (including OST participants and non-participants) reported that they feel school is relevant to their future.
  - ✓ The majority of the 8th-grade students in Elev8 schools (including OST participants and non-participants) participated in high school planning activities and reported having clear high school plans.

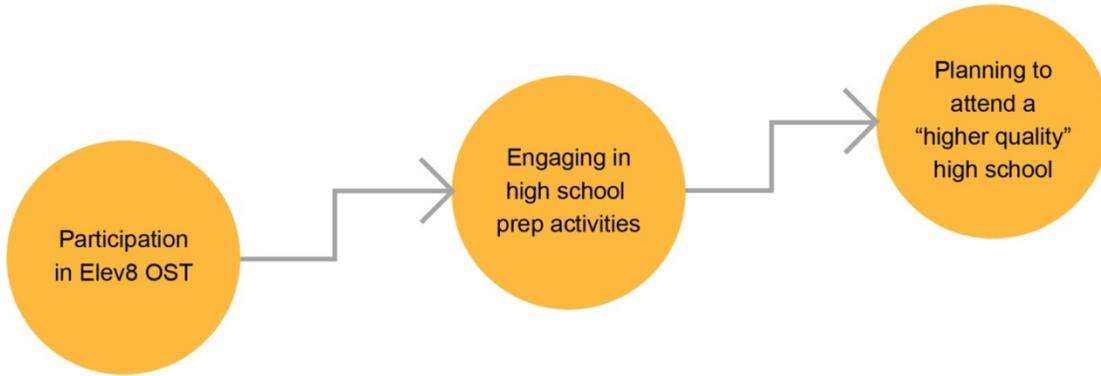
*Eighth grade Elev8 participants who attended more frequently were significantly more likely to participate in a wide range of high school planning activities (such as spending the day shadowing at a high school of interest, attending a test preparation class, attending a mock high school interview, etc.) than those with lower OST participation. Also, Elev8 OST participants who participated more frequently were more likely to report that they planned to attend a college-preparatory (selective enrollment—public or private—or charter) high school than those with less frequent participation. Elev8 OST participation was not related to school attitudes, possibly because students had uniformly positive attitudes towards school.*

Our study was not designed to determine definitively if participation in Elev8 OST is the *cause* of these outcomes. Therefore, these findings do not definitely demonstrate that Elev8 OST participation is beneficial to students' high school planning efforts beyond the benefit Elev8 may exert school-wide (irrespective of 8<sup>th</sup> graders' participation in Elev8 OST). Yet, they do suggest that increased participation levels in Elev8 OST is associated with better high school planning efforts and higher high school aspirations within the subgroup of Elev8 OST participants. These are relationships built into the Elev8 initiative to help students establish a model pathway to postsecondary success (see Figure ES-2).

<sup>11</sup> Regions varied in terms of the availability of selective enrollment and charter high schools. Some regions have robust options, while others have fewer choices. One school had only one feeder high school. Finally, we do not have data to confirm that these schools actually have higher rates of students attending or prepared for college than traditional neighborhood schools.

<sup>12</sup> Their perception that they can achieve in school.

Figure ES-2: Theory of action between participation in Elev8 OST and participants' high school plans



## Final Thoughts

Despite limitations, these findings suggest that: 1) increasing participation levels in OST programs in community school settings may promote OST participants' success in high school; and 2) Elev8 students in our sample have positive attitudes toward school. Elev8 aims to guide students through the steps necessary to prepare, plan for, and attend high-quality high schools through various activities taking place in the school day and by bolstering these school-wide activities during OST programming.

As Elev8 and other community schools strive to meet their central goal of preparing students for high school, OST activities may be a promising context to help inform students about their high school options and planning activities. More research is needed to understand the relationship between Elev8 OST and positive student outcomes.



## Out-of-School Time in Elev8 Community Schools: A First Look at Participation and its Unique Contribution to Students' Experiences in School

July 2013

### Chapter I: Introduction

Far too many children across America face substantial barriers to educational success. Poverty and lack of access to high-quality learning opportunities and healthcare mean young people do not receive the support they need to thrive. A solid, high-quality education is a key to successful adulthood; however, young people from low-income families and communities often face a myriad of educational and academic challenges that put them at risk for ongoing disadvantage. Community schools are an approach that has been adopted to respond to this educational crisis. Community schools are educational models that pool resources and services to meet students', families', and communities' needs in order to alleviate systemic problems associated with poor performance in school. By partnering with local agencies, community schools provide students and families with access to supports to increase student outcomes and overall quality of life, such as healthcare services; child care; educational enhancement and recreational opportunities; family economic supports, such as workforce development and income tax assistance; and other programming, like educational advocacy activities, leadership opportunities, child care, and others.<sup>13</sup> Proponents of the model posit that community schools' "integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities."<sup>14</sup>

In 2008, The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic) made an investment in its first five community schools in the State of New Mexico. Over the years that followed, Atlantic invested in developing community schools in three additional locations where there was also the need for support of low-performing middle schools and middle-school students—Chicago, Baltimore, and Oakland—totaling about 20 schools across all four regions. A brief look at the communities where the investments were made shows some of the reasons why they were targeted:

- In the City of Chicago, there is a 50% high school graduation rate, compared with 70% statewide.<sup>15</sup>
- In the State of New Mexico, over 25% of children live in poverty.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Bireda, S. (2009). A Look at Community Schools. Center for American Progress. Retrieved November 29, 2012 from [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/community\\_schools.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/community_schools.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> What is a Community School? Coalition for Community Schools. Retrieved November 29, 2012, from [http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what\\_is\\_a\\_community\\_school.aspx](http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what_is_a_community_school.aspx)

<sup>15</sup> Source: Illinois Department of Education, 2010

<sup>16</sup> Source: American Community Survey (2009)

- In the City of Baltimore, 50% of public school 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored in the “basic” category on the Maryland School Assessments in reading and math.<sup>17</sup>
- In the City of Oakland, 21% of children live below the poverty line.<sup>18</sup>

For this initiative, now known as Elev8, Atlantic selected agencies with deep local roots to serve as regional leads. Each of these grantees has developed and implemented flexible, full-service community school models in up to five schools, focusing on middle-grade students in low-performing schools in their region. Their efforts build on core elements that research has linked with student achievement and success.<sup>19</sup> These include extended-day learning opportunities, school-based healthcare, and support for families, which are all integrated into the school to make good use of resources and effectively support students.

### About this Study

Assessing the impact of efforts like Elev8 requires time and patience—measurable results take time to achieve and are difficult to prove definitively. In recognition of this, since 2008, Atlantic’s evaluation effort has focused on generating information to help create and sustain the strongest initiative possible. As a result, the first five years of the evaluation were designed to ensure that the model was robustly implemented, and to assist the local sites in utilizing evaluation information to strengthen their efforts.

Atlantic and their grantees are now seeking to document how students fare in the program, and to contribute to the literature on community schools. With this in mind, the evaluation team set forth to explore what questions we could answer with the data we had in hand.

Our review of the literature suggests that, despite the fact that Out-of-School Time (OST) activities are a fundamental aspect of the community school model, little is known about the impact of OST activities on students in the context of community schools. Research has shown that participation in *high-quality* OST programs can provide important opportunities for disadvantaged youth and can result in significant social and educational gains, including: improved school attendance; stronger academic performance; better attitudes towards and behavior in school, improved relationships; and, decreased

*Atlantic and their grantees are now seeking to document how students fare in the program, and to contribute to the literature on community schools. With this in mind, the evaluation team has used data originally intended as part of the program improvement effort to achieve these goals. The result of that effort is presented herein.*

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*This study answers the following questions:*

- *Who participates in OST in Elev8 schools?*
- *What are their patterns of participation?*
- *How do Elev8 OST participants compare to students in Elev8 schools who do not participate in Elev8 OST (non-OST or non-participants in this report)?*
- *How is participation in Elev8 OST related to students’ experiences of school?*

<sup>17</sup> Source: Kids Count (2012)

<sup>18</sup> Source: Oakland Unified School District, CA: DP3 Economic Characteristics. ProximityOne. Retrieved from [http://proximityone.com/acs/dpca/dp3\\_0628050.htm](http://proximityone.com/acs/dpca/dp3_0628050.htm)

<sup>19</sup> Blank, M.A., Melaville, A., & Shah, B.P. (no date). Making the difference: Research and practice in community schools. Coalition for Community Schools. Retrieved January 7, 2013 from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/Page/CCSFullReport.pdf>.

delinquency.<sup>20</sup> Research also shows that participation in OST in a school-based setting can increase parental involvement in school.<sup>21</sup> By design, community schools should be able to enhance these outcomes as they are likely to bolster youth's participation in OST activities by reducing barriers to participation such as: transportation; peer involvement; developing programming that is responsive to the school's and students' needs; and, reducing participation reluctance or hesitancy (as teachers and school staff can collaboratively encourage youth to participate<sup>22</sup>).

As a significant investment is made in OST activities in Elev8 and other community school models, this report takes a preliminary look inside the "black box" of community schools, thereby providing important information to the community schools field about the relative value of OST within a community school model. This study examines the relationship between student participation in community schools' OST activities and students' experiences in schools that may be related to more positive academic outcomes. This study answers the following questions:

- Who participates in OST in Elev8 schools?
- What are their patterns of participation?
- How do Elev8 OST participants compare to students in Elev8 schools who do not participate in Elev8 OST (called non-OST or non-participants in this report)?
- How is participation in Elev8 OST related to students' experiences of school?

To answer these questions, we used data from three main sources:

- Administrative records containing student demographic data;
- OST participation data (the "participation data"); and,
- Self-report data from our annual survey of students in Elev8 schools.

More details on the data sources and survey administration can be found in the appendices.

It is critical to keep in mind that, while OST activities are a central component of Elev8, they are only one component of the initiative. Elev8 is a whole-school model, and all students in Elev8 schools have the opportunity to participate in school-wide Elev8 activities, such as health fairs and opportunities for increased parent and community involvement in schools, and will be exposed to changes to school climate and school policy brought about by the community school effort. Our analysis suggests that, on average, both Elev8 participants and non-participants reported: high levels of efficacy (their perception that they can achieve in school); liked schools they attended; and, valued school highly. Further, a majority of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Elev8 schools, including OST participants and non-participants, participated in high school planning activities and reported having clear high school plans. Notably, our analysis suggests that participation level in Elev8 OST activities is associated with planning and preparing for high school among 8<sup>th</sup> grade Elev8 participants.

In the sections that follow, we provide background information on the community schools model, its origin, and a brief review of the literature on community schools initiatives. We then provide a description of the Elev8 initiative, followed by information about the data sources used in our analyses.

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<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Little, P.M.D & Harris, E. (2003). A Review of Out-of-School Time Program Quasi-Experimental and Experimental Evaluation Results. In *Out of School Time Evaluation Snapshots*. Number 1. Harvard Family Research Project. Kauh, T. (2011). *AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence's Citywide After-School System*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

<sup>21</sup> Grossman, J.B. & Vang, Z. (2009). *The Case for School-Based Integration of Services: Changing the Ways Students, Families and Communities Engage With Their Schools*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

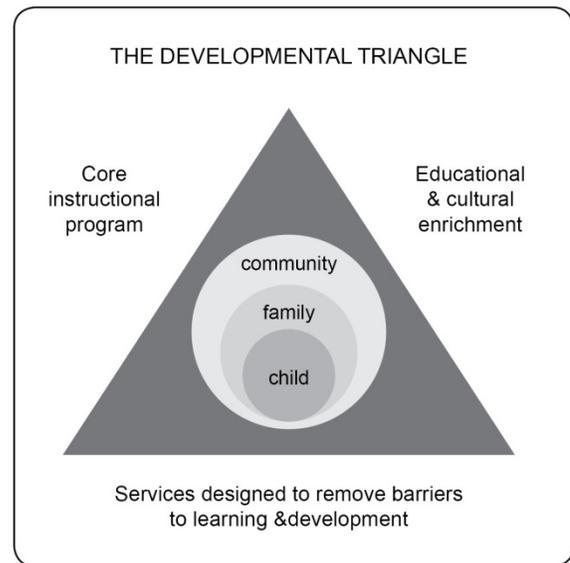
<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The final sections of the report describe OST participation in Elev8 and present early findings on the relationship between Elev8 OST participation and student outcomes.

## Chapter 2: Community Schools and OST—What We Know

### History of Community Schools

The community schools model began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with John Dewey and Jane Addams in response to the need to provide immigrant children with important medical services, such as immunization and dentistry.<sup>23</sup> Today, in response to the 21st century educational issues facing our nation’s most vulnerable youth, community schools exist in forty-nine states and the District of Columbia.<sup>24</sup> While community schools vary in terms of exact configuration of services and partners, according to the Children’s Aid Society, they share the following framework, known as the developmental triangle.<sup>25</sup> Within this framework, common services include OST (including summer) programming, family support services, and services to minimize student barriers to success, such as school-based health, behavioral health, and dental services. The framework recognizes that the engagement of students, their families, and community members in the school and the community is central to student success and the strength of the educational system as a whole.



Source: The Developmental Triangle, Children's Aid Society

### Evidence of Community Schools’ Success

While community schools have existed for almost a century, research on the impact of this educational model is limited, but growing. Nonetheless, some recent research studies suggest that community schools do have a positive impact on academic performance, behavior, and parental involvement. The results on each of these indicators are summarized below.

#### Improved Academic Performance

Educational success is a central goal of the community schools movement, and research on community schools suggests that community school students experience gains in school. Research on the academic impacts of community schools tends to focus on test scores, attendance, and drop-out rates. An evaluation of the Communities in Schools (CIS) model found that case managers played an important role in bolstering academic achievement for 6<sup>th</sup> graders, who achieved significant increases in their

<sup>23</sup> Dryfoos, J.G. (January, 2002). Full-service community schools: Creating new institutions. Phi Delta Kappan.

<sup>24</sup> Coalition for Community Schools (2009). Community schools: Research brief. Retrieved January 8, 2013 from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> National Center for Community Schools (no date). FAQs on Community Schools. Retrieved from <http://nationalcenterforcommunityschools.childrengroups.org/faqs/on-community-schools>

reading test scores; and 9<sup>th</sup> graders, who achieved significant increases in grade point average.<sup>26</sup> An evaluation of the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) also demonstrated that students who participated in their after-school programs earned significantly higher test scores than students in other schools.<sup>27</sup> In a review of 49 evaluations of community schools, Dryfoos found that 36 evaluations reported academic gains: most of the evaluations that reported gains were in the elementary school grades, and improvements were limited to students who needed “specialized services, such as case management, intensive mental health services, or extended day sessions.”<sup>28</sup> The extended day finding is especially noteworthy, as many community school models include an extended day component, while fewer include case management. Research also suggests that students in community schools had increased attendance rates and decreased drop-out rates.<sup>29</sup>

## **Improved Behavior**

Community schools also strive to create a learning environment that fosters improvements in student behavior. Several evaluations have suggested that suspension rates and disciplinary incidents are lower in community schools and among students attending community schools, though the evidence supporting these outcomes is somewhat mixed. In Dryfoos’ examination, 11 programs reported decreases in suspension rates. However, she posits that this decrease “may reflect changes in suspension policies, rather than changes in behaviors leading to suspensions.”<sup>30</sup> Chicago Public Schools manages the Chicago Community Schools Initiative (CSI), which is the largest community schools system in the country.<sup>31</sup> According to the Community Schools Research Brief, this system of schools consistently reported lower levels of disciplinary incidents compared to other schools in the district with similar student demographics.<sup>32</sup> However, while the five-year evaluation of CSI reported that school disciplinary incidents and suspensions decreased for students by the end of 6<sup>th</sup> grade, high school students’ disciplinary incidents and suspensions increased.<sup>33</sup>

## **Increased Parental Involvement**

Many community schools evaluations have found that parental involvement increases over time. Indicators of parental involvement include attendance at parent-teacher conferences and volunteering at school events. Home visits conducted by Family-School Liaisons and opportunities provided for parents to volunteer or take classes may be associated with parents’ increased involvement in community schools.

## **The Role of OST**

OST activities are a central component of community schools. Often, community schools are open for extended hours, providing students with a safe place to spend after-school hours and offering

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<sup>26</sup> IFC International (2010). Communities in schools National Evaluation: Five Year Study. Retrieved November 29, 2012 from <http://www.communitiesinschools.org/about/publications/publication/five-year-national-evaluation-summary-report>

<sup>27</sup> Summary of the Children’s Aid Society community schools: Results to date; Referenced from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers at six New York City middle schools: Year one findings, prepared by K. Krenichy, H. Clark, N. Schaefer-McDaniel, & L. Benitez of ActKnowledge, September 2004. See also Coalition for Community Schools’ Community Schools: Research Brief (2009).

<sup>28</sup> Dryfoos, J.G. (2000). Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date. Coalition for Community Schools.

<sup>29</sup> Coalition for Community Schools’ Community Schools: Research Brief (2009); Dryfoos (2000). Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date; Summary of the Children’s Aid Society community schools: Results to date; and K. Krenichy, H. Clark, N. Schaefer-McDaniel, & L. Benitez of ActKnowledge, September 2004. See also Coalition for Community Schools’ Community Schools: Research Brief (2009).

<sup>30</sup> Dryfoos, J.G. (2000). Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date. Coalition for Community Schools.

<sup>31</sup> Chicago Public Schools website. Retrieved on November 29, 2012 from <http://www.cps.edu/Programs/DistrictInitiatives/Pages/CommunitySchoolsInitiative.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> Coalition for Community Schools’ Community Schools: Research Brief (2009) retrieved November 29, 2012 from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> IFC International (2010). Communities in Schools National Evaluation: Five Year Study. Retrieved November 29, 2012 from <http://www.communitiesinschools.org/about/publications/publication/five-year-national-evaluation-summary-report>

programming targeted at increasing academic skills and positive youth development. The literature on the impact of school- and/or community-based OST programs is robust, but mixed. Many programs boast increased academic achievement, positive youth development, and behavioral change, such as reductions in drug use (or initiation of drug use).<sup>34</sup> However, other research reports mixed effects of OST programs. For example, a 2003 evaluation of the federal government’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program found no improvements in students’ behavior, feelings of safety, or developmental outcomes, including students’ reports of their ability to plan, set goals, or work with a team.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, this evaluation found no differences in academic outcomes between participants and the comparison group of non-participants. On a more positive note, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century evaluation did find that parental involvement, a key to academic performance, increased for middle school participants; parents of middle school participants were more likely to volunteer at school, attend open houses, and help their children with homework.

Documenting and measuring the associations between youth outcomes and activity participation is challenging, which may contribute to the contradictory findings in the literature. There are a myriad of OST programs available to youth and they vary by scale, type, affiliation, focus, and funding.<sup>36</sup> OST programs’ goals and content vary, particularly around academics, enrichment, recreation, and social support.<sup>37</sup> Recreational OST programs are unlikely to achieve positive academic outcomes for participants. Second, there is a great deal of variance in the amount and quality of time that youth spend in OST programs.<sup>38</sup> In a study of these programs in education settings, “only 16 percent of children ages 6-9 and 10 percent of children ages 10-12 attended [school-based or community-based after-school] programs for five or more hours a week.”<sup>39</sup> Research suggests that participation rates can vary in response to student motivation;<sup>40</sup> the needs of the family, whether that includes quality childcare or academic support; and program availability.<sup>41</sup> Students whose participation is of short duration or low frequency are unlikely to benefit from OST programming in meaningful ways.

### Chapter 3: The Elev8 Community Schools Initiative

Elev8 is a community schools model operating in low-income areas, with the goal of alleviating the systematic problems associated with poor performance in school. Building off of the recognized best practices of the community schools approach, Elev8’s “wrap-around” services include:

- Extended learning opportunities outside the classroom and beyond the traditional school year;
- Parental outreach and engagement;
- Accessible health services to students and families; and,
- Resources for household economic stability.

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<sup>34</sup> Weiss, H.B. (2004). Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 7.

<sup>35</sup> Mathematica evaluation of 21<sup>st</sup> century: Dynarski, M. et al. (2003). When Schools Stay Open Late. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/pdfs/whenschools.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Little, P.M.D., Wimer, C., & Weiss, H.B. (2008). After School Programs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Their Potential and What it Takes to Achieve It. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 10.

<sup>37</sup> Halpern, R. (2002). A different kind of child development institution: The history of after-school programs for low-income children.

*Teachers college Record*, 104(2), 178-211. Hynes, K., Smith, E.P., & Perkins, D. (2009). Piloting a school-based intervention in after-school programs: A case study in science migration. *Journal of Children’s Services*, 4, 4-20.

<sup>38</sup> Little, P.M.D., Wimer, C., & Weiss, H.B. (2008). After School Programs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Their Potential and What it Takes to Achieve it. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 10.

<sup>39</sup> Hynes, K. & Sanders, F. (2010). The changing landscape of afterschool programs. *Afterschool Matters (June)*. p.25

<sup>40</sup> Bodilly, S.J. & Beckett, M.K. (2005). Making Out-of-School-Time Matter. RAND Research Brief Education. Retrieved from [www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG242](http://www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG242)

<sup>41</sup> Hynes, K. & Sanders, F. (2010). The changing landscape of afterschool programs. *Afterschool Matters (June)*.

In addition to teachers and administrators, Elev8 schools employ a team of out-of-school time staff, family advocates, medical professionals, a site director, and others as dictated by their model.

## A Brief History of Elev8

Elev8, initially called Integrated Services in Schools, was launched in 2007 with funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies. Elev8 founders had a national selection process to ascertain which communities could most benefit from Elev8's integrated approach. Elev8 concentrates its efforts on the middle school grades, since research shows student engagement in middle school proves an accurate indicator of high school and post-graduate success.<sup>42</sup> The transition from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade is particularly perilous, and a significant decline in academic performance upon reaching high school is associated with a greater risk of not completing college.<sup>43</sup>

Atlantic's first investment in Elev8 was in three locations in New Mexico: Albuquerque, Laguna Pueblo, and Anthony, a rural border community in southern New Mexico. Three additional regions have received investments from Atlantic: Chicago, IL, Oakland, CA, and Baltimore, MD. As of this writing, 19 Elev8 schools serve over 5,000 students in the middle grades. Approximately 2,500 students are served in Elev8 OST activities each year. During the 2010-11 school year, over 700 adult family members received Elev8 services.

## Elev8 Sites: A National Model with Local Customization

While Elev8 is operating nationally in diverse parts of the country, Elev8 community schools function on a decidedly local level. Elev8 endeavors to address the specific needs of each community by working together with existing social infrastructure and institutions. Across Elev8's four local initiatives, each has its own distinct format and unique path toward creating solutions. More detail, along with individual school profiles, is provided at [www.Elev8kids.org](http://www.Elev8kids.org).

### ***A note about nomenclature***

*In order to preserve the anonymity of the Elev8 regions, schools, and study participants, we use an identifier (Region A, B, C, D) for each site in place of its name.*

The Elev8 initiative assumes that the best solutions are often locally driven. For this reason, Elev8 looks different in each of the participating schools,<sup>44</sup> with community members identifying local needs and opportunities. Elev8 engages students and families so that, over the long term, they can be successful advocates for themselves and their communities. Elev8 is a multi-agency, multi-site project, with over 75 contributing partners nationally. Table 1 provides a brief description of each region.

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<sup>42</sup> Wimberly, G.L. & Noeth, R.L. (2005). College readiness begins in middle school. ACT: Iowa City, IA.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, J.S. (2006). Examining the long term impact of achievement loss during the transition to high school. *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17, 211-221.

<sup>44</sup> There were 20 schools in the 2010-11 school year, the year in which most of the data for this study was collected. One of those 20 sites is only included in the counts of participants and not included in other analysis, because we were unable to collect identified individual level-data from students in that school. Currently, there are 19 schools.

Table 1. Description of Elev8 Regions

## Elev8 Chicago

Elev8 Chicago seeks to transform the educational achievement and life outcomes of middle-grade students in five public schools, all in underserved areas of the city. Students at the Elev8 schools, generally from low-income Latino or African-American families, are burdened by an inadequate healthcare system, challenging social environments, and limited economic opportunities. The program is led by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Chicago office (LISC/Chicago), which organizes capital and other resources to support initiatives that stimulate the comprehensive development of healthy, stable neighborhoods. Elev8 Chicago is built on the platform of LISC/Chicago's New Communities Program. Each of the five participating Chicago public schools is partnered with a lead agency that works with scores of local organizations on quality-of-life issues including education, family supports, public safety, healthcare, and opportunities for youth.

## Elev8 Oakland

Elev8 Oakland launched in September 2008 on five school campuses in the city's flatlands—a series of densely populated neighborhoods characterized by extensive racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. Fifty percent of local residents speak a language other than English at home. Elev8 Oakland is a program of Safe Passages, founded in 1998 as one of five sites across the country selected to participate in the national Urban Health Initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Today, Safe Passages serves as an intergovernmental partnership including the City of Oakland, the County of Alameda, and the Oakland Unified School District, as well as philanthropic and community-based partners who are committed to advocating for children, youth, and families, with a special emphasis on vulnerable populations within the County of Alameda.

## Elev8 New Mexico

Elev8 New Mexico is being implemented in five diverse middle schools statewide—in urban, rural, and tribal communities. Elev8 New Mexico is an initiative of Youth Development, Inc. (YDI), a statewide agency that has been serving the comprehensive needs of youth and families in New Mexico for over 40 years. With the participation of a broad array of organizations, elected officials, students, families, and schools, Elev8 New Mexico is integrating extended-day learning programs, healthcare, family supports, and community engagement so students succeed in school and in life.

## Elev8 Baltimore

Fall 2009 marked the launch of Elev8 Baltimore, which partners with four prekindergarten-8<sup>th</sup> grade neighborhood schools in East Baltimore, a community comprised of several neighborhoods located near the Johns Hopkins University Medical Campus. Elev8 Baltimore is an initiative of the East Baltimore Development Inc. (EBDI), an innovative public-private partnership established in 2002 to facilitate one of the most comprehensive, groundbreaking community redevelopment efforts in America. Elev8 Baltimore and its partners—including EBDI, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Baltimore Community Foundation, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions—are committed to transforming school communities by expanding learning, health, and family economic supports to children, youth, and families.

## Chapter 4: Participation in Elev8 OST

Elev8 OST is an essential component of the Elev8 initiative. However, the exact nature of the programming varies by region and school. Some OST programs have an academic focus, concentrating on tutoring or homework help, while others center on recreational activities like cooking or dance classes. Elev8’s middle school-aged participants tend to “vote with their feet,” thereby establishing a critical link between program satisfaction and attendance. Most Elev8 initiatives strive to implement recreational activities with an academic focus in order to both engage and retain young people, while providing students with the educational supports they need. At the program level, all Elev8 schools provide both recreational and academically focused OST programming.<sup>45</sup>

Students come into the OST program in a variety of ways. In most cases, participation in Elev8 OST activities is open to all students who are interested. In a handful of schools, however, students struggling academically are exclusively targeted for Elev8 OST programming. Additionally, some Elev8 schools offer non-Elev8 OST activities to students, so a student not enrolled in Elev8 OST may still have the opportunity to participate in other OST activities.

In the section that follows, we describe Elev8 OST participants and their attendance patterns during the 2010-11 school year. The analyses (with the exception of the participation rate—Figure 1 below) are based upon Elev8’s programmatic database, which contains administrative, demographic and participation information on Elev8 OST participants. Later in this report, we use self-reported demographic data from school-wide student surveys. Survey data include information from all students, rather than only the subset of students who attended OST activities.

While the two data sources mostly provide parallel information, there are a few discrepancies, which we note below.

### How Many Students Participate in Elev8 OST?

Overall, about 40 percent of students in Elev8 schools take advantage of Elev8 OST activities. However, as shown in Figure 1,<sup>46</sup> the number of students that participated in Elev8 OST activities in the 2010-11 school year varied considerably by site. This is in part due to differences in program focus. For instance, Region C targets students who are struggling academically. This region uses an Early Warning Indicator (EWI) framework to identify students who experience challenges in attendance, behavior, and academics (math or language arts), and enrolls them in Elev8 OST programming. Other regions strive to serve all interested students: OST participation in Elev8 schools in two regions is roughly 60%, while it is slightly more than one-third in the last region. These figures are generally comparable (one slightly lower and the other two slightly higher) to favorably to the percent of students who opted to participate in Providence’s After Zone (which also targets middle school students and is not a targeted program)

#### ***A note about data***

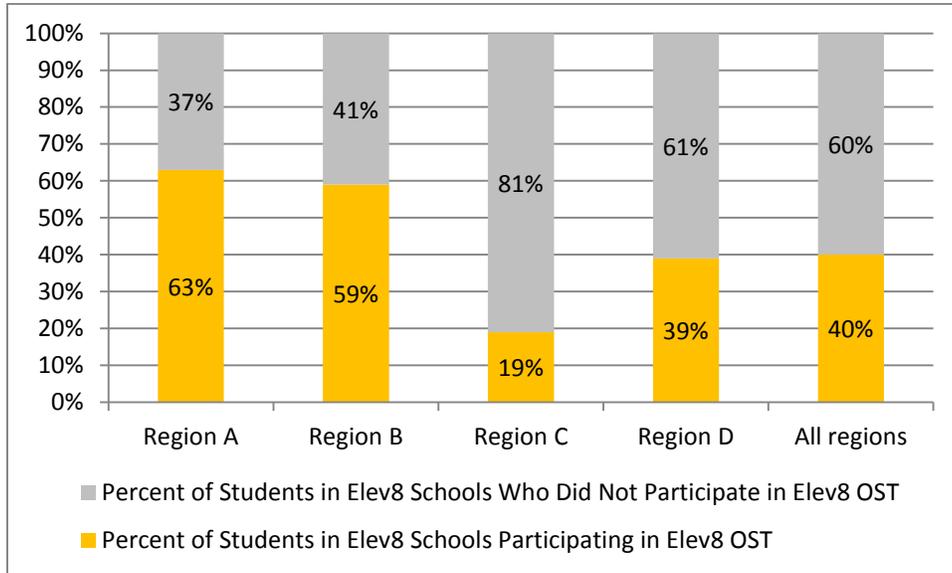
*The data in this section are from our attendance database (except for figure 1, which is from an internal report developed by the Elev8 evaluation team). Later in the report, where we compare OST participants to non-participants, we use a more limited sample comprised of students who completed a student survey. As such, there are some discrepancies in numbers.*

<sup>45</sup> Only one region provided data that document the actual types of OST programs that students participate in. Those data are provided later in this report.

<sup>46</sup> The data in figure 1 are extracted from the 2011 Elev8 participation summary report—an internal formal report the evaluation team prepares for The Atlantic Philanthropies and the regions once a year.

OST programming in the 2008-09 school year (just under half of students).<sup>47</sup> Different levels of resources and other factors, such as grades served and activity quality, also likely influenced student participation in OST activities across regions and schools.

Figure 1. Elev8 OST participation rate by region and overall during the 2010-11 school year



## Racial and Ethnic Characteristics of Elev8 OST Participants

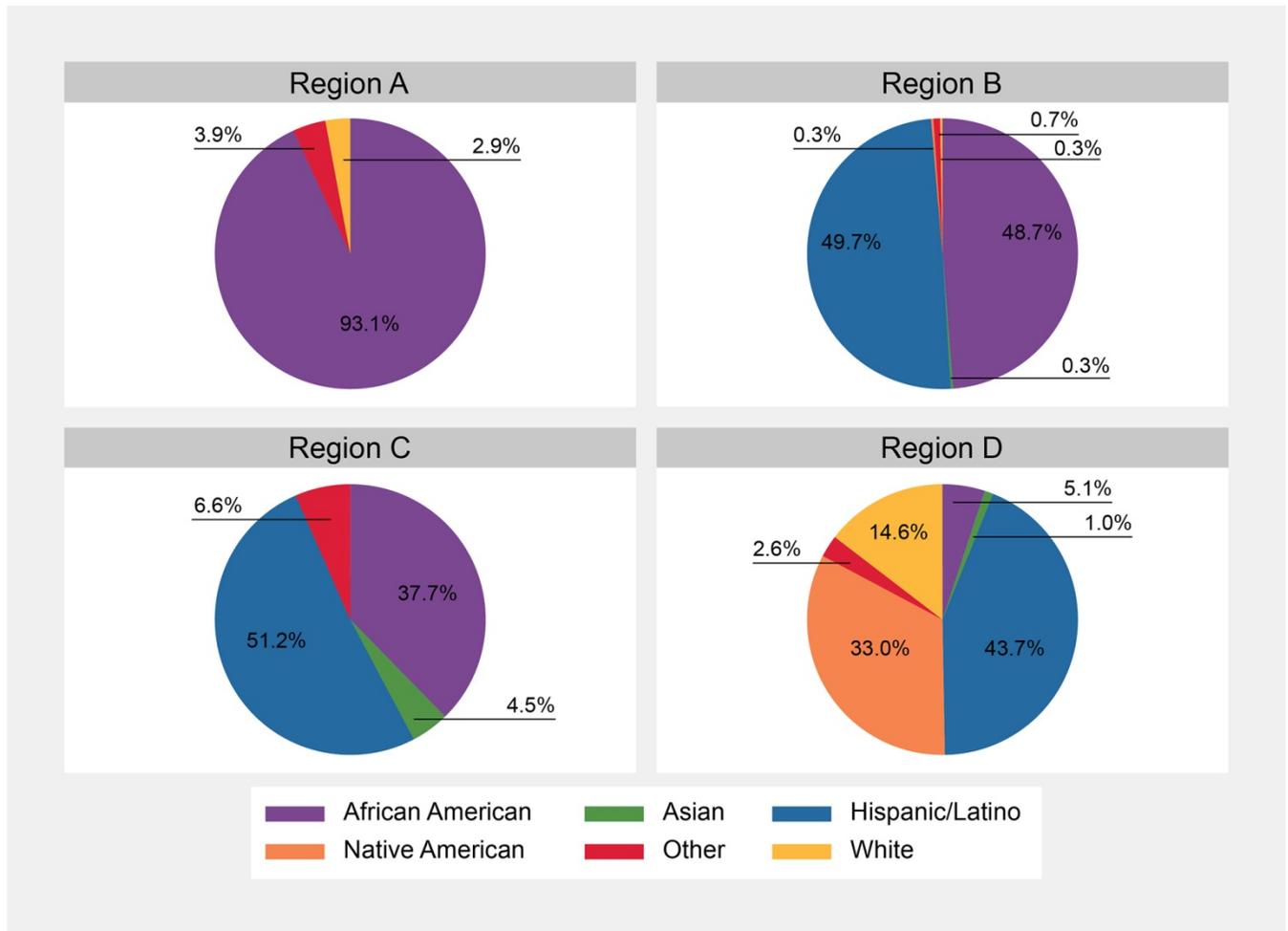
*Representative of the regions in which Elev8 is located, students who participate in Elev8 OST are primarily low income students of color. Female students and middle schoolers in the younger grades are most likely to participate.*

For the most part, Elev8 OST participants are students of color. As displayed in Figure 2, however, the exact racial and ethnic compositions of participants vary by site. Specifically, in Region A the vast majority of OST participants are African American. Region B serves an almost equal number of African-American and Hispanic students. In Region C, the majority of youth who participate in Elev8 OST are Hispanic students and more than one-third are African American. Region C also has the largest percentage of students of Asian descent in their

Elev8 OST programs. Though Region D serves the largest proportion of Native American students in its OST programs, Hispanic youth are the largest portion of their OST participants.

<sup>47</sup> Kauh, T. (2011). *AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence’s Citywide After-School System*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

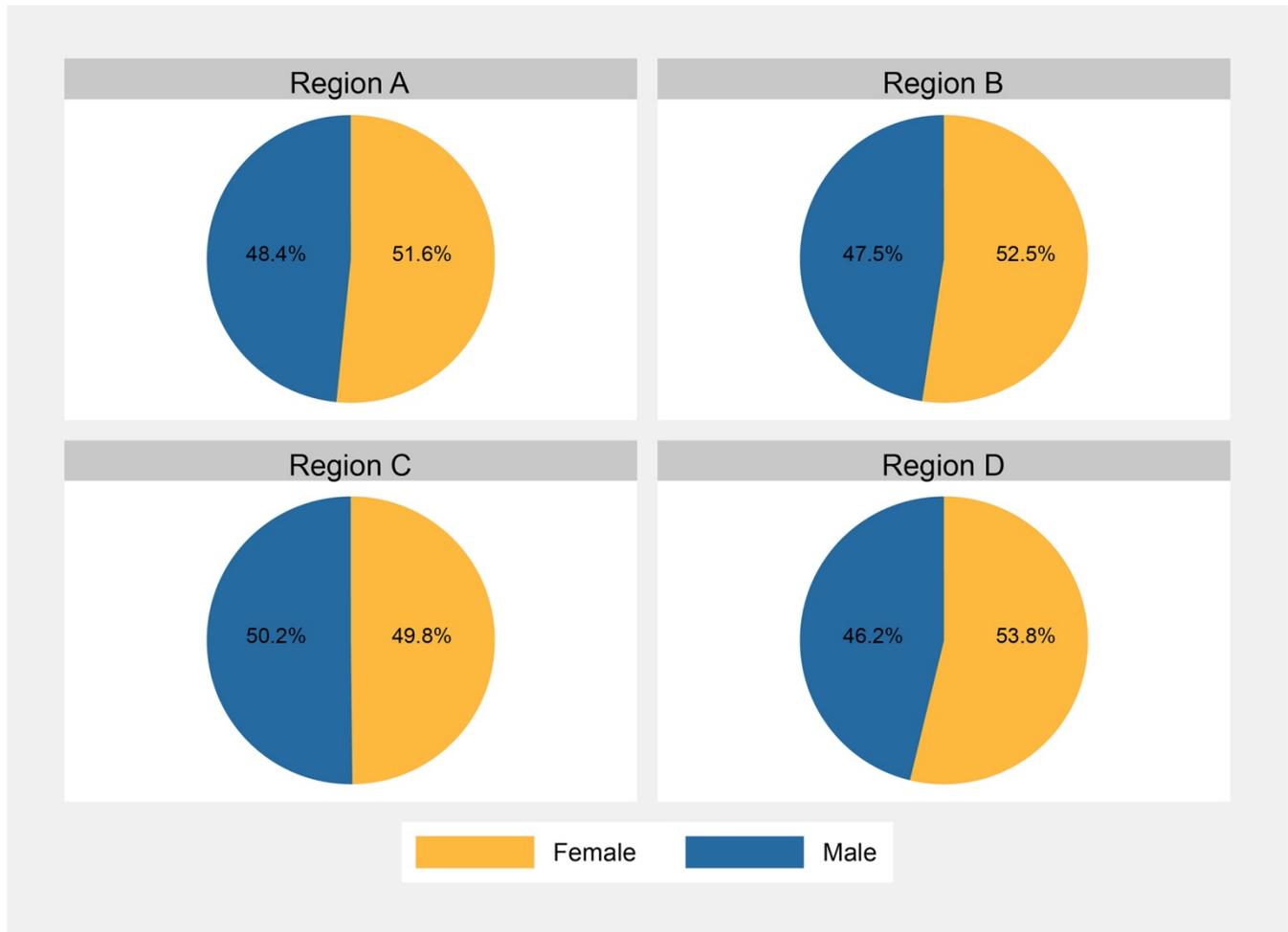
Figure 2: Race and ethnicity of Elev8 OST participants



## Gender

Overall, Elev8 OST participants are more likely to be female than male. However, the gender breakdown varies by region, as shown in Figure 3. In Region C, the percentages of boys and girls who participate in Elev8 OST are about equal, but in Regions A, B, and D, more girls participate in Elev8 OST than boys.

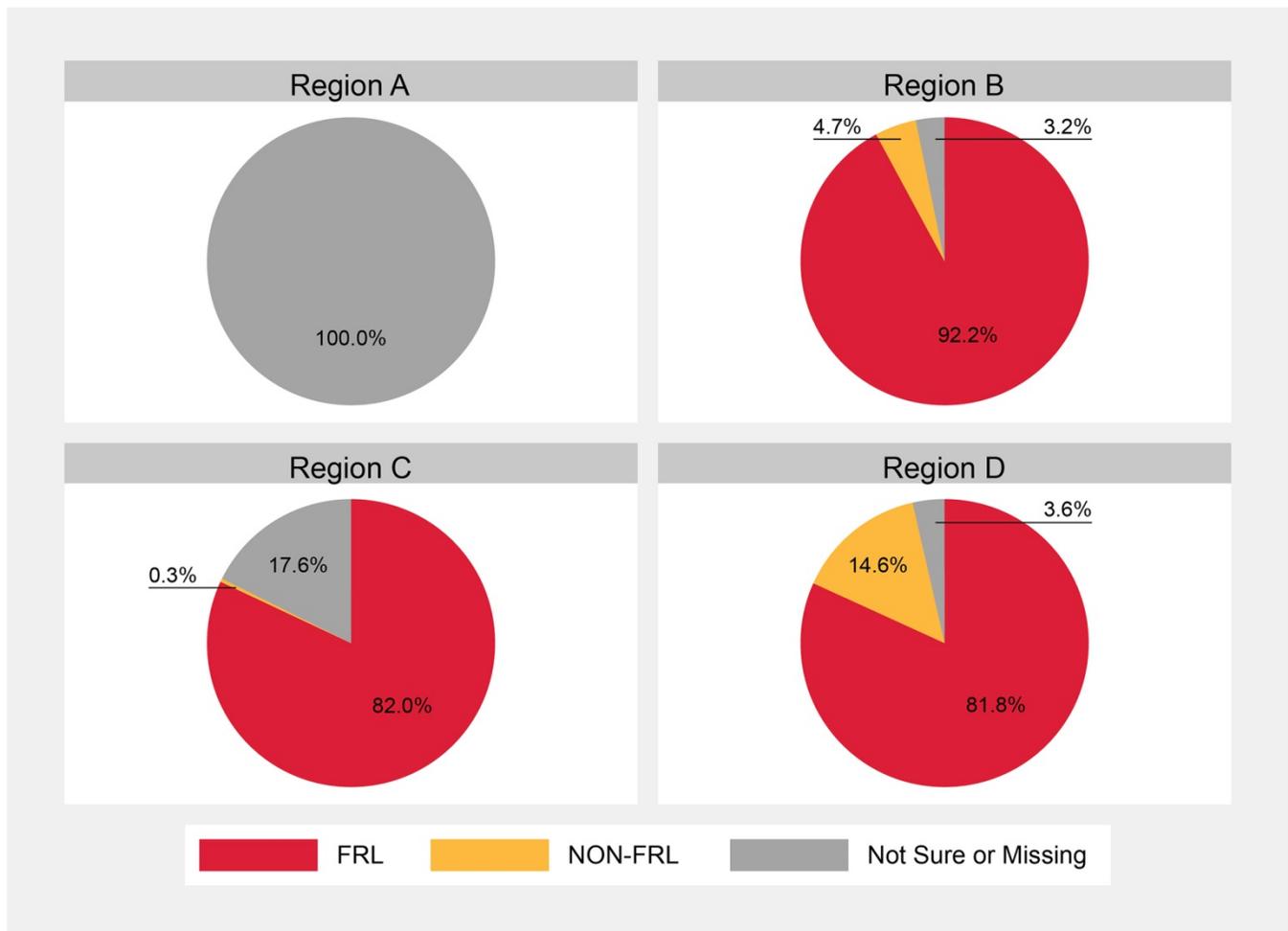
Figure 3. Gender of Elev8 OST participants



## Income Status

The bulk of students who participate in Elev8 OST, as well as those who attend Elev8 schools, are from low-income homes.<sup>48</sup> In Region A, the data for Elev8 OST participants was unavailable from program administrative records; however, as we will see later in this report, almost all students from Elev8 in Region A self-report as receiving free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) at school. Region D serves the largest proportion of students who are not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (non-FRL) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Income status of Elev8 OST participants

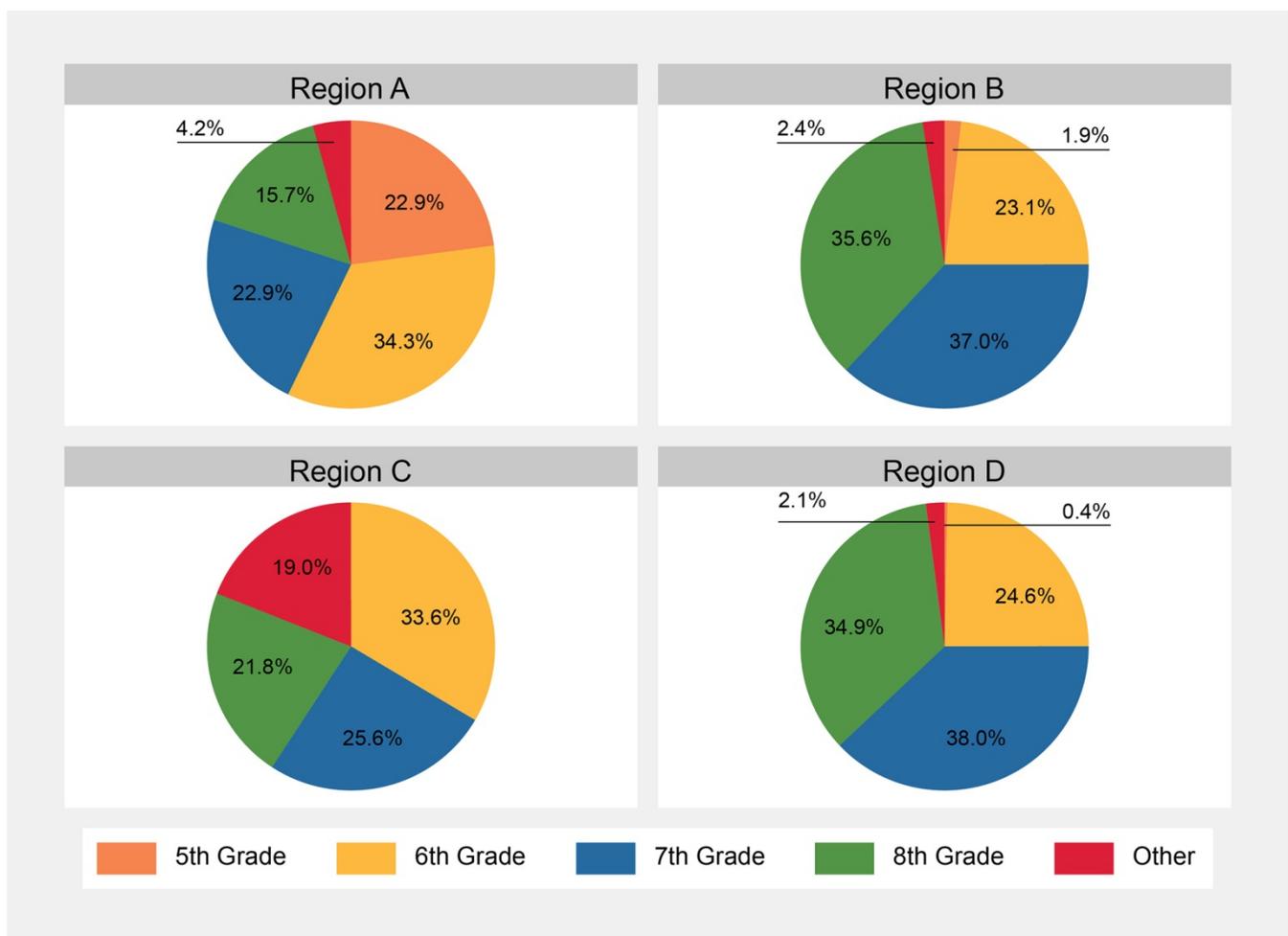


<sup>48</sup> We gauged income status by using free or reduced-price lunch eligibility as a proxy for income.

## Grade Level

Elev8 targets middle-grade students. Overall, the data show that younger students are more likely to participate than older students (see Figure 5). This condition holds true in many OST programs nationwide. However, notably, in two of the four sites at least one quarter of Elev8 OST participants were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade or older. Region A had the lowest percentage of 8<sup>th</sup> graders served, a situation they attribute to the low numbers of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled at each school. Nonetheless, approximately 16 percent of participants in OST in Region A were 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Figure 5: Grade level of Elev8 OST participants



## What Are Students' Patterns of Participation in Elev8 OST?

Describing participation in OST activities is complex because there are a myriad of programs that fall under the category of OST. For instance, a school sport—a very intensive but short-term activity—can be considered an OST activity. School sports are most likely staffed by school employees, funded by the district, heavily regulated, and emphasizing physical activity. Homework help is also a common OST program offered to young people. Homework Help differs in that it may or may not be taught by school staff, it may run every day all school year long, it has limited regulations, it focuses on academics, and it may be funded by an outside agency or by the school itself. Meanwhile, a cooking class, most likely

staffed by a non-school staff person, could be of limited duration (occurring once or twice a week), not heavily regulated, focused on recreation, and funded by an outside agency.

A student attending any of these programs is engaged in an OST program. Therefore, student experiences and levels of engagement are going to be very different across and within programs. For example, on a sports team, a few students may be selected as captains and take on leadership roles. Other students may be starters and play all the time. Finally, some students will play smaller roles on the team and will have more of an opportunity to learn through observation and practice.

Because of this diversity of experiences, OST researchers have identified four main dimensions of OST participation: ever participated, intensity, duration, and breadth.<sup>49</sup> We describe how we have operationalized each term below.

- *Ever participated.* This measure of participation is the most commonly used, and reflects whether a young person ever participated in a program during the timeframe of interest. It is the most basic measure of program participation.
- *Intensity.* Intensity is the amount of time youth attend a program during a given period and can be measured in the following ways: hours per day, days per week, weeks per month, or months per year.
- *Duration.* Duration is the length of time youth attend a program and captures information about how “new” a young person is to the program. Whereas intensity describes the “depth” of attendance, duration addresses the history of attendance in months or years since the young person started in the program.
- *Breadth.* Breadth of attendance refers to the variety of activities that youth attend within and across programs. For instance, while one young person may participate only in a homework help program, another may participate both in organized homework help and in a sports program. Breadth can also be measured within a single program; for instance, some OST programs aim to provide both academic support and recreation activities.

#### ***Key Findings: Participation Patterns in Elev8 OST***

- *Forty percent of students in middle grades in Elev8 schools participated in Elev8 OST in the 2010/2010 school year.*
- *Across regions, students participating in Elev8 OST attended the program for an average of 43 days.*
- *Many students participated for just a few days; however, a meaningful number attended with high frequency.*
- *Students participating in Elev8 OST did so for 5.3 months of the school year on average.*
- *On average, students participated in 2.3 different types of Elev8 OST activities. Across all regions, just under a quarter of students in Elev8 schools both participated in Elev8 OST and took advantage of the school based health center.*

<sup>49</sup> Weiss, H.B. (2004). Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 7.

Our ability to understand each of these facets of participation is limited in the current study because of the data available to us. However, we do have data that describe the following for each student in our sample:

- **Participation in Services.** Whether s/he participated in Elev8 OST only, Elev8 school-based health services only, no Elev8 services, or in both of these Elev8 services.
- **Length of Participation (in Days):** Whether s/he ever participated in Elev8 OST and how many days during the school year s/he participated in Elev8 OST.
- **Length of Participation (in Months).** How many months of the school year s/he participated in Elev8 OST.
- **Participation in Activities.** How many different types of Elev8 OST activities s/he participated in during the school year (Region B only).

Below, we present how Elev8 OST participants engaged in the program on each of these dimensions during the 2010-11 school year.

### **Length of Participation (in Days)**

As seen in Figure 1, about forty percent of students in Elev8 schools attended at least one day of Elev8 OST during the 2010-11 school year.

Students across regions who participated at least once had an average attendance of 43 days over the school year, which compares favorably to the average number of days students in Providence’s After Zone participated in OST programming.<sup>50</sup> However, this statistic masks broad diversity—both across and between regions.

Although attendance rates averaged more than 40 days for Elev8 OST participants, Figure 6 shows that more than half of the participants attended Elev8 OST programs for less than 50 days and less than a quarter participated in the OST program very intensively over the school year (greater than 75 days).

#### ***A note about how to read Figures 6 and 7***

*The figures that follow show the percentages of Elev8 participants for the number of days they participated in Elev8 OST. As Figure 6 shows, 100 percent of Elev8 OST participants participated for one day. At about 30 days only half of participants were still active in Elev8 OST, and at about 145 days, no Elev8 OST participants were still active in the program.*

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<sup>50</sup> In the 2008-09 school year, middle schoolers in the After Zone program participated for an average of 24 of the 96 days of OST programming available to them. Over 80 percent participated in no more than half of the available days (Kauh, 2011).

Figure 6. Percentage of OST participants who ever attended Elev8 OST by the number of days they attended, across regions

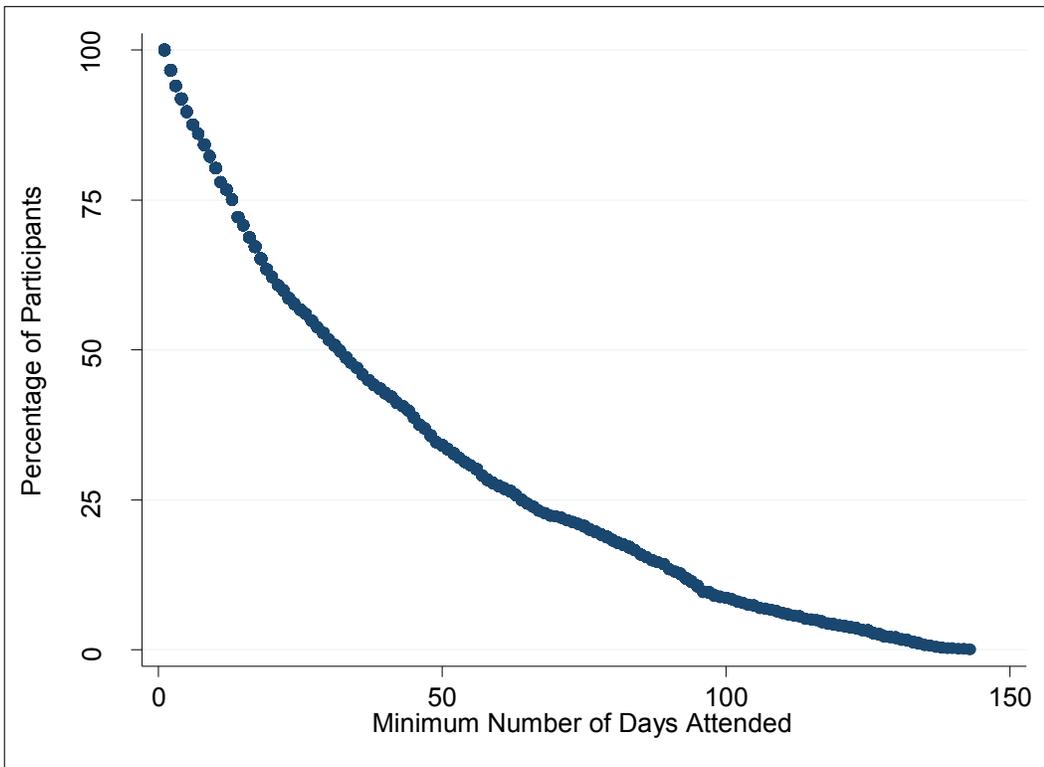
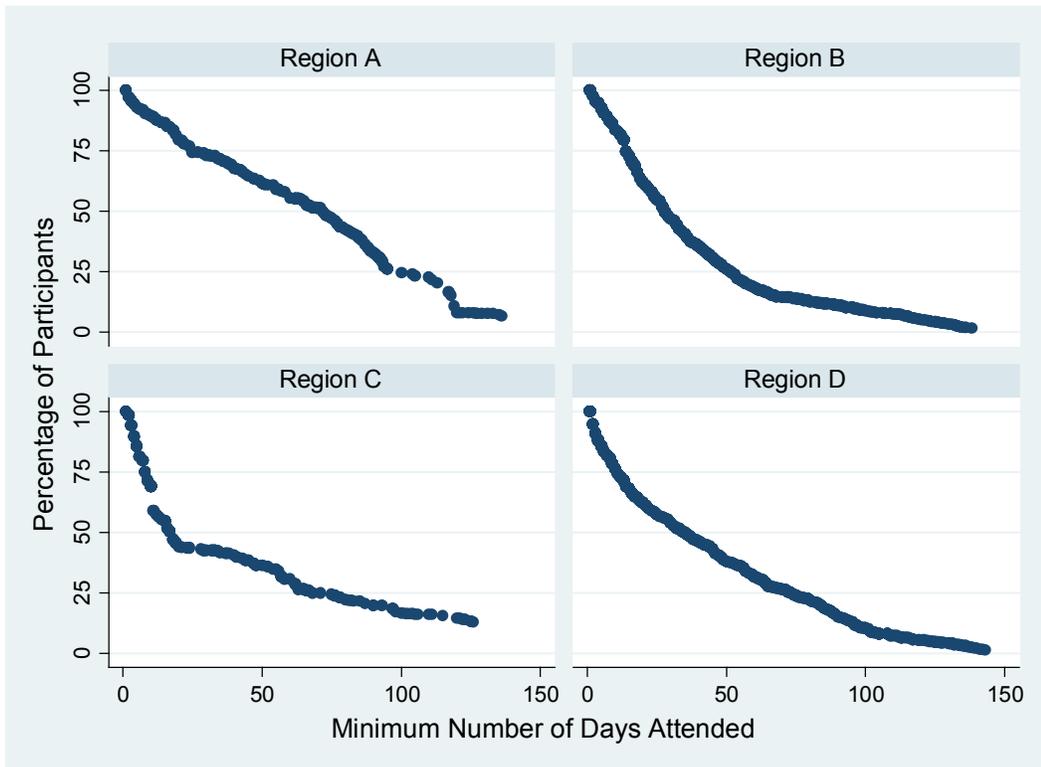


Figure 7 illustrates the differential Elev8 participation levels between regions. Students in Region A participated in Elev8 for the highest number of days across the school year, averaging 53 days a year. Students in Regions B and D had lower levels of participation, with an average of 36 days and 38 days, respectively. Finally, students in Region C had the lowest participation levels in Elev8 OST, averaging just 24 days a year. The graphs in Figure 7 below tell a story similar to the aggregate data presented in Figure 6 above. Each region has a large percentage of participants that attended less than 50 days in Elev8 OST programs and a smaller percentage of students with high levels of participation.

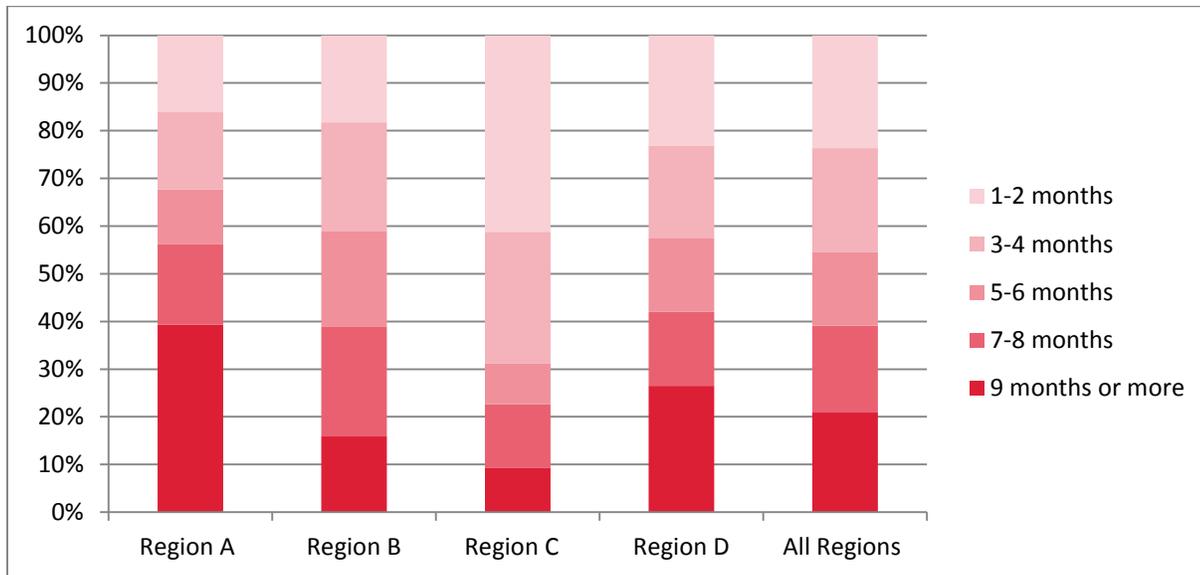
Figure 7: Percentage of OST participants who ever attended Elev8 OST by the number of days they attended by region



### Length of Participation (in Months)

We measured monthly participation in Elev8 OST to estimate the amount of time that participants chose to engage in Elev8 OST activities over the school year (see Figure 8). Additionally, we calculated the average number of months participants remained active in Elev8 OST. On average, students who participated in Elev8 OST across all sites participated for 5.3 months of the school year. However, there was variation by region. In Region A, students attended Elev8 OST for the greatest number of months, averaging 6.3 months per year, including just over one third who participated for the entire school year. Region C's Elev8 OST participants attended for the shortest amount of time, averaging 3.8 months, including almost one third who participated for only one month.

Figure 8. Percentage of students participating in Elev8 OST activities by number of months (school year 2010-11)



### Participation in Activities

Some, but not all, regions record the types of activities in which OST participants engage. Across all regions, there were almost 150 different Elev8 OST activities recorded in the 2010-11 school year. We grouped these activities into the following activity types in order to explore the breadth of student participation in Elev8 OST: general afterschool, sports and fitness, music and dance, development and learning, leadership activities, hobbies, computers, arts and crafts, and other. Regions varied in their activity records. Two regions did not record activity type and a third region only offered one Elev8-funded OST activity at four of its five schools, though other non-Elev8 activities were available during OST hours. In the remaining region, Region B, students participated in an average of 2.3 activity types during the school year. In this region, about one third participated in only one activity, a quarter participated in two activities, 15 percent participated in three activities, 13 percent participated in four activities, and the remainder participated in more than four activities.

### Participation in Services

Using the sample we created by matching students in Elev8 schools who completed a survey to the participation data, we also measured the extent to which students in Elev8 schools participated in more than one Elev8 service (see Table 2). Our data only allows us to measure participation in Elev8 OST and participation in the school-based health center, and we were not able to assess the extent to which particular students' families accessed services through the family support component of the program. Nonetheless, we found that about a quarter of students in Elev8 schools did not participate in either the school-based health center or Elev8 OST; about one half participated in only one of the two Elev8 services, either Elev8 OST or the school-based health center; and, the last quarter of students utilized both services.

Table 2. Distribution of student participation Elev8 services: school-based health center and OST

Number of Services	0	1 (either OST or SBHC)	2 (both OST and SBHC)
% of Sample	25.83%	50.93%	23.24%

## Chapter 5: How is Participation in Elev8 OST Related to Students' Experiences of School?

To see if participation in Elev8 OST is related to students' experiences in school, this evaluation compared students in Elev8 schools who participated in Elev8 OST with those who did not participate; it also compared those who participated with different levels of frequency. While we controlled for some observed factors, because participation in OST in most schools was determined by student choice or through targeting rather than random assignment, we cannot rule out the possibility that participants vary from non-participants (or between high- and low-frequency participators) in important ways. For instance, students who chose to participate in Elev8 OST could be more motivated to pursue educational enrichment activities than those students who did not participate. And students who participate more frequently may be more motivated than those who participate less often. Alternatively, those students who chose to participate (or participated more) might have done so because they needed additional academic support whereas those who did not participate (or participated less) might not have needed such support.

For these reasons, we cannot determine with certainty that the differences in the groups' school experiences are due to Elev8 OST participation. There are other limitations to our study that may result in an underestimation of the relationship between Elev8 OST participation and school experiences.

- Our analysis below is based on a data set we created by matching students in Elev8 schools who completed a survey to students in the OST participation database. The matching protocol utilized students' names, schools, and regions, though students who use or go by more than one name (such as a nickname, or students who have hyphenated last names) may not have been matched properly.<sup>51</sup>
- Students identified as having not participated in Elev8 OST may have participated in other OST activities that are not reported in our data.<sup>52</sup>
- Elev8 OST is only one component of Elev8, and whole school benefits of Elev8 may wash out the relationship between participating in Elev8 OST and school experiences since we are comparing Elev8 OST participants with students in the same school (who have also been "exposed" to Elev8) who did not participate in Elev8 OST.
- Other school factors, such as characteristics of teachers and principals, or other school activities, are deemed important for student academic performance and behavioral outcomes in the literature, but are not available for this study.

<sup>51</sup> Our protocol for matching utilized exact matching via Stata and then manual matching of imperfectly matching names by region and school.

<sup>52</sup> Other limitations include: analysis of high school plans and planning activities includes a smaller sample size of only 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Finally, school fixed effects were not uniformly controlled for because of the small sample size.

In the section that follows, we investigate how those who did participate in Elev8 OST compare demographically to those students who did not participate in Elev8 OST activities during the 2010-11 school year. Then we examine how participation in Elev8 OST is associated with students' experiences in school and 8<sup>th</sup> graders' high school transition. We conclude with a summary of our findings. While the data we use for these analyses is limited to students who completed a survey (a smaller number of Elev8 OST participants than that reported above), the ratio of participants to non-participants is similar to the larger sample (see Appendix B for more detail).

## Comparing the Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Non-Participants

Across all regions there are differences between students who participated in Elev8 OST activities for at least one day and those who did not. Elev8 OST participants are more likely to be African American and less likely to be Hispanic than non-participants. Elev8 OST participants are also more likely to be in the younger grades than their non-OST participating peers. There are no statistically significant differences in gender and income status between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants.

*Students who participated in Elev8 OST were more likely to be African American and to be in younger middle school grades than those who did not participate.*

Since the regions vary in terms of student demographics, their OST models, and their resources, we also looked within each region to see how non-participants compared with OST participants. (For more detailed information on how Elev8 OST participants and non-participants compare on demographic characteristics, see Appendix D). While in some schools the characteristics of Elev8 OST participants and non-participants were similar, in other schools they were very different. In Region B, Elev8 OST participants were much more likely to be Hispanic, and much less likely to be African American than non-OST students. In Region D, Elev8 OST participants were more often Native American than non-OST students. In Region A, Elev8 OST participants were slightly less likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch than those who chose not to participate in Elev8 OST. In Region C, Elev8 OST participants were more likely to be male than non-OST students, but in Region D Elev8 OST participants were more likely to be female. Finally, there were some differences in the proportion of students in grades 5, 6, 7, or 8 between Elev8 OST participants and non-OST students within the same regions.

## How Is Student Participation in Elev8 OST Activities Related to School Experience and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders' High School Transition?

In this report we strive to ascertain if students who participate in Elev8 OST have more positive school experiences than students who attend Elev8 schools but do not participate in Elev8 OST. To conduct this analysis we compare the two groups' end-of-school-year reports for the 2010-11 school year. We also analyzed the data from Elev8 OST participants only to determine if more frequent participation in Elev8 OST is related to school experience.

Overall, our analysis suggests that 8<sup>th</sup> grade Elev8 OST participants who attended more frequently were significantly more likely to participate in a wide range of high school planning activities (such as spending the day shadowing at a high school of interest, attending a test preparation class, attending a mock high school interview) than participants with lower OST participation. Also, 8<sup>th</sup> grade OST participants who attended Elev8 OST more frequently also were more likely to report that they planned to attend a college preparatory (selective enrollment—public or private—or charter) high school. Elev8 OST participation was not found to be related to school attitudes, but this may be due to students having uniformly positive attitudes towards school.

### **Was Participation in Elev8 OST Related to Attitudes Toward School?**

Elev8 aims to improve students' experiences in school and bolster school climate. We had access to data on the following components of a student's attitude towards school:

- Perception of their ability to achieve in school (school efficacy)
- How much they like school (school liking)
- How much they value school (school value)
- Their perception of the connection between school and future (future connectedness)

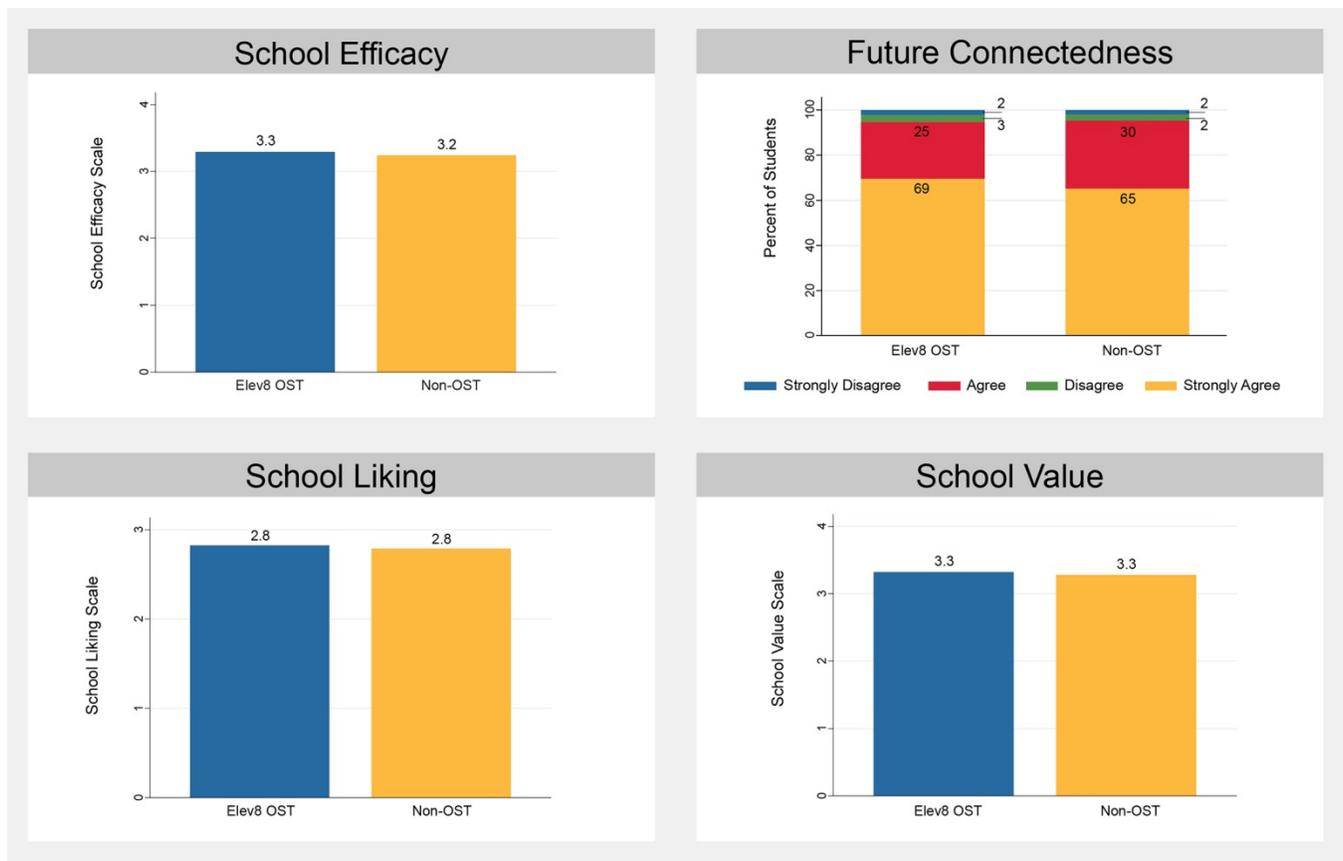
In order to assess if participation in Elev8 OST brings extra benefits to students above and beyond any school-wide benefits to both OST participants and non-participants, we first defined participation at the most basic level: participation in an Elev8 OST activity for at least one day over the school year. As shown in Figure 9, the differences in student attitudes towards school between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants are very small. Both Elev8 OST participants and non-participants reported high levels of efficacy and school value. On a scale from 1 (representing very low efficacy) to 4 (representing very high efficacy), student attitudes toward school in both groups averaged over 3. Similarly, both groups reported an average score of 3.3 (where 1 is very low and 4 is very high) on school value, indicating they valued school highly. Ratings of both school liking and future connectedness were also relatively high. On average students rated their school liking at a 2.8, while a majority of students reported that they feel school is relevant to their future. The aforementioned school liking and school value scores are comparable to scores reported in other studies of youth who chose to participate in OST activities.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Key Findings: Elev8 OST participants and experiences in school***

*Eighth grade Elev8 OST participants who attended more frequently were significantly more likely to participate in a wide range of high school planning activities (such as spending the day shadowing at a high school of interest, attending a test preparation class, attending a mock high school interview) than participants with lower OST participation. Also, 8<sup>th</sup> grade Elev8 OST participants who attended Elev8 OST more frequently were more likely to report that they planned to attend a college preparatory (selective enrollment—public or private—or charter) high school. Elev8 OST participation was not found to be related to school attitudes, but this may be due to students having uniformly positive attitudes towards school.*

<sup>53</sup> For instance, a 2008 study of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who attended Boys & Girls Clubs found that teens, on average, reported 2.76 on school liking and 3.39 on school value (school importance, revised).

Figure 9: Facets of attitude towards school by Elev8 OST participation status



We conducted a set of more sophisticated analyses to rule out the effects of a range of pre-existing differences that might be relevant to student attitudes towards school: student demographics, such as student socioeconomic status, gender, race/ethnicity; grade level; years student stayed in a school; and unobserved differences in the schools that students attended. After taking into account these pre-existing differences in students and schools, we conclude that there are no significant differences in attitude towards school between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants.

Following the work of other researchers, we also conducted a series of analyses investigating whether the participation levels in Elev8 OST are related to student attitudes toward schools. After taking into account pre-existing differences in student demographic characteristics and schools, our analyses do not provide any consistent evidence showing that participation levels in Elev8 OST are associated with student attitudes towards school. In other words, students who participate in Elev8 OST for more days of the school year are not more likely to report more positive attitudes towards school than those who participated less or not at all. However, it is important to note that the average of these scales may mask variation and therefore is not optimal for dosage analysis, which requires a higher level of precision.

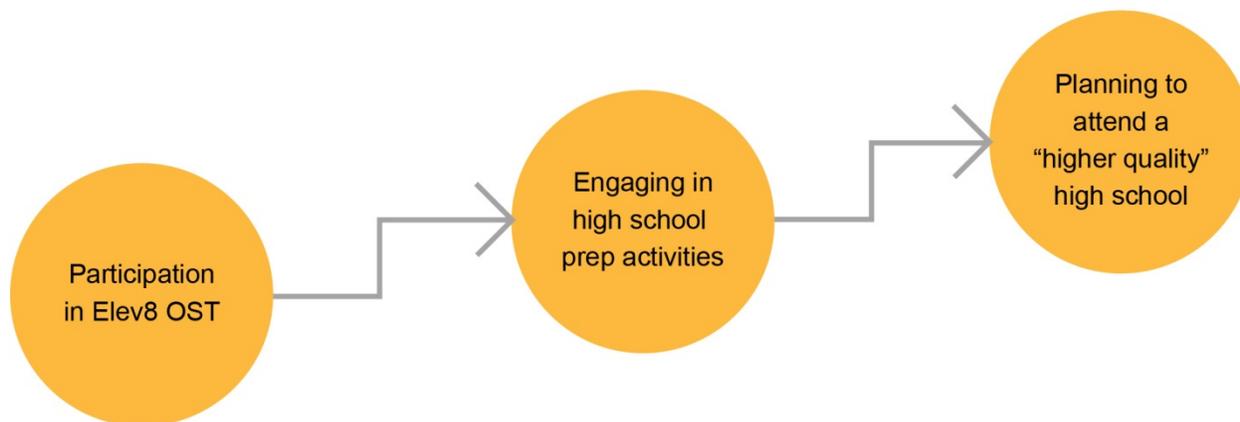
### Was Participation in Elev8 OST Related to High School Planning?

Elev8 aims to support middle grade students in order to ensure their successful transition to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We know that in the current labor market, college graduates earn significantly more than individuals without college degrees. As such, earning a college degree is a key pathway out of poverty. Therefore, high school completion is an important stepping stone and a meaningful credential. Unfortunately, despite recent progress, there remains a significant disparity in high school graduation rates among

young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>54</sup> Research has shown that the path to high school dropout begins before 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and that the successful completion of 9<sup>th</sup> grade is a critical step to high school graduation.<sup>55</sup>

To combat this trend, Elev8 supports students in their high school planning efforts, and encourages students to attend higher-performing high schools that will best support them in their secondary and postsecondary pursuits. While in many Elev8 communities neighborhood public schools struggle with violence, low attendance, high dropout rates, and minimal academic rigor, almost all of the districts in which Elev8 operates have some form of school choice, and students have the opportunity to attend higher-performing high schools if they take the necessary steps. Elev8 aims to guide students through the steps necessary to prepare, plan for, and attend high-quality high schools through various activities taking place in the school day, and by bolstering these school-wide activities during OST programming. For instance, in two regions Elev8 hosts school-wide high school fairs where students can learn about their high school choices, meet high school staff, and learn more about enrollment and entrance procedures. In one region, Elev8 OST staff is comprised of local college students who talk about their academic trajectories, their career plans, and their college experiences in their day-to-day interactions with Elev8 participants. These relationships are built into the Elev8 initiative to help students establish a model pathway to postsecondary success (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Theory of action between participation in Elev8 OST and participants' high school plans



To examine the relationship between 8<sup>th</sup> graders' participation in Elev8 OST and their high school transition, we provide some descriptive analyses showing how Elev8 OST participants are different from non-participants in their high school preparation efforts and their high school plans. This analysis is limited to 8<sup>th</sup> graders, as high school planning questions were only asked of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Elev8's high school planning activities include high school visits, collecting information about specific high schools, test preparation classes, mock interviewing, meeting with students or teachers who attend or teach at a high school of interest, and more.

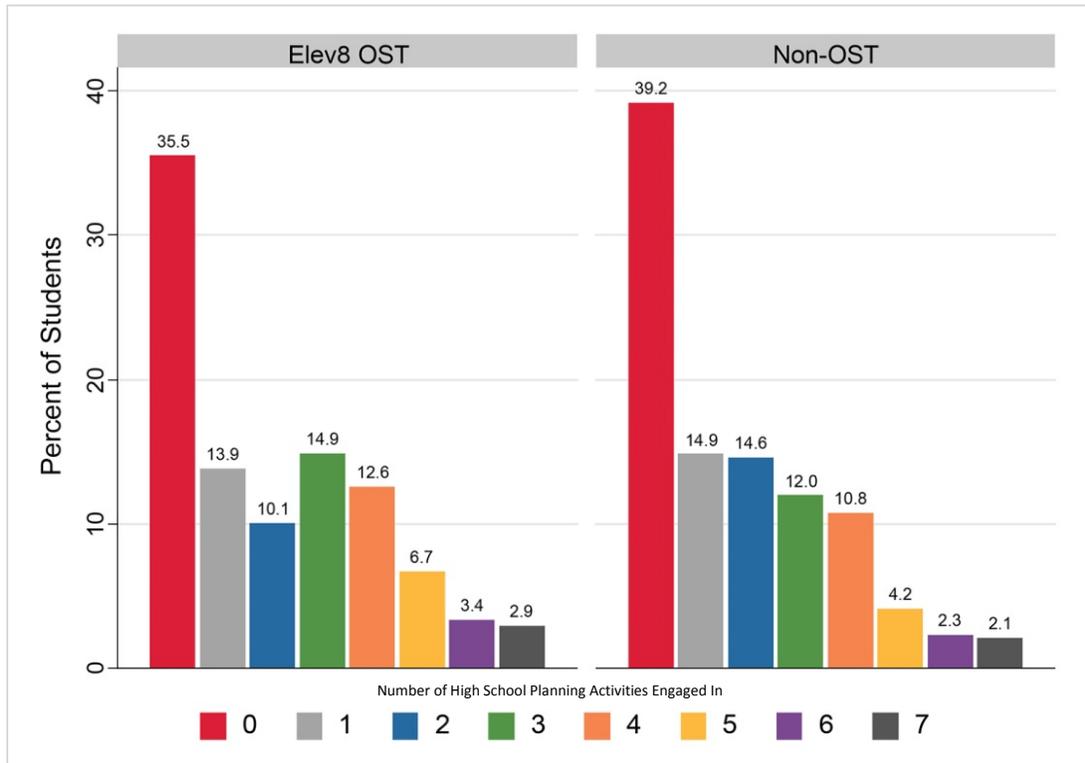
Across all regions, students who participated in Elev8 OST reported engaging in an average of 2.0 types of planning activities, while students who did not participate in Elev8 OST reported engaging in an

<sup>54</sup> Balfanz, R. & Legters, N. (2004). Which High Schools Produce the Nation's Dropouts? Where Are They Located? Who Attends Them? Report 70. Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved from: <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report70.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Neild, R. & Balfanz R. (2006). Unfulfilled Promise. Project U-Turn, Philadelphia Youth Network; Philadelphia.

average of 1.7 planning activities.<sup>56</sup> Our descriptive analysis shows that students who participated in Elev8 OST engaged in a wider range of activities than those who did not participate. For example, as shown in Figure 11, lower percentages of Elev8 OST participants reported no high school planning activities than non-participants, and the percentages of Elev8 OST participants who participated in one or more high school planning activities are higher than those of non-participants.

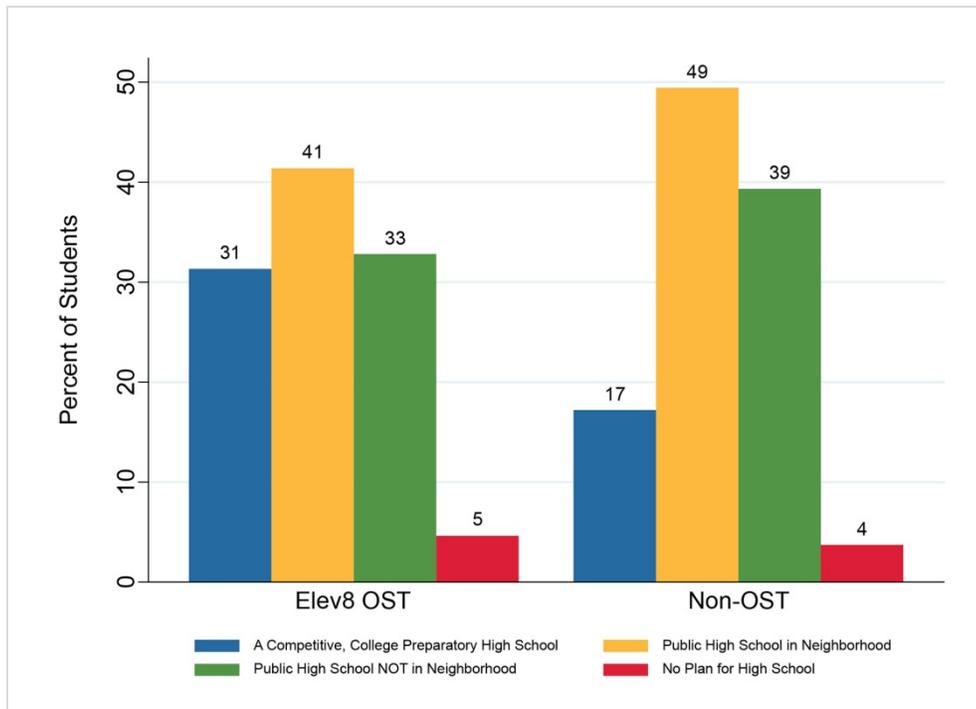
Figure 11. Number of types of high school planning activities engaged in by 8th graders in Elev8 schools during the 2010-11 school year across all regions



Similarly, as reported in Figure 12, 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in Elev8 OST were more likely to have a plan to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school than other students. Specifically, 31% of Elev8 OST participants reported planning to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school, while just 17% of their non-participating peers reported similar plans. Additionally, students who participated in Elev8 OST were less likely to report planning to attend a neighborhood high school, or a public high school outside their neighborhood, than students in Elev8 schools who did not participate in these activities.

<sup>56</sup> Types, not numbers, of activities were recorded. A student who made ten school visits still only receives a count for one type of planning activity. We did not have access to a count of the number of times each student participated in a particular type of activity.

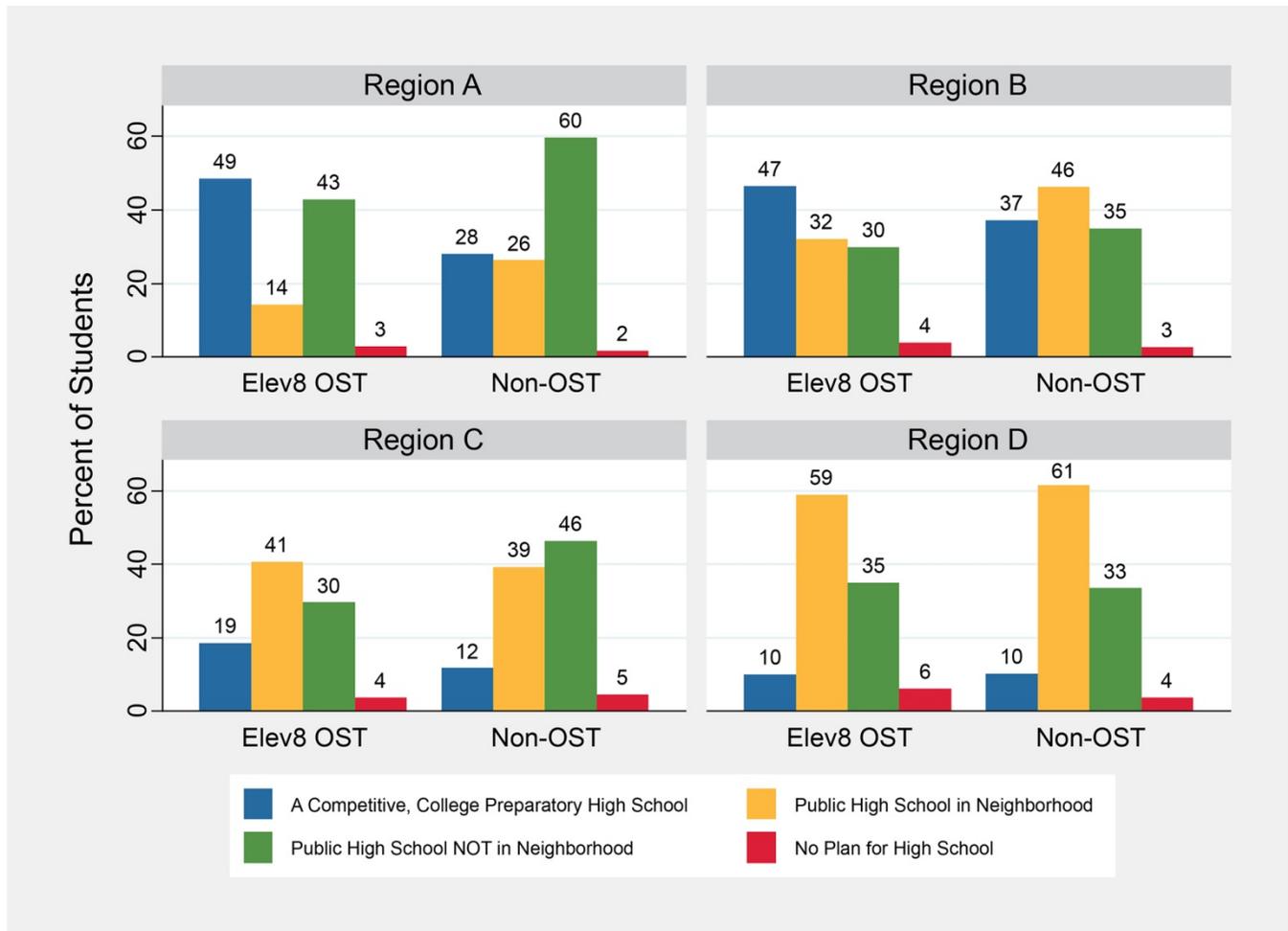
Figure 12: Types of high schools students plan to attend across regions in school year 2010-11<sup>57</sup>



Recognizing that each region is different, we also check if these differences in high school plans exist within each Elev8 region. Below, we see that high school planning distinctions are not consistent across regions. Figure 13 shows that in Region D, approximately equal percentages of Elev8 OST participants and non-participants reported planning to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school. In Region C a noticeable difference in high school plans between the two groups exists; however, it is smaller than in Regions A and B. Region A displayed the largest difference between the two groups' high school plans. This rather drastic variation in high school plans between regions appears related to the different activities offered at the Elev8 sites, as well as the school choice policies and options in the regions. For instance, some schools in Region D are geographically isolated from any urban or suburban center and, therefore, school choice is unavailable. While students in other Elev8 schools in this region have some choice, they still have less opportunity for choice than students in the other three regions.

<sup>57</sup> Students could check all options that applied to them; therefore, the totals are greater than 100%.

Figure 13: Types of high schools students plan to attend by region in the 2010-11 school year



In order to account for observed differences in student demographic characteristics and geographical region between the two groups, we conducted a series of analyses that allow us to estimate the magnitude of the relationship between Elev8 OST participation and high school plans and planning activities in isolation. In other words, we ask: Do Elev8 OST participants still report engaging in more planning activities and more frequently report planning to attend a competitive college preparatory high school if other contributing factors (i.e., SES, gender, race/ethnicity, geographical region, years enrolled in a school) are the same? After taking into account pre-existing differences, there is no consistent evidence showing that Elev8 OST participants are more likely to have a high school plan, plan to apply for a competitive college preparatory high school, or attend more high school preparation activities than those students who did not participate in Elev8 OST.

Given that OST participants and non-participants might be different in ways that we cannot account for in our data, and considering the wide variation in the dosage of Elev8 OST among participants, our next series of analyses examined whether and how participation levels in Elev8 OST related to OST participants' high school planning, using data from Elev8 OST participants only. The results of our analyses suggest that greater frequency of participation in Elev8 OST is positively related to both the number of high school planning activities and the types of high schools that students plan to attend,

controlling for background characteristics that may be related to a student's OST participation level.<sup>58</sup> More specifically:

- Elev8 OST participants who attended a greater number of days were more likely to participate in additional high school planning activities than those who participated fewer days in the Elev8 OST program. For example, a student who attended 43 days, the average number of days a participant attended Elev8 OST, was about 37 percent more likely to engage in one additional planning activity than a student who attended only 1 day of Elev8 OST programming.
- Engaging in more high school planning activities is associated with a greater likelihood of planning to attend a competitive high school. Specifically, for each additional planning activity in which an Elev8 OST participant engages, he or she is 1.3 times more likely to report planning to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school.
- Elev8 participants who attended more days of Elev8 OST programming are more likely to report planning to apply for a competitive college-preparatory high school than students who participated fewer days. For example, a student who attended Elev8 OST for 43 days was about 1.4 times more likely to report planning to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school than a student who attended for only one day.<sup>59</sup>

While these findings do not definitely demonstrate that Elev8 OST participation is beneficial to students' high school planning efforts beyond the benefit Elev8 may exert school-wide (irrespective of 8<sup>th</sup> graders' participation in Elev8 OST), they do suggest that increased participation in Elev8 OST is associated with better high school planning efforts and higher high school aspirations within the subgroup of Elev8 OST participants. (Additional information on this analysis is presented in Appendix E).

## Summary

Our analyses examine the relationship between student participation in Elev8 OST programs and outcomes in student school experience and high school transition planning. The data reveal that, among those who did participate in OST programs, higher levels of participation are associated with more high school planning activities. Further, students with higher participation levels are also more likely to have a plan to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school than those who participated fewer days in the OST programs. Because of differences in the Elev8 regions' local school choice policies and opportunities, we deliberately left the structure of our question open to multiple interpretations. It is possible that in some localities charter schools would not be classified as competitive college-preparatory high schools, and instead would be considered a public school outside their neighborhood. Nonetheless, across the spectrum we see that students who participated more days in Elev8 OST are more likely to take advantage of school choice where it exists, and fewer planned to attend neighborhood public high schools, which many believe are lower performing than the competitive college-preparatory high schools. More research is necessary to determine if Elev8 OST students indeed attend higher-quality high schools, if they succeed in them, and if they are more likely to complete 9<sup>th</sup> grade successfully.

Notably, Elev8 is a whole-school model, and it is quite possible that it benefits all students who attended Elev8 schools—OST participants and non-participants alike. Our analysis suggests that both

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<sup>58</sup> All findings reported are significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

<sup>59</sup> Again, while this assumption is verifiable in theory, we do not have reliable data on the names of the schools where students are planning to apply to high school, so we are unable to assess their quality.

Elev8 OST participants and non-participants reported high levels of efficacy, liked schools they attended, and valued school highly, and that a majority of students reported that they feel school is relevant to their future. Our analysis also suggests that the majority of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students in Elev8 schools participated in high school planning activities and reported having a defined high school plan.

## Chapter 6: Final Thoughts

Elev8 was created to address the myriad of challenges middle school students in chronically underserved communities face when striving to meet their educational potential. Across all sites, the initiative provides needed services tailored to the students, their families, and communities. These services include OST programming, family support services, and school-based health services. This report focuses on one component of Elev8: OST programming. It seeks to add to the literature by learning more about OST participation in a community school setting.

Overall, Elev8 OST serves primarily low-income middle school students of color. However, the students who do participate in Elev8 OST are somewhat different from those students in Elev8 schools who don't participate in Elev8 OST. Specifically, in some regions students who participate in Elev8 OST are more likely to be in a younger grade and of different racial/ethnic background than students who do not participate.

Measuring participation in OST is complex—and this complexity is exacerbated by the community school context where all students are exposed to other Elev8 activities in their schools daily. While the literature suggests there are multiple dimensions of OST participation, we were only able to investigate a few. We found that across all sites, forty percent of students in Elev8 schools participated in Elev8 OST and those that did participated in Elev8 OST for an average of 43 days in the 2010-11 school year. This average compares favorably with the experiences of middle school students enrolled in programs similar to Elev8 OST.<sup>60</sup> The length of participation during the school year was robust. Students, on average, participated in Elev8 OST for over five months of the school year, and some regions achieved even longer average durations of participation. Finally, though the data available to us were limited, where data were available we saw that a majority of Elev8 OST participants were taking advantage of multiple components of the Elev8 initiative.

While it has not yet been established that Elev8 improves student and school performance at this stage of the initiative, we sought to understand how participation in Elev8 OST relates to student outcomes. Though our study does not determine definitively if participation in OST is beneficial to students' performance in school, we did learn that, on average, students who were enrolled in Elev8 schools (including both OST participants and non-participants) reported high levels of efficacy, liked schools they attended, and valued school highly. Further, a majority of the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students in Elev8 schools (including OST participants and non-participants) participated in high school planning activities and reported having clear high school plans. Notably, 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in Elev8 OST more frequently were likely to have engaged in more high school preparation activities, and were more likely to report planning to take advantage of school choice and attend competitive college preparatory high schools than students who participated for fewer days in Elev8 OST. This is not explained by demographic differences between high-frequency and low-frequency participants.

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<sup>60</sup> See Kauh, 2011.

Despite limitations, these findings suggest that increasing participation levels in OST programs in community school settings may promote participant success in high school. While we did not look at school-level changes in culture or consider other community school influences on the entire school population, findings suggest that there may be additional discrete benefits of participation in OST activities in this setting. As Elev8 schools strive to meet their central goal of preparing students for high school, OST activities may be a promising context to help inform students about their high school options and available planning activities. More research is needed to understand the relationship between Elev8 OST and positive student outcomes.

## Appendix A: Data Sources

Data used in this report come from the 2010-11 student survey and 2010-11 participation data. During this data collection period, all students in Elev8 schools were invited to participate in the annual Elev8 survey. Additionally, all sites used a common database developed and managed by the evaluation team to track and record student participation. A summary of the data is provided in Table 1A below.

Table 1A. The 2010-11 sample of students included in the study

Data	Total	Region A	Region B	Region C	Region D
<b>Participation Data</b> (participated at least one day in OST, with consents)	2,476	306	1,073	289	808
<b>Survey Data</b> (completed a survey, with consents)	4,599	465	1,191	1,260	1,683
<b>Merged Sample (Participation + Survey Data)</b> (linked OST student participation data with survey data; some individuals could not be linked)	1,487	238	683	135	431
<b>Survey only sample</b> (non-OST participants)	2,988	226	505	1,123	1,134

### Elev8 student survey data

The Elev8 survey was developed by the national evaluation team to understand the strengths, needs, and short-term outcomes of Elev8 students. The survey contains a combination of validated survey constructs along with additional questions of interest to Elev8 communities. Survey constructs and variables include:

- academic, health, demographic and stressor profiles of students;
- student involvement in OST and other positive activities;
- student barriers to participation in OST;
- student utilization of school-based health centers and outcomes of that utilization; and,
- eighth graders' plans and preparation activities for their transition to high school.

### Participation data

Each site manages a Management Information System (MIS) with information on program participants including basic demographics and attendance in Elev8 services. Three Elev8 program components are captured in the MIS: extended-day learning activities, school-based health centers (aggregate), and family support programs (not linked to students). During the 2010-11 school year, the evaluation team managed the MIS for all regions, providing us with access to student-level identified data on a monthly basis. Consent forms from parents provide permission for the evaluation team to collect and analyze both participation and survey data. Students without permission are not included in the sample.

Students also provided assent to participate in the survey. Students without assent are not included in the sample. The data are administrative in nature, meaning that the demographics and attendance are reported by the program and not the participants themselves.

### Merged sample

Data from the surveys were merged with data from the participation database to identify students who did and did not participate in Elev8 OST. The merge was conducted using two methods. First, the names of students in each database were linked by school and region. In cases where there was not a perfect match, researchers manually identified a match, if one existed. An imperfect match was one where a nickname was used (Joe for Joseph), a hyphenated name was used, there was a reversal in the order of the names (Eric Brown was listed as Brown Eric), or a middle name was indicated in one, but not both sources.

In total, there are 4,599 students who consented and completed the survey, and 1,487 of them could be identified as OST participants (participated in the OST program at least one day) by linking them to participation data. In other words, among 4,599 students in survey file, 1,487 of them can be merged with participation data and thus identified as OST participants. The remaining 2,988 students who could not be linked to the participant file or could be linked but participated zero days in the program were considered non-OST participants.

## Appendix B: Survey Methodology

### Data Collection Plan

The survey methodology utilized in the spring of 2011 was designed to include all students in Elev8 schools irrespective of their participation in Elev8 services. The goal of this methodology was to understand backgrounds and experiences of students in Elev8 schools.<sup>61</sup> The survey was also designed to help understand in-program and interim outcomes of students in Elev8 schools (several outcomes listed below).

We worked with each school to distribute and collect consent forms so that as many students as possible were eligible to participate in the survey. Consent processes were aligned with the regulations of each school district. We gave each school six to eight weeks of lead time to distribute, collect, and submit consent forms to Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) staff.<sup>62</sup> Students who returned their consent forms, irrespective of whether permission was granted by their parents to complete the survey, were entered into a lottery for a prize.

### Instrumentation and Administration

The instruments for this study were designed and developed by P/PV staff. Elev8 staff and local evaluators were provided the opportunity to review and provide suggestions on survey content. Many of the constructs used were from earlier P/PV work and many were developed from other scales used commonly in the field (see Appendix C for citations) including studies of the Boys and Girls Club and Big Brothers Big Sisters. Constructs for the survey included:

- future orientation
- school value
- school liking
- utilization of Elev8 services
- stressors
- high school preparation
- sense of efficacy

The survey days were scheduled in collaboration with Elev8 site staff, and generally took place in April or May 2011 on dates that were determined by the individual schools. Only students who had parent permission (consent) to participate in the survey were invited to take the survey and, of these students, only those who assented to participate took the survey. Students who did not have permission or did not assent were given an activity to work on or were instructed to work on their school work during the survey administration period. The survey was conducted in classrooms by trained survey administrators. Survey administrators read the survey aloud to students, although students were instructed to take it at their own pace if they liked. The survey administration process took approximately 30-45 minutes per classroom. Surveys were paper-based, as many of the schools do not have enough computers to deliver an online survey to multiple classrooms at one time. Once the

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<sup>61</sup> Students were identified as out-of-school time participants or non-participants through linking their survey data with participation data collected through the Elev8 database.

<sup>62</sup> The national evaluation of Elev8 was originally conducted by Public/Private Ventures, a national non-profit research organization. Public/Private Ventures closed in July 2012, and the national evaluation of Elev8 was transferred by Atlantic Philanthropies to Research for Action, a Philadelphia-based non-profit organization working in educational research and reform to ensure opportunities and outcomes for all students.

surveys were completed, they were sealed by students, collected by survey administrators and mailed back to P/PV for processing and data analysis.

Table 1B: Spring 2011 survey response rates

Region A		Region B		Region C		Region D	
School	Response Rate (%)						
A	83	E	60	J	59	P	76
B	90	F	49	K	68	Q	69
C	82	G	63	L	60	R	70
D	78	H	74	M	49	S	60
		I	52	N	71	T	79
				O	46		

Note: Response Rate = number of students in those grades who completed the survey ÷ number of students in school in Elev8 grades; students without consent and who did not assent are included in the denominator.

Table 2B. Number of students completing the student survey (present, consented, and assented)

Region A		Region B		Region C		Region D	
School	No. of students						
A	207	E	346	J	383	P	686
B	61	F	215	K	257	Q	456
C	123	G	286	L	249	R	145
D	74	H	291	M	83	S	282
		I	53	N	135	T	114
				O	153		
Total	465	Total	1,191	Total	1,260	Total	1,683

## Appendix C: Survey Measures

**School Liking** (3 ITEMS: Scale from 1 (not very true) to 4 (very true); Source: Herrera, 2004)<sup>63</sup>

I often feel excited at school

I look forward to going to school every day

I like school a lot

**School Efficacy** (4 ITEMS: Scale from 1 (not very true) to 4 (very true); Source: Modified from Midgley et al., 2000)<sup>64</sup>

I know I can do even the hardest work in my classes if I try

I'm certain I can master the skills taught in school this year

I can do almost all the work in school if I don't give up

I know even if my schoolwork is hard, I can learn it

**School Value** (5 ITEMS: Scale from 1 (not very true) to 4 (very true); Original Source: Modified from Eccles et al., 1984)<sup>65</sup>

I feel that being a good student is important to me

I would be upset if I got a low grade for one of my subjects

I am interested in the things I learn at school

I think school is useful in helping me make good decisions in my life

I know what I learn in school is useful for the job I want as an adult

**Future Orientation/Connectedness** (1 ITEM: Scale from 1 (not very true) to 4 (very true); Source: modified from Arbretton et al., 2009)<sup>66</sup>

I know doing well in school will help me in the future

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<sup>63</sup> Herrera, C. (2004). School based mentoring: A closer look. Public/Private Ventures: Philadelphia.

<sup>64</sup> Midgley, C., Maehr, M.L., Hruda, L.Z., Anderman, E., Anderman, L., Freeman, K.E., Gheen, M...Urda, T. (2000). Manual for the patterns of adaptive learning scales. The University of Michigan: Ann Arbor. MI.

<sup>65</sup> Eccles, J.P., Adler, T. & Meece, J.L. (1984). Sex differences in achievement: A test of alternate theories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46, 26-43.

<sup>66</sup> Arbretton, A.J., with Bradshaw, M., Pepper, S. & Sheldon, J. (2009). Making every day count: Boys and Girls Clubs' role in promoting positive outcomes for teens. Public/Private Ventures: Philadelphia.

## Appendix D: Demographic Comparisons of Elev8 Participants with Non-Participants

Table 1D. Demographic comparisons of Elev8 OST participants and students who did not participate in Elev8 OST in school year 2010-11

CHARACTERISTIC	Region A n=464		Region B n=1188		Region C n=1258		Region D n=1564	
	OST	Non-OST	OST	Non-OST	OST	Non-OST	OST	Non-OST
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>								
African American	1.7	.4	.9	.6	12.6	18.8	3.6	3.8
Asian	86.9	84.0	42.6	19.4	21.5	16.4	4.5	3.2
Hispanic	1.7	1.8	49.1	76.6	57.8	57.1	62.7	69.7
Native American	6.4	5.8	3.7	1.0	.7	2.4	16.6	8.9
Other	2.1	5.3	2.2	1.0	5.9	4.3	1.7	1.3
White	1.3	2.7	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.0	11.1	13.1
<b>GENDER</b>								
Female	55.7	52.2	52.3	55.8	40.0	54.5	58.5	49.9
Male	44.3	47.8	47.7	44.2	60.0	45.5	41.5	50.1
<b>FRL STATUS</b>								
FRL	86.4	79.5	72.3	76.9	64.9	65.6	67.1	69.7
NON-FRL	10.2	16.1	8.3	5.8	6.0	3.7	13.6	12.8
Not Sure	3.4	4.5	19.4	17.3	29.1	30.7	19.3	17.5
<b>GRADE LEVEL</b>								
5th Grade	24.4	21.7	.2	0.0	0.0	.4	0.0	.4
6th Grade	38.2	32.7	23.7	15.5	39.3	29.6	21.1	15.8
7th Grade	22.7	20.4	41.9	41.1	40.7	39.0	37.1	43.4
8th Grade	14.7	25.2	34.3	43.6	20.0	31.1	41.8	40.3

## Appendix E: Regression Analysis

In order to examine the relationship between Elev8 OST participation and high school preparation activities and plans, we conducted two series of analyses.

First, we conducted a series of logistic regressions to examine the potential differences between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants in high school preparation activities and plans. The variables controlled in the statistical model include student gender, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, geographical region, and years in attendance at the school. The results did not provide consistent evidence that Elev8 OST participants are more likely to have a high school plan, plan to apply for a competitive college preparatory high school, or attend more high school preparation activities than those students who did not participate in Elev8 OST. Our analyses may be biased because we are unable to account for all the differences between students who did and did not participate in Elev8 OST activities. Further, students were not randomly selected to participate in the Elev8 OST program; instead, they *chose* to, or were encouraged to, participate. Additionally, the estimate may be biased because some students may have received other, non-Elev8, OST or enrichment programs that are not reported in our data.

Second, using participation data, we explored how the frequency of participation in Elev8 OST was associated with high school preparation activities, and, in turn, how planning activities were associated with where the student planned to attend high school, controlling for observed student and school characteristics, as described above. Figures 1E through 3E display some of the findings from these analyses. In each figure, solid lines represent the change in estimated probabilities, the dashed lines represent the 95% confidence intervals, and the vertical lines ( $x=43$ ) display the average days students participated in Elev8 OST program. All the correlations displayed in the figures are significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  level.

Figure 1E: Students who attended more days in Elev8 OST were more likely to participate in high school preparation activities

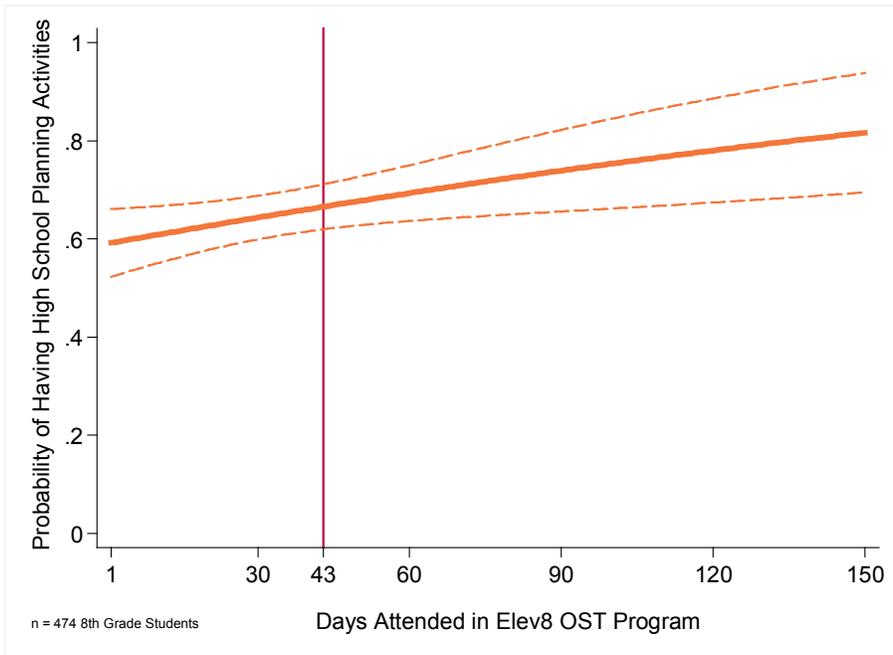


Figure 2E: Engaging in more high school planning activities is associated with a greater likelihood of high school planning

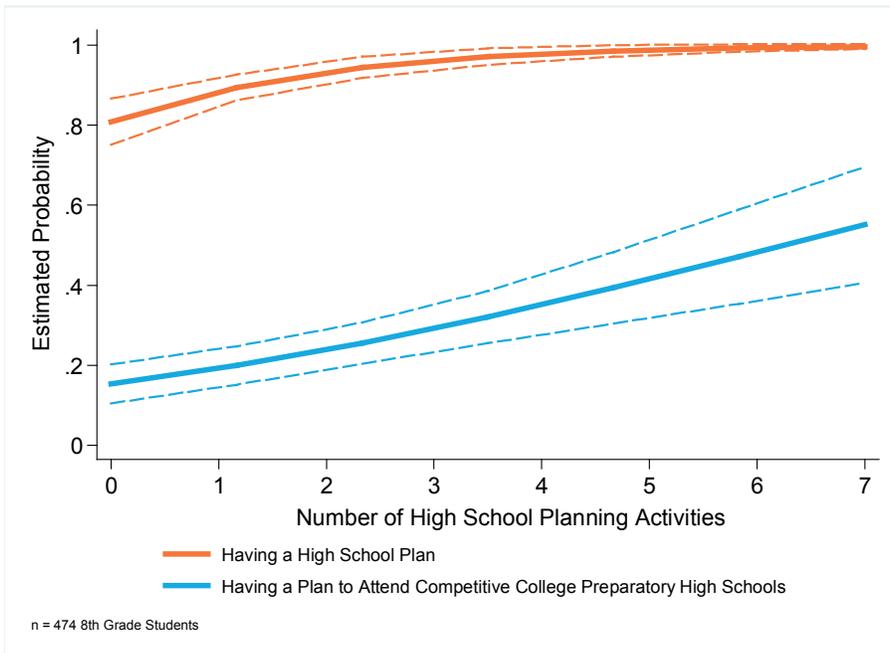
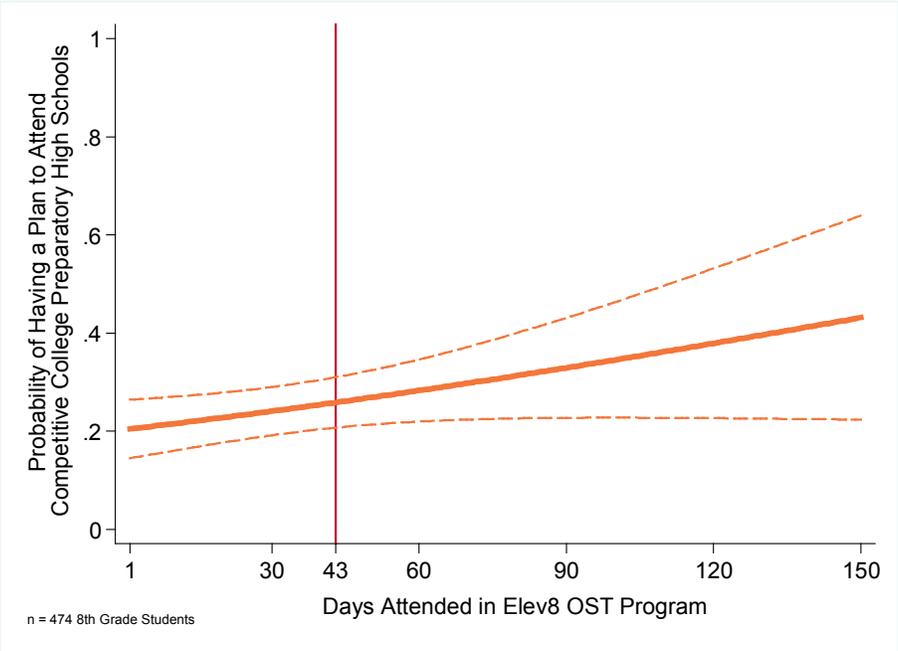


Figure 3E: Students who attended more days of Elev8 OST are more likely to report planning to apply for a competitive college-preparatory high school



# Out-of-School Time in Elev8 Community Schools: A First Look at Participation and its Unique Contribution to Students' Experiences in School

Prepared for The Atlantic Philanthropies  
Prepared by Research for Action & McClanahan Associates, Inc.

July 2013

Authors

Wendy S. McClanahan | Jian Gao | Felicia Sanders

## About Research for Action

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization. We seek to use research as the basis for the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes for traditionally underserved students. Our work is designed to: strengthen public schools and postsecondary institutions; provide research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners, and the public at the local, state, and national levels; and enrich the civic and community dialogue about public education. For more information, please visit our website at [www.researchforaction.org](http://www.researchforaction.org).

## About McClanahan Associates, Inc.

At McClanahan Associates, Inc., we are committed to strengthening programs based on flexible, yet rigorous, evaluation practices that help organizations and funders achieve their mission of improving people's lives. We work closely with the organizations we partner with – capitalizing on their deep knowledge of the local context, the population they serve, and their own program – and generating information and recommendations for our clients that are understandable, practical, and useful. Our staff is comprised of expert researchers, evaluators and technical assistance providers. As a team, we believe that meaningful evaluation efforts respond to each program's unique needs, align with the developmental stage of the program, and produce information that is immediately relevant to practitioners.

## Acknowledgements

This research was made possible with funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies. Research for Action and McClanahan Associates, Inc. would like to thank the foundation for its support and its dedication to leveling the playing field for vulnerable middle school youth from low income communities. Atlantic staff members, Naomi Post and Sandra Trujillo, participated in the development of the report and provided a comprehensive review of its final draft.

This report is the result of work by many organizations and individuals. Thanks go to all of the agencies and schools implementing Elev8. In addition to providing valuable services to students, they have endured the demands of an intensive research process and reviewed the report for factual accuracy. Staff at Research for Action and McClanahan Associates, Inc. were also integral to the completion of this report. Meridith Polin worked tirelessly with the sites over the last five years to collect data about the initiative and prepared the description of that process for the report. Anurag Kumar managed the data, and prepared it for analysis. Emily Lipman pulled the site descriptions together. Kate Shaw and Stephanie Levin provided insightful feedback on the final draft. Jenna McCready and Jesse Gottschalk copy-edited the report. Alison Murawski and Allison Petrosky designed the report and organized its production.

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# Out-of-School Time in Elev8 Community Schools: A First Look at Participation and its Unique Contribution to Students' Experiences in School

## Executive Summary

July 2013

### Introduction

A solid, high-quality education is a key to successful adulthood; however, young people from low-income families and communities often face a myriad of educational and academic challenges that put them at risk for ongoing disadvantage. Community schools are an approach that has been adopted to respond to this educational crisis. By partnering with local agencies, community schools provide students and families with access to healthcare services, educational enhancement and recreational opportunities, family economic supports such as workforce development and income tax assistance, and other programming, like educational advocacy activities, leadership opportunities, child care, and others, to increase student outcomes and overall quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

### About Elev8

In 2007, The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic) made an investment in its first five community schools in the State of New Mexico. Over the years that followed, Atlantic invested in developing community schools in three additional locations—Chicago, Baltimore, and Oakland—totaling about 20 schools across all four regions.

For this initiative, now known as Elev8, Atlantic selected agencies with deep local roots to serve as regional leads. Each of these grantees has developed and implemented flexible, full-service community school models in up to five schools, focusing on middle-grade students in low-performing schools in their region. Elev8 schools employ a team of Out-of-School Time (OST) staff, family advocates, medical professionals, a site director, and others, as dictated by their model.

### About this Study

Since 2008, Atlantic's evaluation effort had focused on generating information to help create and sustain the strongest initiative possible. As a result, the first five years of the evaluation were designed to ensure that the model was robustly implemented, and to assist the local sites in utilizing evaluation information to strengthen their efforts. However, Atlantic and their grantees are now seeking to document how students fare in the program, and to contribute to the literature on community schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Bireda, S. (2009). A Look at Community Schools, Center for American Progress. Retrieved November 29, 2012 from [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/community\\_schools.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/community_schools.pdf)

With this in mind, the evaluation team set forth to explore what questions we could answer with the data we had in hand. As a significant investment is made in OST activities in Elev8 and other community school models, this report takes a preliminary look inside the “black box” of community schools, thereby providing important information to the field about the relative value of OST within a community school model. This study answers the following questions:

- Who participates in OST in Elev8 schools?
- What are their patterns of participation?
- How do Elev8 OST participants compare to students in Elev8 schools who do not participate in Elev8 OST (called “non-OST” or “non-participants” in this report)?
- How is participation in Elev8 OST related to students’ experiences of school?

To answer these questions, we used data from three main sources:

- Administrative records containing student demographic data;
- OST participation data (the “participation data”); and,
- Self-report data from our annual survey of students in Elev8 schools.

More details on the data sources and survey administration can be found in the appendices of the full report.

## Community Schools and OST—What We Know

While community schools have existed for almost a century, rigorous evaluation of the impact of this educational model is limited, but growing. Research points to three indicators that suggest that community schools are a promising approach.<sup>2</sup> They include:

- Improved academic performance;
- Improved behavior; and,
- Increased parental involvement.

OST activities are a central component of community schools and, while not a lot is known specifically about OST in the context of community schools, the literature on the impact of school- and/or community-based OST programs is quite robust, though results are mixed. Many programs demonstrate increased academic achievement, positive youth development, and reductions in harmful behaviors, such as drug use.<sup>3</sup> However, some studies report more limited benefits to students who participate in OST programs. Research suggests that participation rates vary in response to student motivation;<sup>4</sup> the needs of the family; whether that is quality childcare or academic support; and, program availability.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a review, see Dryfoos, J.G. (2000). *Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date*. Coalition for Community Schools.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, H.B. (2004). *Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs*. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 7.

<sup>4</sup> Bodilly, S.J. & Beckett, M.K. (2005). *Making Out-of-School-Time Matter*. RAND Research Brief Education. Retrieved from [www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG242](http://www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG242)

<sup>5</sup> Hynes, K. & Sanders, F. (2010). The changing landscape of afterschool programs. *Afterschool Matters (June)*.

## Participation in Elev8 OST Programming

Elev8 OST is an essential component of the Elev8 initiative. However, the exact nature of the programming varies by region and school. All Elev8 schools provide both recreational and academically focused OST programming.<sup>6</sup> Students come into the OST program in a variety of ways. In most cases, participation in Elev8 OST activities is open to all students who are interested. In a handful of schools, however, students struggling academically are exclusively targeted for Elev8 OST programming which, in those schools, is focused on academics. Additionally, some Elev8 schools offer non-Elev8-funded OST activities to students, so a student not enrolled in Elev8 OST may still have the opportunity to participate in other school-based OST activities that are not reflected in our data.

### Who Participates in Elev8 OST Activities?

The demographic characteristics of participants are displayed in Table ES-1.

*Representative of the regions in which Elev8 is located, students who participate in Elev8 OST are primarily low-income students of color. Female students and middle schoolers in the younger grades are most likely to participate.*

- **Racial and ethnic characteristics:** Representative of the regions in which Elev8 is located. Elev8 OST participants are primarily students of color.
- **Gender:** Elev8 OST participants are more likely to be female than male; however, gender breakdowns vary by site.
- **Income status:** The bulk of students who participate in Elev8 OST, as well as those who attend Elev8 schools, are from low-income homes.<sup>7</sup>
- **Grade level:** Elev8 targets middle-grade students. Overall, the data shows that younger students are more likely to participate than older students. This condition holds true in many OST programs nationwide.

Table ES-1: Characteristics of Elev8 OST participants

CHARACTERISTIC	Region A		Region B		Region C		Region D	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>								
African American	285	93.1	523	48.7	109	37.7	41	5.1
Asian	0	0	3	0.3	13	4.5	8	1.0
Hispanic	0	0	533	49.7	148	51.2	353	43.7
Native American	0	0	3	0.3	0	0	267	33.0
Other	12	3.9	8	0.8	19	6.6	21	2.6
White	9	2.9	3	0.3	0	0	118	14.6
<b>GENDER</b>								
Female	158	51.6	563	52.5	144	49.8	435	53.8
Male	148	48.4	510	47.5	145	50.2	373	46.2

<sup>6</sup> Only one region provided data that documents the actual types of OST programs that students participate in. That data is provided later in this report.

<sup>7</sup> We gauged income status by using free or reduced-price lunch eligibility as a proxy for income (denoted FRL and NON-FRL herein).

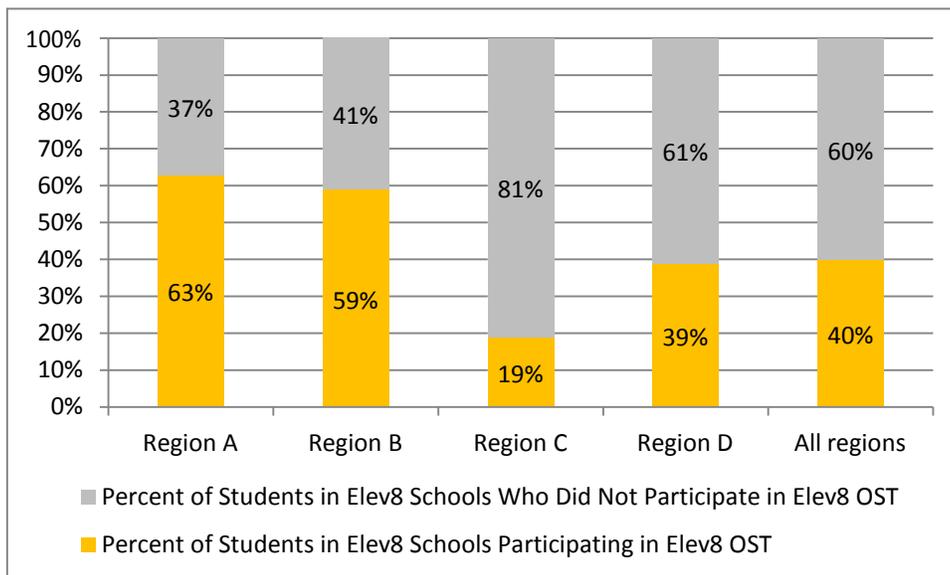
FRL STATUS								
FRL	0	0	989	92.2	237	82.0	661	81.8
NON-FRL	0	0	50	4.7	1	0.4	118	14.6
Not Sure	306	100.0	34	3.2	51	17.7	29	3.6
GRADE LEVEL								
5th Grade	70	22.9	20	1.9	0	0	3	0.4
6th Grade	105	34.3	248	23.1	97	33.6	199	24.6
7th Grade	70	22.9	397	37.0	74	25.6	307	38.0
8th Grade	48	15.7	382	35.6	63	21.8	282	34.9
Other	13	4.3	26	2.4	55	19.0	17	2.1

### What are Students' Patterns of Participation in Elev8 OST?

As can be seen in Figure ES-1, across all regions, about four in ten students in middle grades in Elev8 schools participated in Elev8 OST activities at least once during the 2010-11 school year.<sup>8</sup> However, participation varied by region. This is due, in part, to differences in program focus.

*About four in ten middle-grades students in Elev8 schools participated in Elev8 OST activities at least once during the 2010-11 school year.*

Figure ES-1: Elev8 OST participation rate by region and overall during the 2010-11 school year



<sup>8</sup> Grades targeted for Elev8 are primarily the middle grades: 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. However, there is variation by school. In Baltimore, for instance, some 5<sup>th</sup> graders are included in Elev8 because the school configuration is K-8. In Chicago, there is a school that only serves 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. In Oakland, some campuses include 9<sup>th</sup> graders and therefore some 9<sup>th</sup> graders receive programming. Data are from 2011 Elev8 participation summary.

- **Participation in days:** Across regions, students participating in Elev8 OST attended the program for an average of 43 days, ranging from 1 to 143 days in 2010-2011. This compares favorably to the average number of days students in Providence’s After Zone participated in OST programming.<sup>9 10</sup>
- **Participation in months:** Students participating in Elev8 OST did so for 5.3 months of the school year on average. Across regions, participation averages ranged from 3.8 to 6.3 months.
- **Breadth of participation in activities and services:** Only one region had data on the types of Elev8 activities students engaged in; on average, students in this region participated in two to three different types of Elev8 OST activities. Across all regions, just under a quarter of students in Elev8 schools both participated in Elev8 OST and took advantage of the school-based health center, another key Elev8 service.

## How Do the Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Non-Participants Compare?

Across regions there are differences between students who opted to participate in Elev8 OST activities for at least one day and those who did not. Students who participated in Elev8 OST are more likely to be African American and less likely to be Hispanic than non-participants. They are also more likely to be in the younger grades than their non-OST participating peers. There are no statistically significant differences in gender or income status between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants.

*Students who opted to participate in Elev8 OST were more likely to be African American and to be in younger middle school grades than those who opted not to participate.*

## How Is Participation in Elev8 OST Related to Students’ Experiences of School?

This evaluation examines the relationship between student participation in Elev8 OST programs and two school experience outcomes we had access to in our data: 8<sup>th</sup> grade students’ high school transition planning and attitudes toward school. After taking into account pre-existing differences in student race/ethnicity, gender, student socioeconomic status, and schools students attended, our analyses suggest the following:

- Among those who participated in Elev8 OST, higher levels of participation are associated with more positive high school planning outcomes. More specifically:
  - ✓ Students who attended more days in Elev8 OST were more likely to participate in a wider range of high school planning activities.
  - ✓ Engaging in more high school planning activities is associated with a greater likelihood of having a plan for high school.

<sup>9</sup> In the 2008-09 school year, middle schoolers in the After Zone program participated for an average of 24 of the 96 days of OST programming available to them. Over 80 percent participated in no more than half of the available days (Kauh, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Little, P.M.D & Harris, E. (2003). A Review of Out-of-School Time Program Quasi-Experimental and Experimental Evaluation Results. In Out of School Time Evaluation Snapshots. Number 1. Harvard Family Research Project. Kauh, T. (2011). AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence’s Citywide After-School System. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

- ✓ Students who attended more days of Elev8 OST are more likely to report planning to apply for a competitive college preparatory high school (defined as a selective enrollment—public or private—or charter high school).<sup>11</sup>
- The Elev8 program is a whole-school model and as such it might benefit all students who attended Elev8 schools, including OST participants and non-participants. According to our analysis:
  - ✓ Both Elev8 OST participants and non-participants reported high levels of efficacy<sup>12</sup>, liked schools they attended, and valued school highly.
  - ✓ More than two thirds of students in Elev8 schools (including OST participants and non-participants) reported that they feel school is relevant to their future.
  - ✓ The majority of the 8th-grade students in Elev8 schools (including OST participants and non-participants) participated in high school planning activities and reported having clear high school plans.

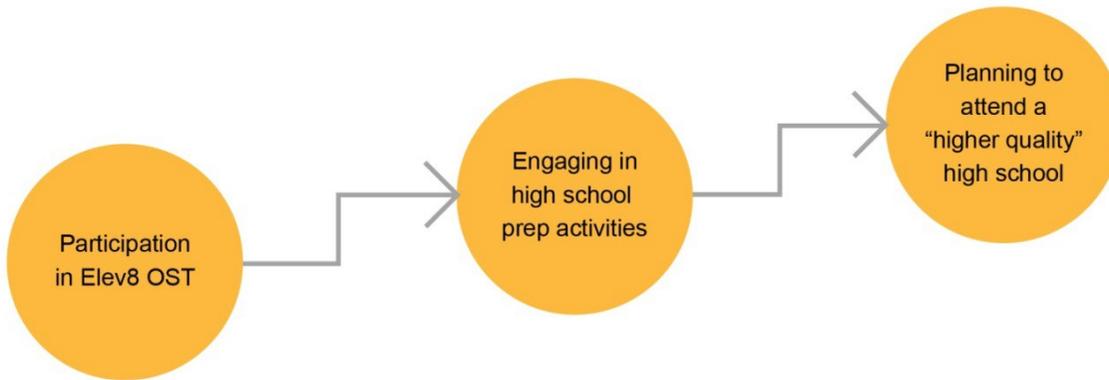
*Eighth grade Elev8 participants who attended more frequently were significantly more likely to participate in a wide range of high school planning activities (such as spending the day shadowing at a high school of interest, attending a test preparation class, attending a mock high school interview, etc.) than those with lower OST participation. Also, Elev8 OST participants who participated more frequently were more likely to report that they planned to attend a college-preparatory (selective enrollment—public or private—or charter) high school than those with less frequent participation. Elev8 OST participation was not related to school attitudes, possibly because students had uniformly positive attitudes towards school.*

Our study was not designed to determine definitively if participation in Elev8 OST is the *cause* of these outcomes. Therefore, these findings do not definitely demonstrate that Elev8 OST participation is beneficial to students' high school planning efforts beyond the benefit Elev8 may exert school-wide (irrespective of 8<sup>th</sup> graders' participation in Elev8 OST). Yet, they do suggest that increased participation levels in Elev8 OST is associated with better high school planning efforts and higher high school aspirations within the subgroup of Elev8 OST participants. These are relationships built into the Elev8 initiative to help students establish a model pathway to postsecondary success (see Figure ES-2).

<sup>11</sup> Regions varied in terms of the availability of selective enrollment and charter high schools. Some regions have robust options, while others have fewer choices. One school had only one feeder high school. Finally, we do not have data to confirm that these schools actually have higher rates of students attending or prepared for college than traditional neighborhood schools.

<sup>12</sup> Their perception that they can achieve in school.

Figure ES-2: Theory of action between participation in Elev8 OST and participants' high school plans



## Final Thoughts

Despite limitations, these findings suggest that: 1) increasing participation levels in OST programs in community school settings may promote OST participants' success in high school; and 2) Elev8 students in our sample have positive attitudes toward school. Elev8 aims to guide students through the steps necessary to prepare, plan for, and attend high-quality high schools through various activities taking place in the school day and by bolstering these school-wide activities during OST programming.

As Elev8 and other community schools strive to meet their central goal of preparing students for high school, OST activities may be a promising context to help inform students about their high school options and planning activities. More research is needed to understand the relationship between Elev8 OST and positive student outcomes.



## Out-of-School Time in Elev8 Community Schools: A First Look at Participation and its Unique Contribution to Students' Experiences in School

July 2013

### Chapter I: Introduction

Far too many children across America face substantial barriers to educational success. Poverty and lack of access to high-quality learning opportunities and healthcare mean young people do not receive the support they need to thrive. A solid, high-quality education is a key to successful adulthood; however, young people from low-income families and communities often face a myriad of educational and academic challenges that put them at risk for ongoing disadvantage. Community schools are an approach that has been adopted to respond to this educational crisis. Community schools are educational models that pool resources and services to meet students', families', and communities' needs in order to alleviate systemic problems associated with poor performance in school. By partnering with local agencies, community schools provide students and families with access to supports to increase student outcomes and overall quality of life, such as healthcare services; child care; educational enhancement and recreational opportunities; family economic supports, such as workforce development and income tax assistance; and other programming, like educational advocacy activities, leadership opportunities, child care, and others.<sup>13</sup> Proponents of the model posit that community schools' "integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities."<sup>14</sup>

In 2008, The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic) made an investment in its first five community schools in the State of New Mexico. Over the years that followed, Atlantic invested in developing community schools in three additional locations where there was also the need for support of low-performing middle schools and middle-school students—Chicago, Baltimore, and Oakland—totaling about 20 schools across all four regions. A brief look at the communities where the investments were made shows some of the reasons why they were targeted:

- In the City of Chicago, there is a 50% high school graduation rate, compared with 70% statewide.<sup>15</sup>
- In the State of New Mexico, over 25% of children live in poverty.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Bireda, S. (2009). A Look at Community Schools. Center for American Progress. Retrieved November 29, 2012 from [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/community\\_schools.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/community_schools.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> What is a Community School? Coalition for Community Schools. Retrieved November 29, 2012, from [http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what\\_is\\_a\\_community\\_school.aspx](http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what_is_a_community_school.aspx)

<sup>15</sup> Source: Illinois Department of Education, 2010

<sup>16</sup> Source: American Community Survey (2009)

- In the City of Baltimore, 50% of public school 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored in the “basic” category on the Maryland School Assessments in reading and math.<sup>17</sup>
- In the City of Oakland, 21% of children live below the poverty line.<sup>18</sup>

For this initiative, now known as Elev8, Atlantic selected agencies with deep local roots to serve as regional leads. Each of these grantees has developed and implemented flexible, full-service community school models in up to five schools, focusing on middle-grade students in low-performing schools in their region. Their efforts build on core elements that research has linked with student achievement and success.<sup>19</sup> These include extended-day learning opportunities, school-based healthcare, and support for families, which are all integrated into the school to make good use of resources and effectively support students.

## About this Study

Assessing the impact of efforts like Elev8 requires time and patience—measurable results take time to achieve and are difficult to prove definitively. In recognition of this, since 2008, Atlantic’s evaluation effort has focused on generating information to help create and sustain the strongest initiative possible. As a result, the first five years of the evaluation were designed to ensure that the model was robustly implemented, and to assist the local sites in utilizing evaluation information to strengthen their efforts.

Atlantic and their grantees are now seeking to document how students fare in the program, and to contribute to the literature on community schools. With this in mind, the evaluation team set forth to explore what questions we could answer with the data we had in hand.

Our review of the literature suggests that, despite the fact that Out-of-School Time (OST) activities are a fundamental aspect of the community school model, little is known about the impact of OST activities on students in the context of community schools. Research has shown that participation in *high-quality* OST programs can provide important opportunities for disadvantaged youth and can result in significant social and educational gains, including: improved school attendance; stronger academic performance; better attitudes towards and behavior in school, improved relationships; and, decreased

*Atlantic and their grantees are now seeking to document how students fare in the program, and to contribute to the literature on community schools. With this in mind, the evaluation team has used data originally intended as part of the program improvement effort to achieve these goals. The result of that effort is presented herein.*

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*This study answers the following questions:*

- *Who participates in OST in Elev8 schools?*
- *What are their patterns of participation?*
- *How do Elev8 OST participants compare to students in Elev8 schools who do not participate in Elev8 OST (non-OST or non-participants in this report)?*
- *How is participation in Elev8 OST related to students’ experiences of school?*

<sup>17</sup> Source: Kids Count (2012)

<sup>18</sup> Source: Oakland Unified School District, CA: DP3 Economic Characteristics. ProximityOne. Retrieved from [http://proximityone.com/acs/dpca/dp3\\_0628050.htm](http://proximityone.com/acs/dpca/dp3_0628050.htm)

<sup>19</sup> Blank, M.A., Melaville, A., & Shah, B.P. (no date). Making the difference: Research and practice in community schools. Coalition for Community Schools. Retrieved January 7, 2013 from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/Page/CCSFullReport.pdf>.

delinquency.<sup>20</sup> Research also shows that participation in OST in a school-based setting can increase parental involvement in school.<sup>21</sup> By design, community schools should be able to enhance these outcomes as they are likely to bolster youth's participation in OST activities by reducing barriers to participation such as: transportation; peer involvement; developing programming that is responsive to the school's and students' needs; and, reducing participation reluctance or hesitancy (as teachers and school staff can collaboratively encourage youth to participate<sup>22</sup>).

As a significant investment is made in OST activities in Elev8 and other community school models, this report takes a preliminary look inside the "black box" of community schools, thereby providing important information to the community schools field about the relative value of OST within a community school model. This study examines the relationship between student participation in community schools' OST activities and students' experiences in schools that may be related to more positive academic outcomes. This study answers the following questions:

- Who participates in OST in Elev8 schools?
- What are their patterns of participation?
- How do Elev8 OST participants compare to students in Elev8 schools who do not participate in Elev8 OST (called non-OST or non-participants in this report)?
- How is participation in Elev8 OST related to students' experiences of school?

To answer these questions, we used data from three main sources:

- Administrative records containing student demographic data;
- OST participation data (the "participation data"); and,
- Self-report data from our annual survey of students in Elev8 schools.

More details on the data sources and survey administration can be found in the appendices.

It is critical to keep in mind that, while OST activities are a central component of Elev8, they are only one component of the initiative. Elev8 is a whole-school model, and all students in Elev8 schools have the opportunity to participate in school-wide Elev8 activities, such as health fairs and opportunities for increased parent and community involvement in schools, and will be exposed to changes to school climate and school policy brought about by the community school effort. Our analysis suggests that, on average, both Elev8 participants and non-participants reported: high levels of efficacy (their perception that they can achieve in school); liked schools they attended; and, valued school highly. Further, a majority of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Elev8 schools, including OST participants and non-participants, participated in high school planning activities and reported having clear high school plans. Notably, our analysis suggests that participation level in Elev8 OST activities is associated with planning and preparing for high school among 8<sup>th</sup> grade Elev8 participants.

In the sections that follow, we provide background information on the community schools model, its origin, and a brief review of the literature on community schools initiatives. We then provide a description of the Elev8 initiative, followed by information about the data sources used in our analyses.

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<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Little, P.M.D & Harris, E. (2003). A Review of Out-of-School Time Program Quasi-Experimental and Experimental Evaluation Results. In Out of School Time Evaluation Snapshots. Number 1. Harvard Family Research Project. Kauh, T. (2011). AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence's Citywide After-School System. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

<sup>21</sup> Grossman, J.B. & Vang, Z. (2009). The Case for School-Based Integration of Services: Changing the Ways Students, Families and Communities Engage With Their Schools. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

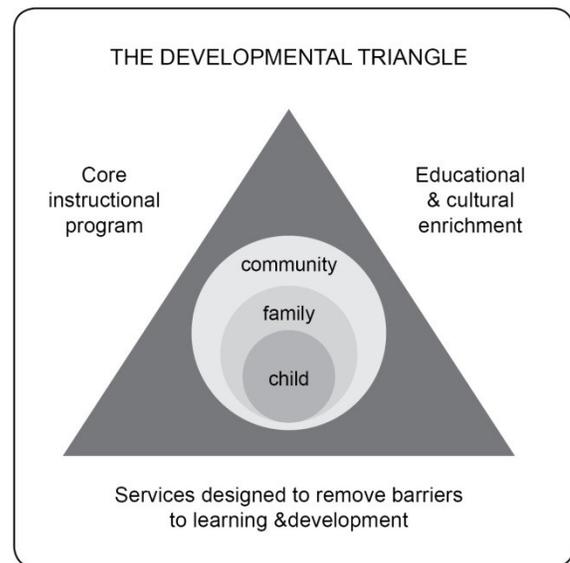
<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The final sections of the report describe OST participation in Elev8 and present early findings on the relationship between Elev8 OST participation and student outcomes.

## Chapter 2: Community Schools and OST—What We Know

### History of Community Schools

The community schools model began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with John Dewey and Jane Addams in response to the need to provide immigrant children with important medical services, such as immunization and dentistry.<sup>23</sup> Today, in response to the 21st century educational issues facing our nation’s most vulnerable youth, community schools exist in forty-nine states and the District of Columbia.<sup>24</sup> While community schools vary in terms of exact configuration of services and partners, according to the Children’s Aid Society, they share the following framework, known as the developmental triangle.<sup>25</sup> Within this framework, common services include OST (including summer) programming, family support services, and services to minimize student barriers to success, such as school-based health, behavioral health, and dental services. The framework recognizes that the engagement of students, their families, and community members in the school and the community is central to student success and the strength of the educational system as a whole.



Source: The Developmental Triangle, Children's Aid Society

### Evidence of Community Schools’ Success

While community schools have existed for almost a century, research on the impact of this educational model is limited, but growing. Nonetheless, some recent research studies suggest that community schools do have a positive impact on academic performance, behavior, and parental involvement. The results on each of these indicators are summarized below.

#### Improved Academic Performance

Educational success is a central goal of the community schools movement, and research on community schools suggests that community school students experience gains in school. Research on the academic impacts of community schools tends to focus on test scores, attendance, and drop-out rates. An evaluation of the Communities in Schools (CIS) model found that case managers played an important role in bolstering academic achievement for 6<sup>th</sup> graders, who achieved significant increases in their

<sup>23</sup> Dryfoos, J.G. (January, 2002). Full-service community schools: Creating new institutions. Phi Delta Kappan.

<sup>24</sup> Coalition for Community Schools (2009). Community schools: Research brief. Retrieved January 8, 2013 from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> National Center for Community Schools (no date). FAQs on Community Schools. Retrieved from <http://nationalcenterforcommunityschools.childrensaidsociety.org/faqs/on-community-schools>

reading test scores; and 9<sup>th</sup> graders, who achieved significant increases in grade point average.<sup>26</sup> An evaluation of the Children's Aid Society (CAS) also demonstrated that students who participated in their after-school programs earned significantly higher test scores than students in other schools.<sup>27</sup> In a review of 49 evaluations of community schools, Dryfoos found that 36 evaluations reported academic gains: most of the evaluations that reported gains were in the elementary school grades, and improvements were limited to students who needed "specialized services, such as case management, intensive mental health services, or extended day sessions."<sup>28</sup> The extended day finding is especially noteworthy, as many community school models include an extended day component, while fewer include case management. Research also suggests that students in community schools had increased attendance rates and decreased drop-out rates.<sup>29</sup>

## **Improved Behavior**

Community schools also strive to create a learning environment that fosters improvements in student behavior. Several evaluations have suggested that suspension rates and disciplinary incidents are lower in community schools and among students attending community schools, though the evidence supporting these outcomes is somewhat mixed. In Dryfoos' examination, 11 programs reported decreases in suspension rates. However, she posits that this decrease "may reflect changes in suspension policies, rather than changes in behaviors leading to suspensions."<sup>30</sup> Chicago Public Schools manages the Chicago Community Schools Initiative (CSI), which is the largest community schools system in the country.<sup>31</sup> According to the Community Schools Research Brief, this system of schools consistently reported lower levels of disciplinary incidents compared to other schools in the district with similar student demographics.<sup>32</sup> However, while the five-year evaluation of CSI reported that school disciplinary incidents and suspensions decreased for students by the end of 6<sup>th</sup> grade, high school students' disciplinary incidents and suspensions increased.<sup>33</sup>

## **Increased Parental Involvement**

Many community schools evaluations have found that parental involvement increases over time. Indicators of parental involvement include attendance at parent-teacher conferences and volunteering at school events. Home visits conducted by Family-School Liaisons and opportunities provided for parents to volunteer or take classes may be associated with parents' increased involvement in community schools.

## **The Role of OST**

OST activities are a central component of community schools. Often, community schools are open for extended hours, providing students with a safe place to spend after-school hours and offering

<sup>26</sup> IFC International (2010). Communities in schools National Evaluation: Five Year Study. Retrieved November 29, 2012 from <http://www.communitiesinschools.org/about/publications/publication/five-year-national-evaluation-summary-report>

<sup>27</sup> Summary of the Children's Aid Society community schools: Results to date; Referenced from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers at six New York City middle schools: Year one findings, prepared by K. Krenichy, H. Clark, N. Schaefer-McDaniel, & L. Benitez of ActKnowledge, September 2004. See also Coalition for Community Schools' Community Schools: Research Brief (2009).

<sup>28</sup> Dryfoos, J.G. (2000). Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date. Coalition for Community Schools.

<sup>29</sup> Coalition for Community Schools' Community Schools: Research Brief (2009); Dryfoos (2000). Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date; Summary of the Children's Aid Society community schools: Results to date; and K. Krenichy, H. Clark, N. Schaefer-McDaniel, & L. Benitez of ActKnowledge, September 2004. See also Coalition for Community Schools' Community Schools: Research Brief (2009).

<sup>30</sup> Dryfoos, J.G. (2000). Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date. Coalition for Community Schools.

<sup>31</sup> Chicago Public Schools website. Retrieved on November 29, 2012 from <http://www.cps.edu/Programs/DistrictInitiatives/Pages/CommunitySchoolsInitiative.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> Coalition for Community Schools' Community Schools: Research Brief (2009) retrieved November 29, 2012 from <http://www.communitiesinschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> IFC International (2010). Communities in Schools National Evaluation: Five Year Study. Retrieved November 29, 2012 from <http://www.communitiesinschools.org/about/publications/publication/five-year-national-evaluation-summary-report>

programming targeted at increasing academic skills and positive youth development. The literature on the impact of school- and/or community-based OST programs is robust, but mixed. Many programs boast increased academic achievement, positive youth development, and behavioral change, such as reductions in drug use (or initiation of drug use).<sup>34</sup> However, other research reports mixed effects of OST programs. For example, a 2003 evaluation of the federal government's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program found no improvements in students' behavior, feelings of safety, or developmental outcomes, including students' reports of their ability to plan, set goals, or work with a team.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, this evaluation found no differences in academic outcomes between participants and the comparison group of non-participants. On a more positive note, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century evaluation did find that parental involvement, a key to academic performance, increased for middle school participants; parents of middle school participants were more likely to volunteer at school, attend open houses, and help their children with homework.

Documenting and measuring the associations between youth outcomes and activity participation is challenging, which may contribute to the contradictory findings in the literature. There are a myriad of OST programs available to youth and they vary by scale, type, affiliation, focus, and funding.<sup>36</sup> OST programs' goals and content vary, particularly around academics, enrichment, recreation, and social support.<sup>37</sup> Recreational OST programs are unlikely to achieve positive academic outcomes for participants. Second, there is a great deal of variance in the amount and quality of time that youth spend in OST programs.<sup>38</sup> In a study of these programs in education settings, "only 16 percent of children ages 6-9 and 10 percent of children ages 10-12 attended [school-based or community-based after-school] programs for five or more hours a week."<sup>39</sup> Research suggests that participation rates can vary in response to student motivation;<sup>40</sup> the needs of the family, whether that includes quality childcare or academic support; and program availability.<sup>41</sup> Students whose participation is of short duration or low frequency are unlikely to benefit from OST programming in meaningful ways.

### Chapter 3: The Elev8 Community Schools Initiative

Elev8 is a community schools model operating in low-income areas, with the goal of alleviating the systematic problems associated with poor performance in school. Building off of the recognized best practices of the community schools approach, Elev8's "wrap-around" services include:

- Extended learning opportunities outside the classroom and beyond the traditional school year;
- Parental outreach and engagement;
- Accessible health services to students and families; and,
- Resources for household economic stability.

<sup>34</sup> Weiss, H.B. (2004). Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 7.

<sup>35</sup> Mathematica evaluation of 21<sup>st</sup> century: Dynarski, M. et al. (2003). When Schools Stay Open Late. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/pdfs/whenschools.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Little, P.M.D., Wimer, C., & Weiss, H.B. (2008). After School Programs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Their Potential and What it Takes to Achieve It. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 10.

<sup>37</sup> Halpern, R. (2002). A different kind of child development institution: The history of after-school programs for low-income children.

*Teachers college Record*, 104(2), 178-211. Hynes, K., Smith, E.P., & Perkins, D. (2009). Piloting a school-based intervention in after-school programs: A case study in science migration. *Journal of Children's Services*, 4, 4-20.

<sup>38</sup> Little, P.M.D., Wimer, C., & Weiss, H.B. (2008). After School Programs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Their Potential and What it Takes to Achieve it. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 10.

<sup>39</sup> Hynes, K. & Sanders, F. (2010). The changing landscape of afterschool programs. *Afterschool Matters (June)*, p.25

<sup>40</sup> Bodilly, S.J. & Beckett, M.K. (2005). Making Out-of-School-Time Matter. RAND Research Brief Education. Retrieved from [www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG242](http://www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG242)

<sup>41</sup> Hynes, K. & Sanders, F. (2010). The changing landscape of afterschool programs. *Afterschool Matters (June)*.

In addition to teachers and administrators, Elev8 schools employ a team of out-of-school time staff, family advocates, medical professionals, a site director, and others as dictated by their model.

## A Brief History of Elev8

Elev8, initially called Integrated Services in Schools, was launched in 2007 with funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies. Elev8 founders had a national selection process to ascertain which communities could most benefit from Elev8's integrated approach. Elev8 concentrates its efforts on the middle school grades, since research shows student engagement in middle school proves an accurate indicator of high school and post-graduate success.<sup>42</sup> The transition from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade is particularly perilous, and a significant decline in academic performance upon reaching high school is associated with a greater risk of not completing college.<sup>43</sup>

Atlantic's first investment in Elev8 was in three locations in New Mexico: Albuquerque, Laguna Pueblo, and Anthony, a rural border community in southern New Mexico. Three additional regions have received investments from Atlantic: Chicago, IL, Oakland, CA, and Baltimore, MD. As of this writing, 19 Elev8 schools serve over 5,000 students in the middle grades. Approximately 2,500 students are served in Elev8 OST activities each year. During the 2010-11 school year, over 700 adult family members received Elev8 services.

## Elev8 Sites: A National Model with Local Customization

While Elev8 is operating nationally in diverse parts of the country, Elev8 community schools function on a decidedly local level. Elev8 endeavors to address the specific needs of each community by working together with existing social infrastructure and institutions. Across Elev8's four local initiatives, each has its own distinct format and unique path toward creating solutions. More detail, along with individual school profiles, is provided at [www.Elev8kids.org](http://www.Elev8kids.org).

### ***A note about nomenclature***

*In order to preserve the anonymity of the Elev8 regions, schools, and study participants, we use an identifier (Region A, B, C, D) for each site in place of its name.*

The Elev8 initiative assumes that the best solutions are often locally driven. For this reason, Elev8 looks different in each of the participating schools,<sup>44</sup> with community members identifying local needs and opportunities. Elev8 engages students and families so that, over the long term, they can be successful advocates for themselves and their communities. Elev8 is a multi-agency, multi-site project, with over 75 contributing partners nationally. Table 1 provides a brief description of each region.

<sup>42</sup> Wimberly, G.L. & Noeth, R.L. (2005). College readiness begins in middle school. ACT: Iowa City, IA.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, J.S. (2006). Examining the long term impact of achievement loss during the transition to high school. *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17, 211-221.

<sup>44</sup> There were 20 schools in the 2010-11 school year, the year in which most of the data for this study was collected. One of those 20 sites is only included in the counts of participants and not included in other analysis, because we were unable to collect identified individual level-data from students in that school. Currently, there are 19 schools.

Table 1. Description of Elev8 Regions

## Elev8 Chicago

Elev8 Chicago seeks to transform the educational achievement and life outcomes of middle-grade students in five public schools, all in underserved areas of the city. Students at the Elev8 schools, generally from low-income Latino or African-American families, are burdened by an inadequate healthcare system, challenging social environments, and limited economic opportunities. The program is led by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Chicago office (LISC/Chicago), which organizes capital and other resources to support initiatives that stimulate the comprehensive development of healthy, stable neighborhoods. Elev8 Chicago is built on the platform of LISC/Chicago's New Communities Program. Each of the five participating Chicago public schools is partnered with a lead agency that works with scores of local organizations on quality-of-life issues including education, family supports, public safety, healthcare, and opportunities for youth.

## Elev8 Oakland

Elev8 Oakland launched in September 2008 on five school campuses in the city's flatlands—a series of densely populated neighborhoods characterized by extensive racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. Fifty percent of local residents speak a language other than English at home. Elev8 Oakland is a program of Safe Passages, founded in 1998 as one of five sites across the country selected to participate in the national Urban Health Initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Today, Safe Passages serves as an intergovernmental partnership including the City of Oakland, the County of Alameda, and the Oakland Unified School District, as well as philanthropic and community-based partners who are committed to advocating for children, youth, and families, with a special emphasis on vulnerable populations within the County of Alameda.

## Elev8 New Mexico

Elev8 New Mexico is being implemented in five diverse middle schools statewide—in urban, rural, and tribal communities. Elev8 New Mexico is an initiative of Youth Development, Inc. (YDI), a statewide agency that has been serving the comprehensive needs of youth and families in New Mexico for over 40 years. With the participation of a broad array of organizations, elected officials, students, families, and schools, Elev8 New Mexico is integrating extended-day learning programs, healthcare, family supports, and community engagement so students succeed in school and in life.

## Elev8 Baltimore

Fall 2009 marked the launch of Elev8 Baltimore, which partners with four prekindergarten-8<sup>th</sup> grade neighborhood schools in East Baltimore, a community comprised of several neighborhoods located near the Johns Hopkins University Medical Campus. Elev8 Baltimore is an initiative of the East Baltimore Development Inc. (EBDI), an innovative public-private partnership established in 2002 to facilitate one of the most comprehensive, groundbreaking community redevelopment efforts in America. Elev8 Baltimore and its partners—including EBDI, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Baltimore Community Foundation, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions—are committed to transforming school communities by expanding learning, health, and family economic supports to children, youth, and families.

## Chapter 4: Participation in Elev8 OST

Elev8 OST is an essential component of the Elev8 initiative. However, the exact nature of the programming varies by region and school. Some OST programs have an academic focus, concentrating on tutoring or homework help, while others center on recreational activities like cooking or dance classes. Elev8’s middle school-aged participants tend to “vote with their feet,” thereby establishing a critical link between program satisfaction and attendance. Most Elev8 initiatives strive to implement recreational activities with an academic focus in order to both engage and retain young people, while providing students with the educational supports they need. At the program level, all Elev8 schools provide both recreational and academically focused OST programming.<sup>45</sup>

Students come into the OST program in a variety of ways. In most cases, participation in Elev8 OST activities is open to all students who are interested. In a handful of schools, however, students struggling academically are exclusively targeted for Elev8 OST programming. Additionally, some Elev8 schools offer non-Elev8 OST activities to students, so a student not enrolled in Elev8 OST may still have the opportunity to participate in other OST activities.

In the section that follows, we describe Elev8 OST participants and their attendance patterns during the 2010-11 school year. The analyses (with the exception of the participation rate—Figure 1 below) are based upon Elev8’s programmatic database, which contains administrative, demographic and participation information on Elev8 OST participants. Later in this report, we use self-reported demographic data from school-wide student surveys. Survey data include information from all students, rather than only the subset of students who attended OST activities.

While the two data sources mostly provide parallel information, there are a few discrepancies, which we note below.

### How Many Students Participate in Elev8 OST?

Overall, about 40 percent of students in Elev8 schools take advantage of Elev8 OST activities. However, as shown in Figure 1,<sup>46</sup> the number of students that participated in Elev8 OST activities in the 2010-11 school year varied considerably by site. This is in part due to differences in program focus. For instance, Region C targets students who are struggling academically. This region uses an Early Warning Indicator (EWI) framework to identify students who experience challenges in attendance, behavior, and academics (math or language arts), and enrolls them in Elev8 OST programming. Other regions strive to serve all interested students: OST participation in Elev8 schools in two regions is roughly 60%, while it is slightly more than one-third in the last region. These figures are generally comparable (one slightly lower and the other two slightly higher) to favorably to the percent of students who opted to participate in Providence’s After Zone (which also targets middle school students and is not a targeted program)

#### ***A note about data***

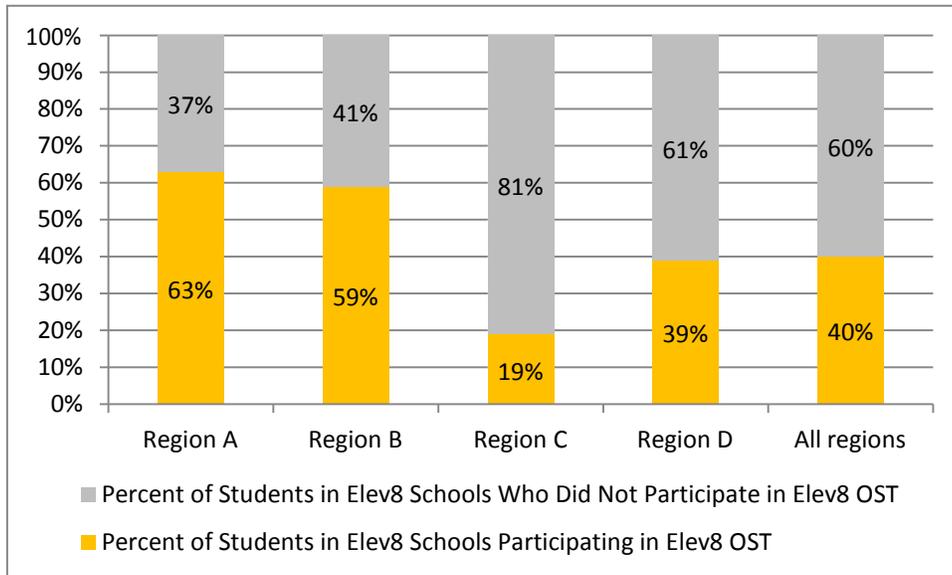
*The data in this section are from our attendance database (except for figure 1, which is from an internal report developed by the Elev8 evaluation team). Later in the report, where we compare OST participants to non-participants, we use a more limited sample comprised of students who completed a student survey. As such, there are some discrepancies in numbers.*

<sup>45</sup> Only one region provided data that document the actual types of OST programs that students participate in. Those data are provided later in this report.

<sup>46</sup> The data in figure 1 are extracted from the 2011 Elev8 participation summary report—an internal formal report the evaluation team prepares for The Atlantic Philanthropies and the regions once a year.

OST programming in the 2008-09 school year (just under half of students).<sup>47</sup> Different levels of resources and other factors, such as grades served and activity quality, also likely influenced student participation in OST activities across regions and schools.

Figure 1. Elev8 OST participation rate by region and overall during the 2010-11 school year



## Racial and Ethnic Characteristics of Elev8 OST Participants

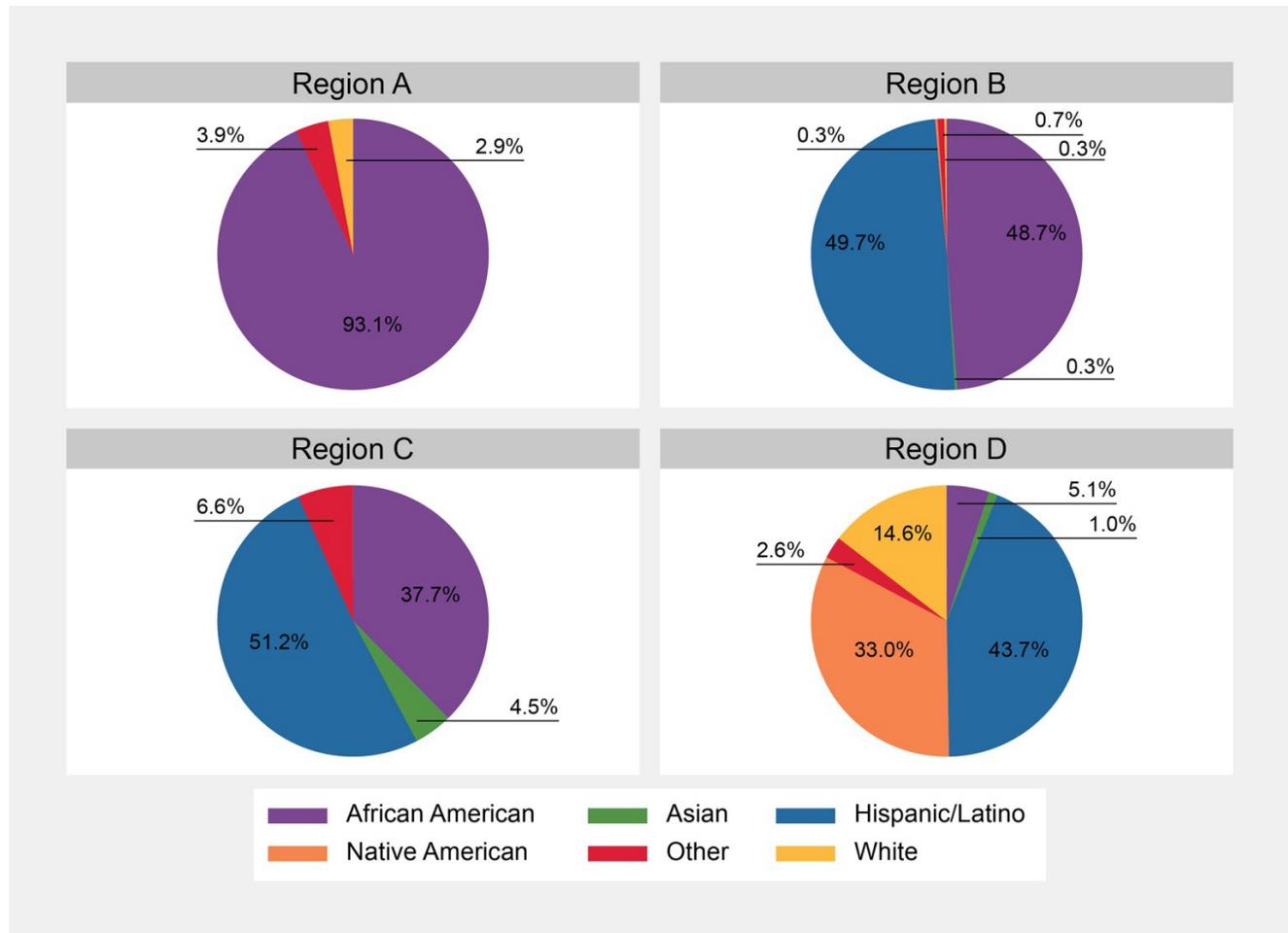
*Representative of the regions in which Elev8 is located, students who participate in Elev8 OST are primarily low income students of color. Female students and middle schoolers in the younger grades are most likely to participate.*

For the most part, Elev8 OST participants are students of color. As displayed in Figure 2, however, the exact racial and ethnic compositions of participants vary by site. Specifically, in Region A the vast majority of OST participants are African American. Region B serves an almost equal number of African-American and Hispanic students. In Region C, the majority of youth who participate in Elev8 OST are Hispanic students and more than one-third are African American. Region C also has the largest percentage of students of Asian descent in their

Elev8 OST programs. Though Region D serves the largest proportion of Native American students in its OST programs, Hispanic youth are the largest portion of their OST participants.

<sup>47</sup> Kauh, T. (2011). *AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence’s Citywide After-School System*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

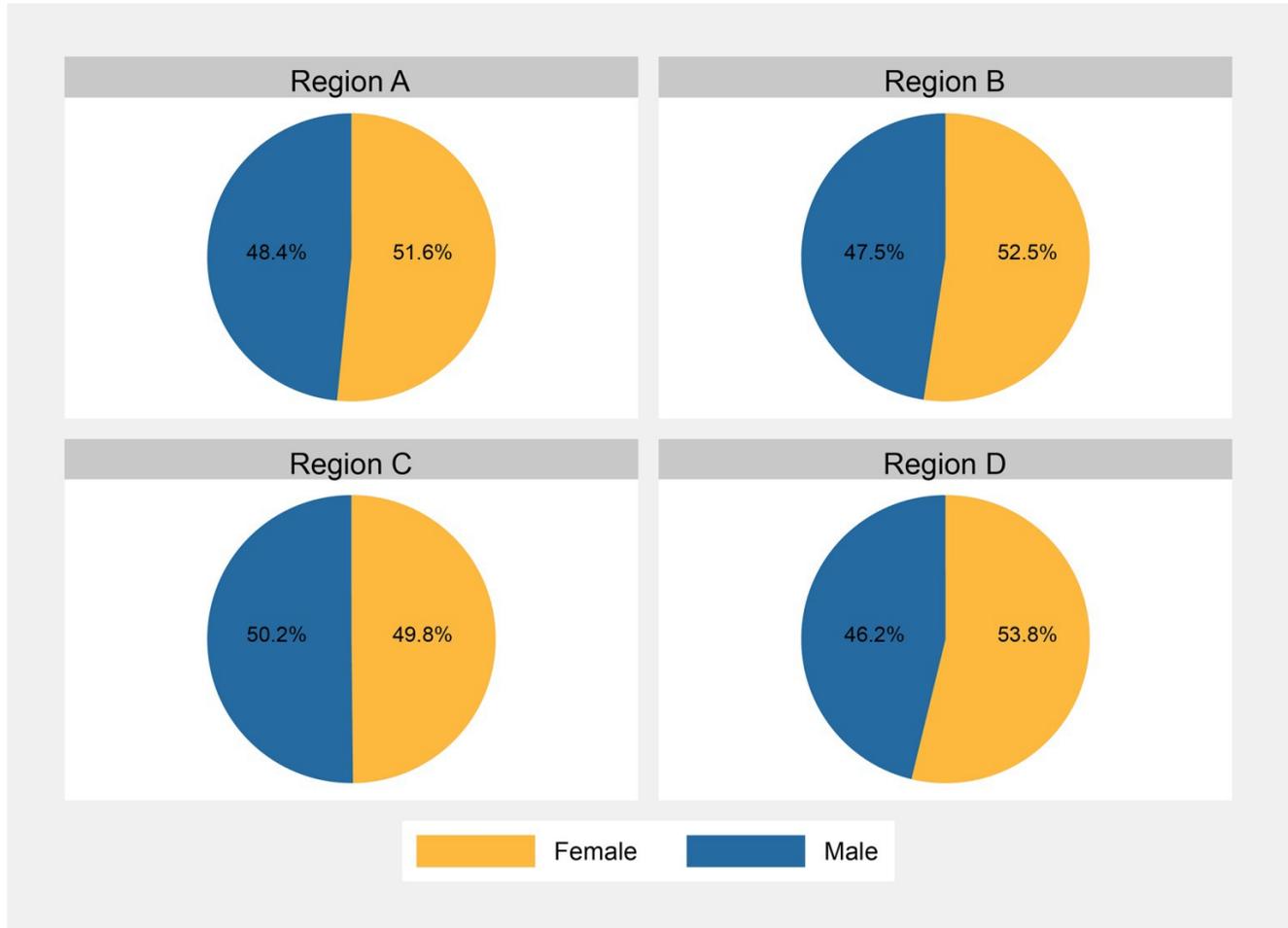
Figure 2: Race and ethnicity of Elev8 OST participants



## Gender

Overall, Elev8 OST participants are more likely to be female than male. However, the gender breakdown varies by region, as shown in Figure 3. In Region C, the percentages of boys and girls who participate in Elev8 OST are about equal, but in Regions A, B, and D, more girls participate in Elev8 OST than boys.

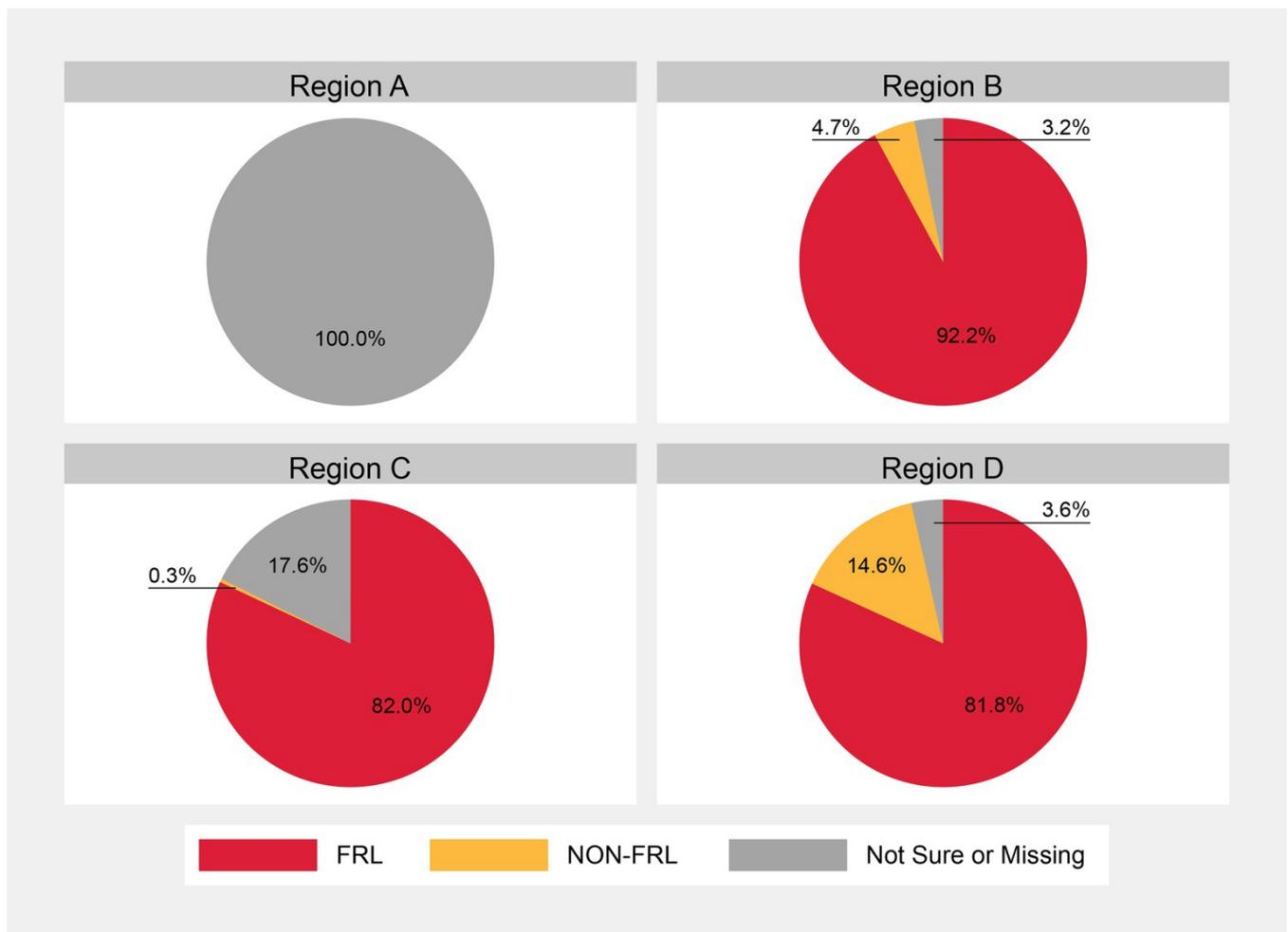
Figure 3. Gender of Elev8 OST participants



## Income Status

The bulk of students who participate in Elev8 OST, as well as those who attend Elev8 schools, are from low-income homes.<sup>48</sup> In Region A, the data for Elev8 OST participants was unavailable from program administrative records; however, as we will see later in this report, almost all students from Elev8 in Region A self-report as receiving free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) at school. Region D serves the largest proportion of students who are not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (non-FRL) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Income status of Elev8 OST participants

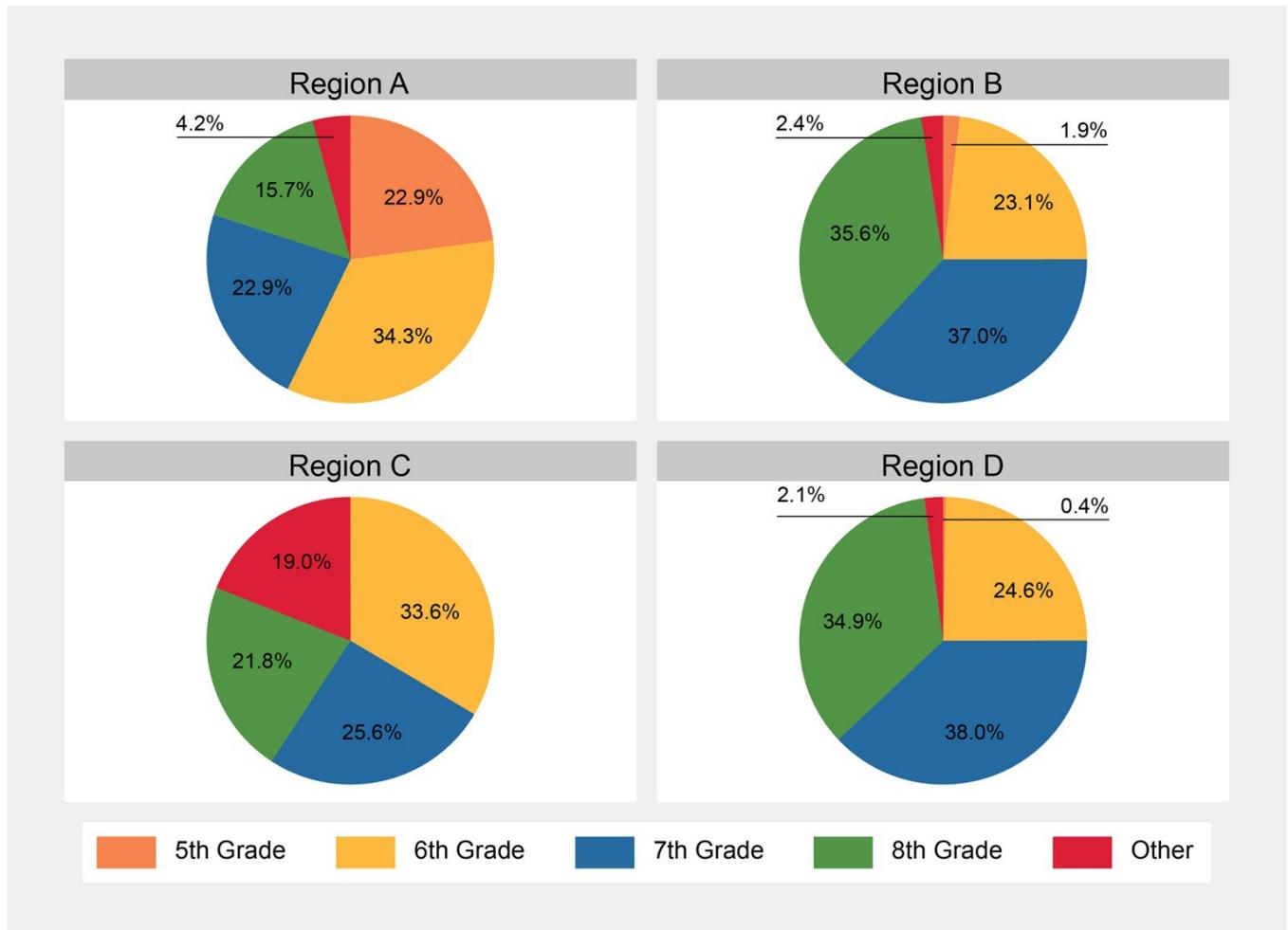


<sup>48</sup>We gauged income status by using free or reduced-price lunch eligibility as a proxy for income.

## Grade Level

Elev8 targets middle-grade students. Overall, the data show that younger students are more likely to participate than older students (see Figure 5). This condition holds true in many OST programs nationwide. However, notably, in two of the four sites at least one quarter of Elev8 OST participants were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade or older. Region A had the lowest percentage of 8<sup>th</sup> graders served, a situation they attribute to the low numbers of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled at each school. Nonetheless, approximately 16 percent of participants in OST in Region A were 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Figure 5: Grade level of Elev8 OST participants



## What Are Students' Patterns of Participation in Elev8 OST?

Describing participation in OST activities is complex because there are a myriad of programs that fall under the category of OST. For instance, a school sport—a very intensive but short-term activity—can be considered an OST activity. School sports are most likely staffed by school employees, funded by the district, heavily regulated, and emphasizing physical activity. Homework help is also a common OST program offered to young people. Homework Help differs in that it may or may not be taught by school staff, it may run every day all school year long, it has limited regulations, it focuses on academics, and it may be funded by an outside agency or by the school itself. Meanwhile, a cooking class, most likely

staffed by a non-school staff person, could be of limited duration (occurring once or twice a week), not heavily regulated, focused on recreation, and funded by an outside agency.

A student attending any of these programs is engaged in an OST program. Therefore, student experiences and levels of engagement are going to be very different across and within programs. For example, on a sports team, a few students may be selected as captains and take on leadership roles. Other students may be starters and play all the time. Finally, some students will play smaller roles on the team and will have more of an opportunity to learn through observation and practice.

Because of this diversity of experiences, OST researchers have identified four main dimensions of OST participation: ever participated, intensity, duration, and breadth.<sup>49</sup> We describe how we have operationalized each term below.

- *Ever participated.* This measure of participation is the most commonly used, and reflects whether a young person ever participated in a program during the timeframe of interest. It is the most basic measure of program participation.
- *Intensity.* Intensity is the amount of time youth attend a program during a given period and can be measured in the following ways: hours per day, days per week, weeks per month, or months per year.
- *Duration.* Duration is the length of time youth attend a program and captures information about how “new” a young person is to the program. Whereas intensity describes the “depth” of attendance, duration addresses the history of attendance in months or years since the young person started in the program.
- *Breadth.* Breadth of attendance refers to the variety of activities that youth attend within and across programs. For instance, while one young person may participate only in a homework help program, another may participate both in organized homework help and in a sports program. Breadth can also be measured within a single program; for instance, some OST programs aim to provide both academic support and recreation activities.

#### ***Key Findings: Participation Patterns in Elev8 OST***

- *Forty percent of students in middle grades in Elev8 schools participated in Elev8 OST in the 2010/2010 school year.*
- *Across regions, students participating in Elev8 OST attended the program for an average of 43 days.*
- *Many students participated for just a few days; however, a meaningful number attended with high frequency.*
- *Students participating in Elev8 OST did so for 5.3 months of the school year on average.*
- *On average, students participated in 2.3 different types of Elev8 OST activities. Across all regions, just under a quarter of students in Elev8 schools both participated in Elev8 OST and took advantage of the school based health center.*

<sup>49</sup>Weiss, H.B. (2004). Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time Evaluation. Harvard Family Research Project. Number 7.

Our ability to understand each of these facets of participation is limited in the current study because of the data available to us. However, we do have data that describe the following for each student in our sample:

- **Participation in Services.** Whether s/he participated in Elev8 OST only, Elev8 school-based health services only, no Elev8 services, or in both of these Elev8 services.
- **Length of Participation (in Days):** Whether s/he ever participated in Elev8 OST and how many days during the school year s/he participated in Elev8 OST.
- **Length of Participation (in Months).** How many months of the school year s/he participated in Elev8 OST.
- **Participation in Activities.** How many different types of Elev8 OST activities s/he participated in during the school year (Region B only).

Below, we present how Elev8 OST participants engaged in the program on each of these dimensions during the 2010-11 school year.

### **Length of Participation (in Days)**

As seen in Figure 1, about forty percent of students in Elev8 schools attended at least one day of Elev8 OST during the 2010-11 school year.

Students across regions who participated at least once had an average attendance of 43 days over the school year, which compares favorably to the average number of days students in Providence's After Zone participated in OST programming.<sup>50</sup> However, this statistic masks broad diversity—both across and between regions.

Although attendance rates averaged more than 40 days for Elev8 OST participants, Figure 6 shows that more than half of the participants attended Elev8 OST programs for less than 50 days and less than a quarter participated in the OST program very intensively over the school year (greater than 75 days).

#### ***A note about how to read Figures 6 and 7***

*The figures that follow show the percentages of Elev8 participants for the number of days they participated in Elev8 OST. As Figure 6 shows, 100 percent of Elev8 OST participants participated for one day. At about 30 days only half of participants were still active in Elev8 OST, and at about 145 days, no Elev8 OST participants were still active in the program.*

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<sup>50</sup>In the 2008-09 school year, middle schoolers in the After Zone program participated for an average of 24 of the 96 days of OST programming available to them. Over 80 percent participated in no more than half of the available days (Kauh, 2011).

Figure 6. Percentage of OST participants who ever attended Elev8 OST by the number of days they attended, across regions

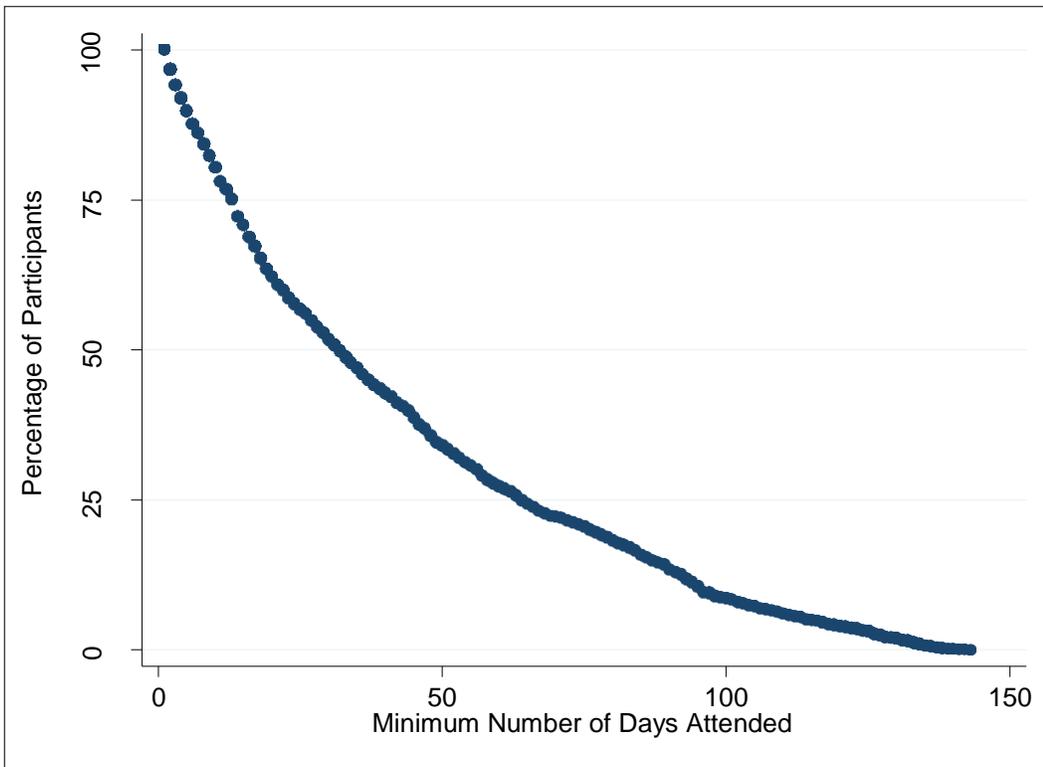
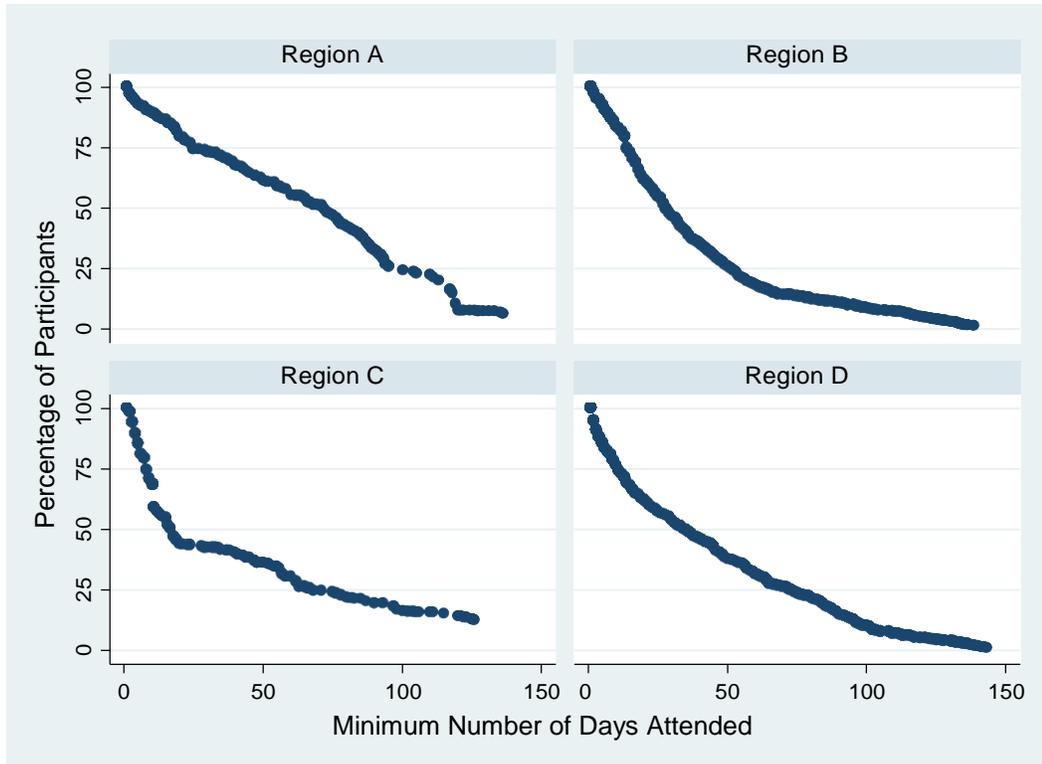


Figure 7 illustrates the differential Elev8 participation levels between regions. Students in Region A participated in Elev8 for the highest number of days across the school year, averaging 53 days a year. Students in Regions B and D had lower levels of participation, with an average of 36 days and 38 days, respectively. Finally, students in Region C had the lowest participation levels in Elev8 OST, averaging just 24 days a year. The graphs in Figure 7 below tell a story similar to the aggregate data presented in Figure 6 above. Each region has a large percentage of participants that attended less than 50 days in Elev8 OST programs and a smaller percentage of students with high levels of participation.

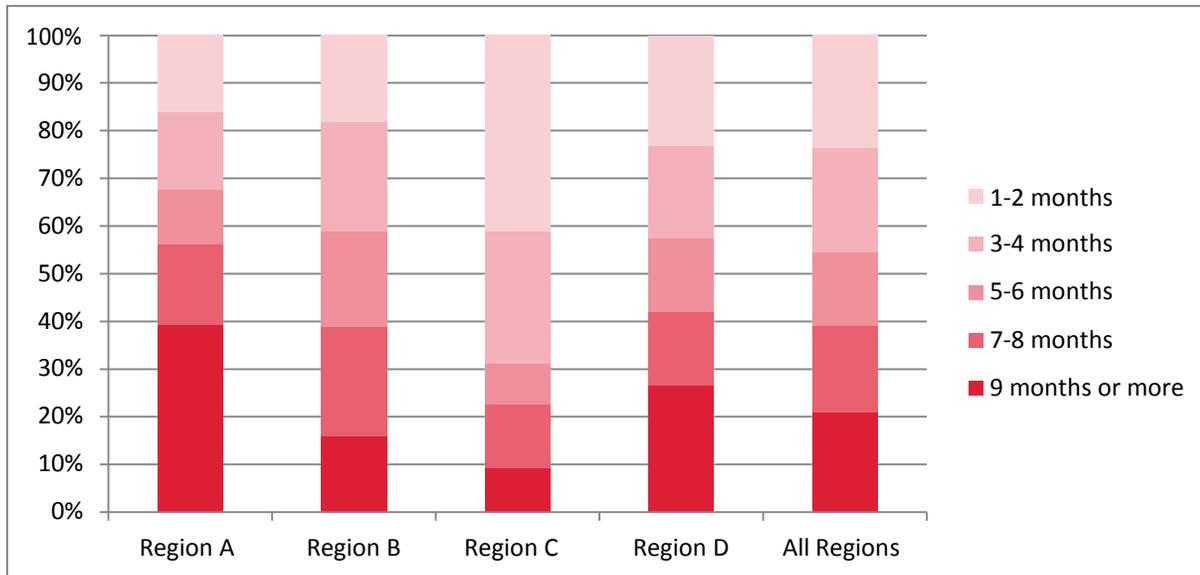
Figure 7: Percentage of OST participants who ever attended Elev8 OST by the number of days they attended by region



### Length of Participation (in Months)

We measured monthly participation in Elev8 OST to estimate the amount of time that participants chose to engage in Elev8 OST activities over the school year (see Figure 8). Additionally, we calculated the average number of months participants remained active in Elev8 OST. On average, students who participated in Elev8 OST across all sites participated for 5.3 months of the school year. However, there was variation by region. In Region A, students attended Elev8 OST for the greatest number of months, averaging 6.3 months per year, including just over one third who participated for the entire school year. Region C's Elev8 OST participants attended for the shortest amount of time, averaging 3.8 months, including almost one third who participated for only one month.

Figure 8. Percentage of students participating in Elev8 OST activities by number of months (school year 2010-11)



### Participation in Activities

Some, but not all, regions record the types of activities in which OST participants engage. Across all regions, there were almost 150 different Elev8 OST activities recorded in the 2010-11 school year. We grouped these activities into the following activity types in order to explore the breadth of student participation in Elev8 OST: general afterschool, sports and fitness, music and dance, development and learning, leadership activities, hobbies, computers, arts and crafts, and other. Regions varied in their activity records. Two regions did not record activity type and a third region only offered one Elev8-funded OST activity at four of its five schools, though other non-Elev8 activities were available during OST hours. In the remaining region, Region B, students participated in an average of 2.3 activity types during the school year. In this region, about one third participated in only one activity, a quarter participated in two activities, 15 percent participated in three activities, 13 percent participated in four activities, and the remainder participated in more than four activities.

### Participation in Services

Using the sample we created by matching students in Elev8 schools who completed a survey to the participation data, we also measured the extent to which students in Elev8 schools participated in more than one Elev8 service (see Table 2). Our data only allows us to measure participation in Elev8 OST and participation in the school-based health center, and we were not able to assess the extent to which particular students' families accessed services through the family support component of the program. Nonetheless, we found that about a quarter of students in Elev8 schools did not participate in either the school-based health center or Elev8 OST; about one half participated in only one of the two Elev8 services, either Elev8 OST or the school-based health center; and, the last quarter of students utilized both services.

Table 2. Distribution of student participation Elev8 services: school-based health center and OST

Number of Services	0	1 (either OST or SBHC)	2 (both OST and SBHC)
% of Sample	25.83%	50.93%	23.24%

## Chapter 5: How is Participation in Elev8 OST Related to Students' Experiences of School?

To see if participation in Elev8 OST is related to students' experiences in school, this evaluation compared students in Elev8 schools who participated in Elev8 OST with those who did not participate; it also compared those who participated with different levels of frequency. While we controlled for some observed factors, because participation in OST in most schools was determined by student choice or through targeting rather than random assignment, we cannot rule out the possibility that participants vary from non-participants (or between high- and low-frequency participators) in important ways. For instance, students who chose to participate in Elev8 OST could be more motivated to pursue educational enrichment activities than those students who did not participate. And students who participate more frequently may be more motivated than those who participate less often. Alternatively, those students who chose to participate (or participated more) might have done so because they needed additional academic support whereas those who did not participate (or participated less) might not have needed such support.

For these reasons, we cannot determine with certainty that the differences in the groups' school experiences are due to Elev8 OST participation. There are other limitations to our study that may result in an underestimation of the relationship between Elev8 OST participation and school experiences.

- Our analysis below is based on a data set we created by matching students in Elev8 schools who completed a survey to students in the OST participation database. The matching protocol utilized students' names, schools, and regions, though students who use or go by more than one name (such as a nickname, or students who have hyphenated last names) may not have been matched properly.<sup>51</sup>
- Students identified as having not participated in Elev8 OST may have participated in other OST activities that are not reported in our data.<sup>52</sup>
- Elev8 OST is only one component of Elev8, and whole school benefits of Elev8 may wash out the relationship between participating in Elev8 OST and school experiences since we are comparing Elev8 OST participants with students in the same school (who have also been "exposed" to Elev8) who did not participate in Elev8 OST.
- Other school factors, such as characteristics of teachers and principals, or other school activities, are deemed important for student academic performance and behavioral outcomes in the literature, but are not available for this study.

<sup>51</sup> Our protocol for matching utilized exact matching via Stata and then manual matching of imperfectly matching names by region and school.

<sup>52</sup> Other limitations include: analysis of high school plans and planning activities includes a smaller sample size of only 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Finally, school fixed effects were not uniformly controlled for because of the small sample size.

In the section that follows, we investigate how those who did participate in Elev8 OST compare demographically to those students who did not participate in Elev8 OST activities during the 2010-11 school year. Then we examine how participation in Elev8 OST is associated with students' experiences in school and 8<sup>th</sup> graders' high school transition. We conclude with a summary of our findings. While the data we use for these analyses is limited to students who completed a survey (a smaller number of Elev8 OST participants than that reported above), the ratio of participants to non-participants is similar to the larger sample (see Appendix B for more detail).

## Comparing the Demographic Characteristics of Participants and Non-Participants

Across all regions there are differences between students who participated in Elev8 OST activities for at least one day and those who did not. Elev8 OST participants are more likely to be African American and less likely to be Hispanic than non-participants. Elev8 OST participants are also more likely to be in the younger grades than their non-OST participating peers. There are no statistically significant differences in gender and income status between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants.

*Students who participated in Elev8 OST were more likely to be African American and to be in younger middle school grades than those who did not participate.*

Since the regions vary in terms of student demographics, their OST models, and their resources, we also looked within each region to see how non-participants compared with OST participants. (For more detailed information on how Elev8 OST participants and non-participants compare on demographic characteristics, see Appendix D). While in some schools the characteristics of Elev8 OST participants and non-participants were similar, in other schools they were very different. In Region B, Elev8 OST participants were much more likely to be Hispanic, and much less likely to be African American than non-OST students. In Region D, Elev8 OST participants were more often Native American than non-OST students. In Region A, Elev8 OST participants were slightly less likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch than those who chose not to participate in Elev8 OST. In Region C, Elev8 OST participants were more likely to be male than non-OST students, but in Region D Elev8 OST participants were more likely to be female. Finally, there were some differences in the proportion of students in grades 5, 6, 7, or 8 between Elev8 OST participants and non-OST students within the same regions.

## How Is Student Participation in Elev8 OST Activities Related to School Experience and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders' High School Transition?

In this report we strive to ascertain if students who participate in Elev8 OST have more positive school experiences than students who attend Elev8 schools but do not participate in Elev8 OST. To conduct this analysis we compare the two groups' end-of-school-year reports for the 2010-11 school year. We also analyzed the data from Elev8 OST participants only to determine if more frequent participation in Elev8 OST is related to school experience.

Overall, our analysis suggests that 8<sup>th</sup> grade Elev8 OST participants who attended more frequently were significantly more likely to participate in a wide range of high school planning activities (such as spending the day shadowing at a high school of interest, attending a test preparation class, attending a mock high school interview) than participants with lower OST participation. Also, 8<sup>th</sup> grade OST participants who attended Elev8 OST more frequently also were more likely to report that they planned to attend a college preparatory (selective enrollment—public or private—or charter) high school. Elev8 OST participation was not found to be related to school attitudes, but this may be due to students having uniformly positive attitudes towards school.

### **Was Participation in Elev8 OST Related to Attitudes Toward School?**

Elev8 aims to improve students' experiences in school and bolster school climate. We had access to data on the following components of a student's attitude towards school:

- Perception of their ability to achieve in school (school efficacy)
- How much they like school (school liking)
- How much they value school (school value)
- Their perception of the connection between school and future (futureconnectedness)

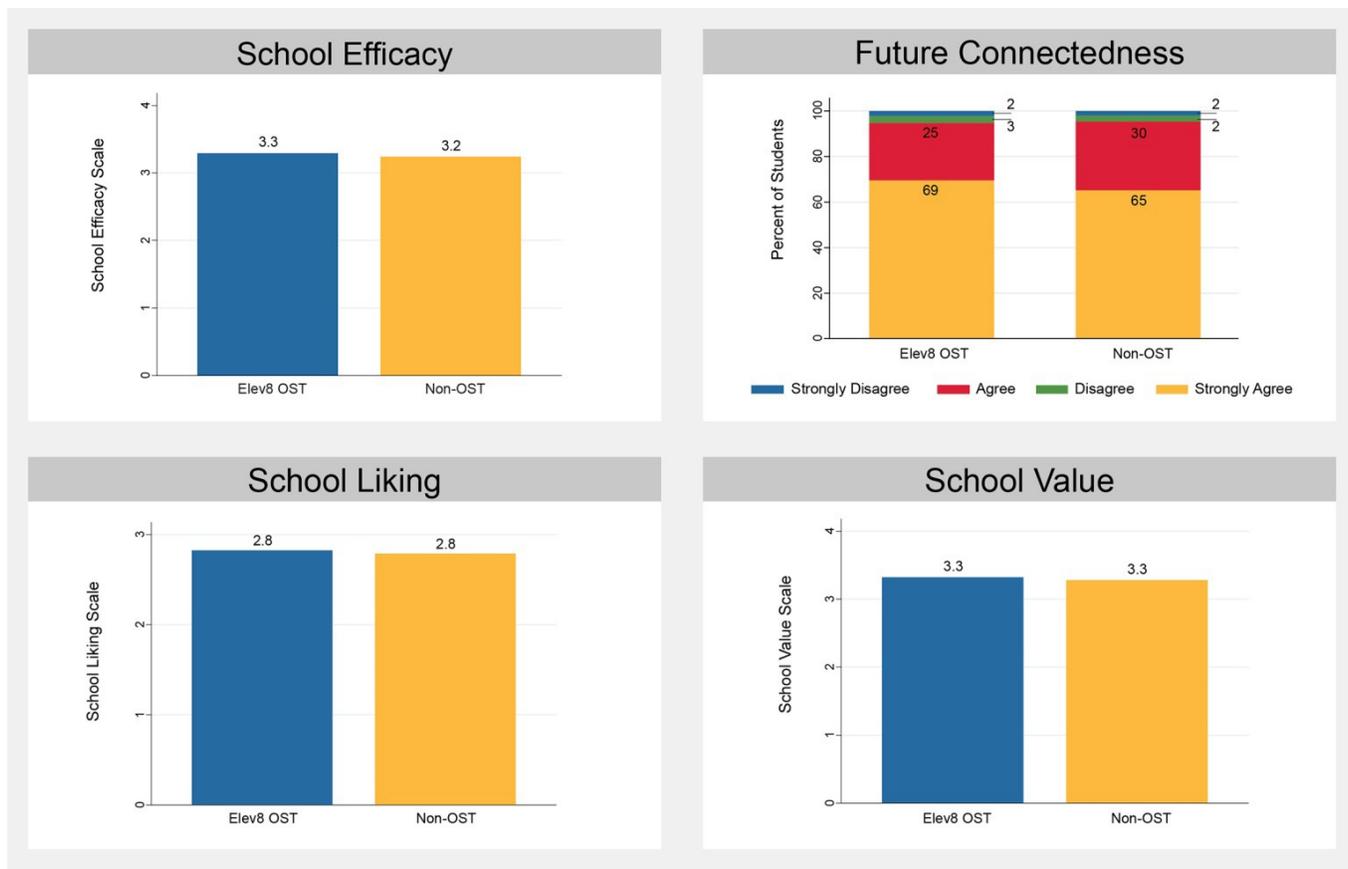
In order to assess if participation in Elev8 OST brings extra benefits to students above and beyond any school-wide benefits to both OST participants and non-participants, we first defined participation at the most basic level: participation in an Elev8 OST activity for at least one day over the school year. As shown in Figure 9, the differences in student attitudes towards school between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants are very small. Both Elev8 OST participants and non-participants reported high levels of efficacy and school value. On a scale from 1 (representing very low efficacy) to 4 (representing very high efficacy), student attitudes toward school in both groups averaged over 3. Similarly, both groups reported an average score of 3.3 (where 1 is very low and 4 is very high) on school value, indicating they valued school highly. Ratings of both school liking and future connectedness were also relatively high. On average students rated their school liking at a 2.8, while a majority of students reported that they feel school is relevant to their future. The aforementioned school liking and school value scores are comparable to scores reported in other studies of youth who chose to participate in OST activities.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Key Findings: Elev8 OST participants and experiences in school***

*Eighth grade Elev8 OST participants who attended more frequently were significantly more likely to participate in a wide range of high school planning activities (such as spending the day shadowing at a high school of interest, attending a test preparation class, attending a mock high school interview) than participants with lower OST participation. Also, 8<sup>th</sup> grade Elev8 OST participants who attended Elev8 OST more frequently were more likely to report that they planned to attend a college preparatory (selective enrollment—public or private—or charter) high school. Elev8 OST participation was not found to be related to school attitudes, but this may be due to students having uniformly positive attitudes towards school.*

<sup>53</sup> For instance, a 2008 study of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who attended Boys & Girls Clubs found that teens, on average, reported 2.76 on school liking and 3.39 on school value (school importance, revised).

Figure 9: Facets of attitude towards school by Elev8 OST participation status



We conducted a set of more sophisticated analyses to rule out the effects of a range of pre-existing differences that might be relevant to student attitudes towards school: student demographics, such as student socioeconomic status, gender, race/ethnicity; grade level; years student stayed in a school; and unobserved differences in the schools that students attended. After taking into account these pre-existing differences in students and schools, we conclude that there are no significant differences in attitude towards school between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants.

Following the work of other researchers, we also conducted a series of analyses investigating whether the participation levels in Elev8 OST are related to student attitudes toward schools. After taking into account pre-existing differences in student demographic characteristics and schools, our analyses do not provide any consistent evidence showing that participation levels in Elev8 OST are associated with student attitudes towards school. In other words, students who participate in Elev8 OST for more days of the school year are not more likely to report more positive attitudes towards school than those who participated less or not at all. However, it is important to note that the average of these scales may mask variation and therefore is not optimal for dosage analysis, which requires a higher level of precision.

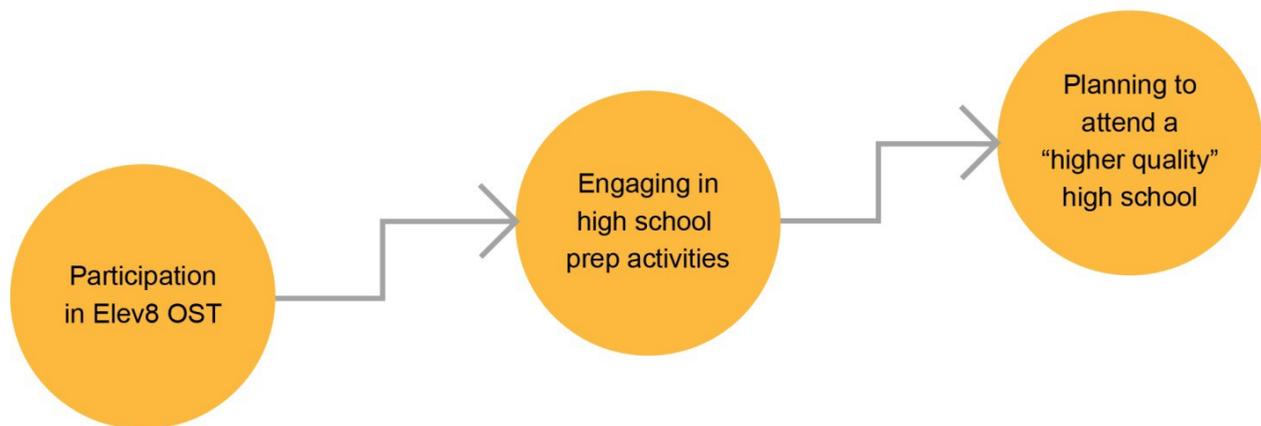
### Was Participation in Elev8 OST Related to High School Planning?

Elev8 aims to support middle grade students in order to ensure their successful transition to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We know that in the current labor market, college graduates earn significantly more than individuals without college degrees. As such, earning a college degree is a key pathway out of poverty. Therefore, high school completion is an important stepping stone and a meaningful credential. Unfortunately, despite recent progress, there remains a significant disparity in high school graduation rates among

young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>54</sup> Research has shown that the path to high school dropout begins before 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and that the successful completion of 9<sup>th</sup> grade is a critical step to high school graduation.<sup>55</sup>

To combat this trend, Elev8 supports students in their high school planning efforts, and encourages students to attend higher-performing high schools that will best support them in their secondary and postsecondary pursuits. While in many Elev8 communities neighborhood public schools struggle with violence, low attendance, high dropout rates, and minimal academic rigor, almost all of the districts in which Elev8 operates have some form of school choice, and students have the opportunity to attend higher-performing high schools if they take the necessary steps. Elev8 aims to guide students through the steps necessary to prepare, plan for, and attend high-quality high schools through various activities taking place in the school day, and by bolstering these school-wide activities during OST programming. For instance, in two regions Elev8 hosts school-wide high school fairs where students can learn about their high school choices, meet high school staff, and learn more about enrollment and entrance procedures. In one region, Elev8 OST staff is comprised of local college students who talk about their academic trajectories, their career plans, and their college experiences in their day-to-day interactions with Elev8 participants. These relationships are built into the Elev8 initiative to help students establish a model pathway to postsecondary success (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Theory of action between participation in Elev8 OST and participants' high school plans



To examine the relationship between 8<sup>th</sup> graders' participation in Elev8 OST and their high school transition, we provide some descriptive analyses showing how Elev8 OST participants are different from non-participants in their high school preparation efforts and their high school plans. This analysis is limited to 8<sup>th</sup> graders, as high school planning questions were only asked of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Elev8's high school planning activities include high school visits, collecting information about specific high schools, test preparation classes, mock interviewing, meeting with students or teachers who attend or teach at a high school of interest, and more.

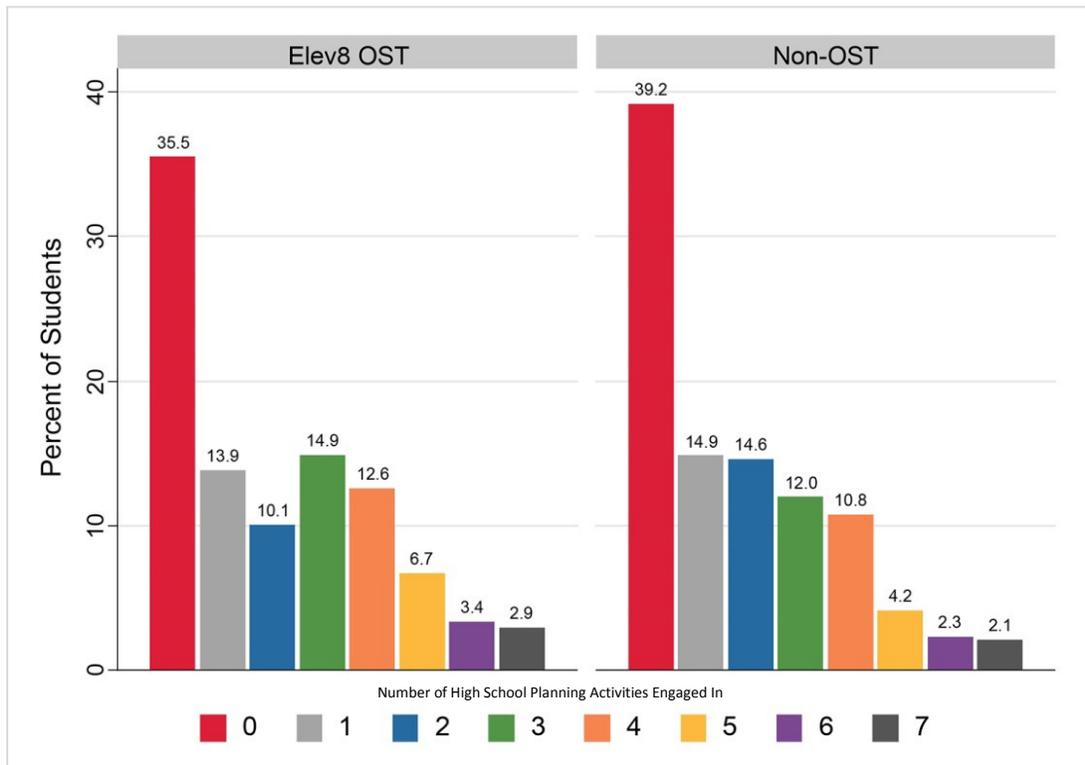
Across all regions, students who participated in Elev8 OST reported engaging in an average of 2.0 types of planning activities, while students who did not participate in Elev8 OST reported engaging in an

<sup>54</sup> Balfanz, R. & Legters, N. (2004). Which High Schools Produce the Nation's Dropouts? Where Are They Located? Who Attends Them? Report 70. Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved from: <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report70.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Neild, R. & Balfanz R. (2006). Unfulfilled Promise. Project U-Turn, Philadelphia Youth Network; Philadelphia.

average of 1.7 planning activities.<sup>56</sup> Our descriptive analysis shows that students who participated in Elev8 OST engaged in a wider range of activities than those who did not participate. For example, as shown in Figure 11, lower percentages of Elev8 OST participants reported no high school planning activities than non-participants, and the percentages of Elev8 OST participants who participated in one or more high school planning activities are higher than those of non-participants.

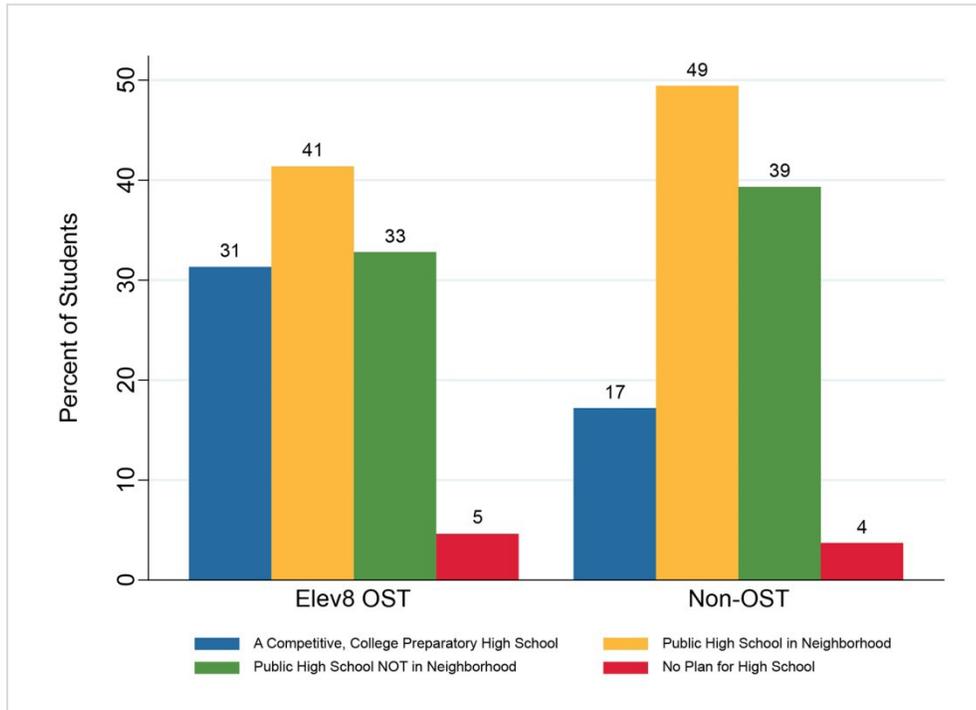
Figure 11. Number of types of high school planning activities engaged in by 8th graders in Elev8 schools during the 2010-11 school year across all regions



Similarly, as reported in Figure 12, 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in Elev8 OST were more likely to have a plan to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school than other students. Specifically, 31% of Elev8 OST participants reported planning to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school, while just 17% of their non-participating peers reported similar plans. Additionally, students who participated in Elev8 OST were less likely to report planning to attend a neighborhood high school, or a public high school outside their neighborhood, than students in Elev8 schools who did not participate in these activities.

<sup>56</sup>Types, not numbers, of activities were recorded. A student who made ten school visits still only receives a count for one type of planning activity. We did not have access to a count of the number of times each student participated in a particular type of activity.

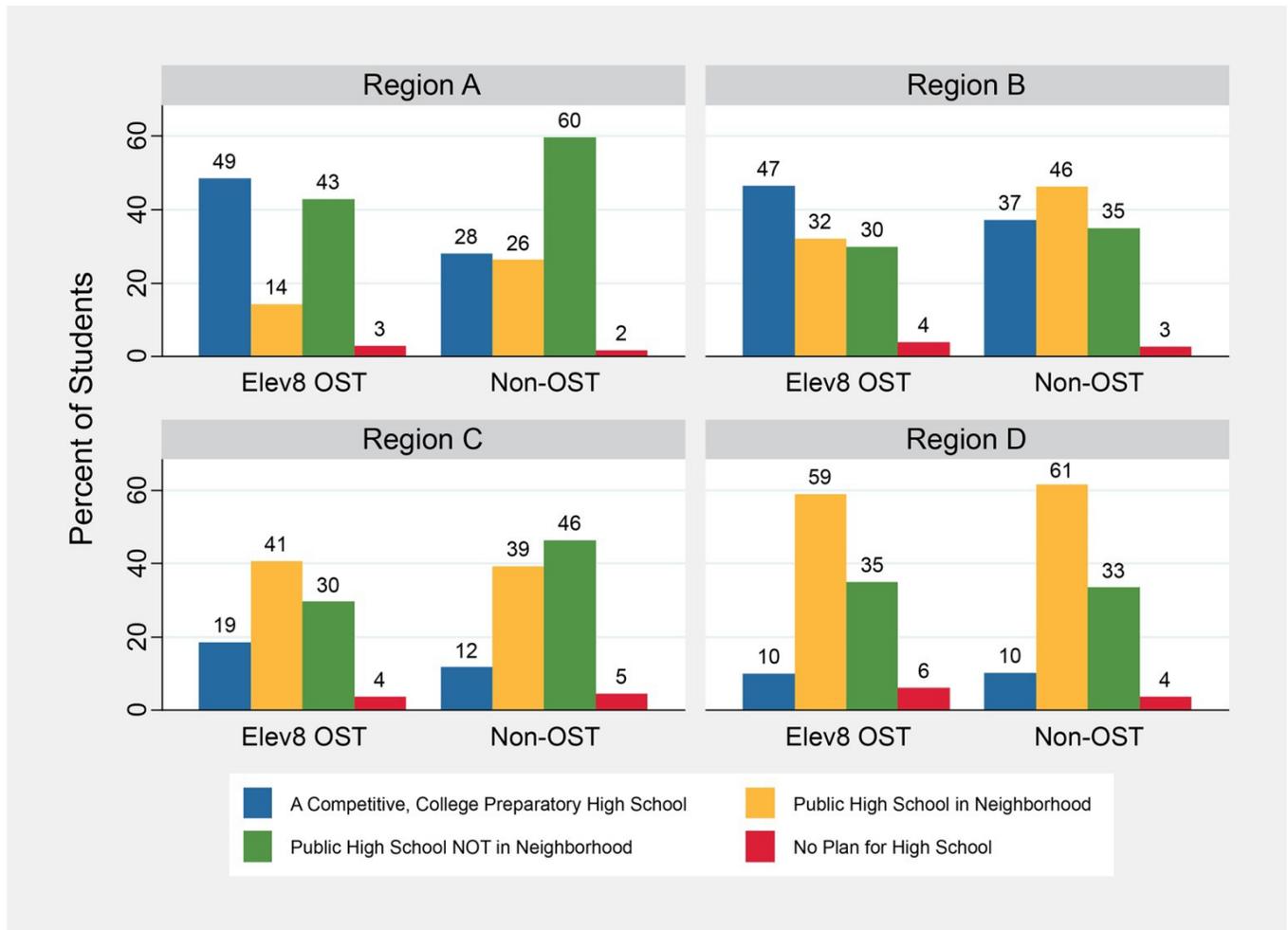
Figure 12: Types of high schools students plan to attend across regions in school year 2010-11<sup>57</sup>



Recognizing that each region is different, we also check if these differences in high school plans exist within each Elev8 region. Below, we see that high school planning distinctions are not consistent across regions. Figure 13 shows that in Region D, approximately equal percentages of Elev8 OST participants and non-participants reported planning to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school. In Region C a noticeable difference in high school plans between the two groups exists; however, it is smaller than in Regions A and B. Region A displayed the largest difference between the two groups' high school plans. This rather drastic variation in high school plans between regions appears related to the different activities offered at the Elev8 sites, as well as the school choice policies and options in the regions. For instance, some schools in Region D are geographically isolated from any urban or suburban center and, therefore, school choice is unavailable. While students in other Elev8 schools in this region have some choice, they still have less opportunity for choice than students in the other three regions.

<sup>57</sup> Students could check all options that applied to them; therefore, the totals are greater than 100%.

Figure 13: Types of high schools students plan to attend by region in the 2010-11 school year



In order to account for observed differences in student demographic characteristics and geographical region between the two groups, we conducted a series of analyses that allow us to estimate the magnitude of the relationship between Elev8 OST participation and high school plans and planning activities in isolation. In other words, we ask: Do Elev8 OST participants still report engaging in more planning activities and more frequently report planning to attend a competitive college preparatory high school if other contributing factors (i.e., SES, gender, race/ethnicity, geographical region, years enrolled in a school) are the same? After taking into account pre-existing differences, there is no consistent evidence showing that Elev8 OST participants are more likely to have a high school plan, plan to apply for a competitive college preparatory high school, or attend more high school preparation activities than those students who did not participate in Elev8 OST.

Given that OST participants and non-participants might be different in ways that we cannot account for in our data, and considering the wide variation in the dosage of Elev8 OST among participants, our next series of analyses examined whether and how participation levels in Elev8 OST related to OST participants' high school planning, using data from Elev8 OST participants only. The results of our analyses suggest that greater frequency of participation in Elev8 OST is positively related to both the number of high school planning activities and the types of high schools that students plan to attend,

controlling for background characteristics that may be related to a student's OST participation level.<sup>58</sup> More specifically:

- Elev8 OST participants who attended a greater number of days were more likely to participate in additional high school planning activities than those who participated fewer days in the Elev8 OST program. For example, a student who attended 43 days, the average number of days a participant attended Elev8 OST, was about 37 percent more likely to engage in one additional planning activity than a student who attended only 1 day of Elev8 OST programming.
- Engaging in more high school planning activities is associated with a greater likelihood of planning to attend a competitive high school. Specifically, for each additional planning activity in which an Elev8 OST participant engages, he or she is 1.3 times more likely to report planning to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school.
- Elev8 participants who attended more days of Elev8 OST programming are more likely to report planning to apply for a competitive college-preparatory high school than students who participated fewer days. For example, a student who attended Elev8 OST for 43 days was about 1.4 times more likely to report planning to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school than a student who attended for only one day.<sup>59</sup>

While these findings do not definitely demonstrate that Elev8 OST participation is beneficial to students' high school planning efforts beyond the benefit Elev8 may exert school-wide (irrespective of 8<sup>th</sup> graders' participation in Elev8 OST), they do suggest that increased participation in Elev8 OST is associated with better high school planning efforts and higher high school aspirations within the subgroup of Elev8 OST participants. (Additional information on this analysis is presented in Appendix E).

## Summary

Our analyses examine the relationship between student participation in Elev8 OST programs and outcomes in student school experience and high school transition planning. The data reveal that, among those who did participate in OST programs, higher levels of participation are associated with more high school planning activities. Further, students with higher participation levels are also more likely to have a plan to attend a competitive college-preparatory high school than those who participated fewer days in the OST programs. Because of differences in the Elev8 regions' local school choice policies and opportunities, we deliberately left the structure of our question open to multiple interpretations. It is possible that in some localities charter schools would not be classified as competitive college-preparatory high schools, and instead would be considered a public school outside their neighborhood. Nonetheless, across the spectrum we see that students who participated more days in Elev8 OST are more likely to take advantage of school choice where it exists, and fewer planned to attend neighborhood public high schools, which many believe are lower performing than the competitive college-preparatory high schools. More research is necessary to determine if Elev8 OST students indeed attend higher-quality high schools, if they succeed in them, and if they are more likely to complete 9<sup>th</sup> grade successfully.

Notably, Elev8 is a whole-school model, and it is quite possible that it benefits all students who attended Elev8 schools—OST participants and non-participants alike. Our analysis suggests that both

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<sup>58</sup>All findings reported are significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

<sup>59</sup>Again, while this assumption is verifiable in theory, we do not have reliable data on the names of the schools where students are planning to apply to high school, so we are unable to assess their quality.

Elev8 OST participants and non-participants reported high levels of efficacy, liked schools they attended, and valued school highly, and that a majority of students reported that they feel school is relevant to their future. Our analysis also suggests that the majority of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students in Elev8 schools participated in high school planning activities and reported having a defined high school plan.

## Chapter 6: Final Thoughts

Elev8 was created to address the myriad of challenges middle school students in chronically underserved communities face when striving to meet their educational potential. Across all sites, the initiative provides needed services tailored to the students, their families, and communities. These services include OST programming, family support services, and school-based health services. This report focuses on one component of Elev8: OST programming. It seeks to add to the literature by learning more about OST participation in a community school setting.

Overall, Elev8 OST serves primarily low-income middle school students of color. However, the students who do participate in Elev8 OST are somewhat different from those students in Elev8 schools who don't participate in Elev8 OST. Specifically, in some regions students who participate in Elev8 OST are more likely to be in a younger grade and of different racial/ethnic background than students who do not participate.

Measuring participation in OST is complex—and this complexity is exacerbated by the community school context where all students are exposed to other Elev8 activities in their schools daily. While the literature suggests there are multiple dimensions of OST participation, we were only able to investigate a few. We found that across all sites, forty percent of students in Elev8 schools participated in Elev8 OST and those that did participated in Elev8 OST for an average of 43 days in the 2010-11 school year. This average compares favorably with the experiences of middle school students enrolled in programs similar to Elev8 OST.<sup>60</sup> The length of participation during the school year was robust. Students, on average, participated in Elev8 OST for over five months of the school year, and some regions achieved even longer average durations of participation. Finally, though the data available to us were limited, where data were available we saw that a majority of Elev8 OST participants were taking advantage of multiple components of the Elev8 initiative.

While it has not yet been established that Elev8 improves student and school performance at this stage of the initiative, we sought to understand how participation in Elev8 OST relates to student outcomes. Though our study does not determine definitively if participation in OST is beneficial to students' performance in school, we did learn that, on average, students who were enrolled in Elev8 schools (including both OST participants and non-participants) reported high levels of efficacy, liked schools they attended, and valued school highly. Further, a majority of the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students in Elev8 schools (including OST participants and non-participants) participated in high school planning activities and reported having clear high school plans. Notably, 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in Elev8 OST more frequently were likely to have engaged in more high school preparation activities, and were more likely to report planning to take advantage of school choice and attend competitive college preparatory high schools than students who participated for fewer days in Elev8 OST. This is not explained by demographic differences between high-frequency and low-frequency participants.

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<sup>60</sup> See Kauh, 2011.

Despite limitations, these findings suggest that increasing participation levels in OST programs in community school settings may promote participant success in high school. While we did not look at school-level changes in culture or consider other community school influences on the entire school population, findings suggest that there may be additional discrete benefits of participation in OST activities in this setting. As Elev8 schools strive to meet their central goal of preparing students for high school, OST activities may be a promising context to help inform students about their high school options and available planning activities. More research is needed to understand the relationship between Elev8 OST and positive student outcomes.

## Appendix A: Data Sources

Data used in this report come from the 2010-11 student survey and 2010-11 participation data. During this data collection period, all students in Elev8 schools were invited to participate in the annual Elev8 survey. Additionally, all sites used a common database developed and managed by the evaluation team to track and record student participation. A summary of the data is provided in Table 1A below.

Table 1A. The 2010-11 sample of students included in the study

Data	Total	Region A	Region B	Region C	Region D
<b>Participation Data</b> (participated at least one day in OST, with consents)	2,476	306	1,073	289	808
<b>Survey Data</b> (completed a survey, with consents)	4,599	465	1,191	1,260	1,683
<b>Merged Sample (Participation + Survey Data)</b> (linked OST student participation data with survey data; some individuals could not be linked)	1,487	238	683	135	431
<b>Survey only sample</b> (non-OST participants)	2,988	226	505	1,123	1,134

### Elev8 student survey data

The Elev8 survey was developed by the national evaluation team to understand the strengths, needs, and short-term outcomes of Elev8 students. The survey contains a combination of validated survey constructs along with additional questions of interest to Elev8 communities. Survey constructs and variables include:

- a) academic, health, demographic and stressor profiles of students;
- b) student involvement in OST and other positive activities;
- c) student barriers to participation in OST;
- d) student utilization of school-based health centers and outcomes of that utilization; and,
- e) eighth graders' plans and preparation activities for their transition to highschool.

### Participation data

Each site manages a Management Information System (MIS) with information on program participants including basic demographics and attendance in Elev8 services. Three Elev8 program components are captured in the MIS: extended-day learning activities, school-based health centers (aggregate), and family support programs (not linked to students). During the 2010-11 school year, the evaluation team managed the MIS for all regions, providing us with access to student-level identified data on a monthly basis. Consent forms from parents provide permission for the evaluation team to collect and analyze both participation and survey data. Students without permission are not included in the sample.

Students also provided assent to participate in the survey. Students without assent are not included in the sample. The data are administrative in nature, meaning that the demographics and attendance are reported by the program and not the participants themselves.

### Merged sample

Data from the surveys were merged with data from the participation database to identify students who did and did not participate in Elev8 OST. The merge was conducted using two methods. First, the names of students in each database were linked by school and region. In cases where there was not a perfect match, researchers manually identified a match, if one existed. An imperfect match was one where a nickname was used (Joe for Joseph), a hyphenated name was used, there was a reversal in the order of the names (Eric Brown was listed as Brown Eric), or a middle name was indicated in one, but not both sources.

In total, there are 4,599 students who consented and completed the survey, and 1,487 of them could be identified as OST participants (participated in the OST program at least one day) by linking them to participation data. In other words, among 4,599 students in survey file, 1,487 of them can be merged with participation data and thus identified as OST participants. The remaining 2,988 students who could not be linked to the participant file or could be linked but participated zero days in the program were considered non-OST participants.

## Appendix B: Survey Methodology

### Data Collection Plan

The survey methodology utilized in the spring of 2011 was designed to include all students in Elev8 schools irrespective of their participation in Elev8 services. The goal of this methodology was to understand backgrounds and experiences of students in Elev8 schools.<sup>61</sup> The survey was also designed to help understand in-program and interim outcomes of students in Elev8 schools (several outcomes listed below).

We worked with each school to distribute and collect consent forms so that as many students as possible were eligible to participate in the survey. Consent processes were aligned with the regulations of each school district. We gave each school six to eight weeks of lead time to distribute, collect, and submit consent forms to Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) staff.<sup>62</sup> Students who returned their consent forms, irrespective of whether permission was granted by their parents to complete the survey, were entered into a lottery for a prize.

### Instrumentation and Administration

The instruments for this study were designed and developed by P/PV staff. Elev8 staff and local evaluators were provided the opportunity to review and provide suggestions on survey content. Many of the constructs used were from earlier P/PV work and many were developed from other scales used commonly in the field (see Appendix C for citations) including studies of the Boys and Girls Club and Big Brothers Big Sisters. Constructs for the survey included:

- future orientation
- school value
- school liking
- utilization of Elev8 services
- stressors
- high school preparation
- sense of efficacy

The survey days were scheduled in collaboration with Elev8 site staff, and generally took place in April or May 2011 on dates that were determined by the individual schools. Only students who had parent permission (consent) to participate in the survey were invited to take the survey and, of these students, only those who assented to participate took the survey. Students who did not have permission or did not assent were given an activity to work on or were instructed to work on their school work during the survey administration period. The survey was conducted in classrooms by trained survey administrators. Survey administrators read the survey aloud to students, although students were instructed to take it at their own pace if they liked. The survey administration process took approximately 30-45 minutes per classroom. Surveys were paper-based, as many of the schools do not have enough computers to deliver an online survey to multiple classrooms at one time. Once the

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<sup>61</sup> Students were identified as out-of-school time participants or non-participants through linking their survey data with participation data collected through the Elev8 database.

<sup>62</sup> The national evaluation of Elev8 was originally conducted by Public/Private Ventures, a national non-profit research organization. Public/Private Ventures closed in July 2012, and the national evaluation of Elev8 was transferred by Atlantic Philanthropies to Research for Action, a Philadelphia-based non-profit organization working in educational research and reform to ensure opportunities and outcomes for all students.

surveys were completed, they were sealed by students, collected by survey administrators and mailed back to P/PV for processing and data analysis.

Table 1B: Spring 2011 survey response rates

Region A		Region B		Region C		Region D	
School	Response Rate (%)						
A	83	E	60	J	59	P	76
B	90	F	49	K	68	Q	69
C	82	G	63	L	60	R	70
D	78	H	74	M	49	S	60
		I	52	N	71	T	79
				O	46		

Note: Response Rate = number of students in those grades who completed the survey ÷ number of students in school in Elev8 grades; students without consent and who did not assent are included in the denominator.

Table 2B. Number of students completing the student survey (present, consented, and assented)

Region A		Region B		Region C		Region D	
School	No. of students						
A	207	E	346	J	383	P	686
B	61	F	215	K	257	Q	456
C	123	G	286	L	249	R	145
D	74	H	291	M	83	S	282
		I	53	N	135	T	114
				O	153		
Total	465	Total	1,191	Total	1,260	Total	1,683

## Appendix C: Survey Measures

**School Liking** (3 ITEMS: Scale from 1 (not very true) to 4 (very true); Source: Hererra, 2004)<sup>63</sup>

I often feel excited at school

I look forward to going to school every day

I like school a lot

**School Efficacy** (4 ITEMS: Scale from 1 (not very true) to 4 (very true); Source: Modified from Midgley et al., 2000)<sup>64</sup>

I know I can do even the hardest work in my classes if I try

I'm certain I can master the skills taught in school this year

I can do almost all the work in school if I don't give up

I know even if my schoolwork is hard, I can learn it

**School Value** (5 ITEMS: Scale from 1 (not very true) to 4 (very true); Original Source: Modified from Eccles et al., 1984)<sup>65</sup>

I feel that being a good student is important to me

I would be upset if I got a low grade for one of my subjects

I am interested in the things I learn at school

I think school is useful in helping me make good decisions in my life

I know what I learn in school is useful for the job I want as an adult

**Future Orientation/Connectedness** (1 ITEM: Scale from 1 (not very true) to 4 (very true); Source: modified from Arbretton et al., 2009)<sup>66</sup>

I know doing well in school will help me in the future

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<sup>63</sup> Hererra, C. (2004). School based mentoring: A closer look. Public/Private Ventures: Philadelphia.

<sup>64</sup> Midgley, C., Maehr, M.L., Hruda, L.Z., Anderman, E., Anderman, L., Freeman, K.E., Gheen, M., Urdan, T. (2000). Manual for the patterns of adaptive learning scales. The University of Michigan: Ann Arbor, MI.

<sup>65</sup> Eccles, J.P., Adler, T. & Meece, J.L. (1984). Sex differences in achievement: A test of alternate theories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46, 26-43.

<sup>66</sup> Arbretton, A.J., with Bradshaw, M., Pepper, S. & Sheldon, J. (2009). Making every day count: Boys and Girls Clubs' role in promoting positive outcomes for teens. Public/Private Ventures: Philadelphia.

## Appendix D: Demographic Comparisons of Elev8 Participants with Non-Participants

Table 1D. Demographic comparisons of Elev8 OST participants and students who did not participate in Elev8 OST in school year 2010-11

CHARACTERISTIC	Region A n=464		Region B n=1188		Region C n=1258		Region D n=1564	
	OST	Non-OST	OST	Non-OST	OST	Non-OST	OST	Non-OST
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>								
African American	1.7	.4	.9	.6	12.6	18.8	3.6	3.8
Asian	86.9	84.0	42.6	19.4	21.5	16.4	4.5	3.2
Hispanic	1.7	1.8	49.1	76.6	57.8	57.1	62.7	69.7
Native American	6.4	5.8	3.7	1.0	.7	2.4	16.6	8.9
Other	2.1	5.3	2.2	1.0	5.9	4.3	1.7	1.3
White	1.3	2.7	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.0	11.1	13.1
<b>GENDER</b>								
Female	55.7	52.2	52.3	55.8	40.0	54.5	58.5	49.9
Male	44.3	47.8	47.7	44.2	60.0	45.5	41.5	50.1
<b>FRL STATUS</b>								
FRL	86.4	79.5	72.3	76.9	64.9	65.6	67.1	69.7
NON-FRL	10.2	16.1	8.3	5.8	6.0	3.7	13.6	12.8
Not Sure	3.4	4.5	19.4	17.3	29.1	30.7	19.3	17.5
<b>GRADE LEVEL</b>								
5th Grade	24.4	21.7	.2	0.0	0.0	.4	0.0	.4
6th Grade	38.2	32.7	23.7	15.5	39.3	29.6	21.1	15.8
7th Grade	22.7	20.4	41.9	41.1	40.7	39.0	37.1	43.4
8th Grade	14.7	25.2	34.3	43.6	20.0	31.1	41.8	40.3

## Appendix E: Regression Analysis

In order to examine the relationship between Elev8 OST participation and high school preparation activities and plans, we conducted two series of analyses.

First, we conducted a series of logistic regressions to examine the potential differences between Elev8 OST participants and non-participants in high school preparation activities and plans. The variables controlled in the statistical model include student gender, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, geographical region, and years in attendance at the school. The results did not provide consistent evidence that Elev8 OST participants are more likely to have a high school plan, plan to apply for a competitive college preparatory high school, or attend more high school preparation activities than those students who did not participate in Elev8 OST. Our analyses may be biased because we are unable to account for all the differences between students who did and did not participate in Elev8 OST activities. Further, students were not randomly selected to participate in the Elev8 OST program; instead, they *chose* to, or were encouraged to, participate. Additionally, the estimate may be biased because some students may have received other, non-Elev8, OST or enrichment programs that are not reported in our data.

Second, using participation data, we explored how the frequency of participation in Elev8 OST was associated with high school preparation activities, and, in turn, how planning activities were associated with where the student planned to attend high school, controlling for observed student and school characteristics, as described above. Figures 1E through 3E display some of the findings from these analyses. In each figure, solid lines represent the change in estimated probabilities, the dashed lines represent the 95% confidence intervals, and the vertical lines ( $x=43$ ) display the average days students participated in Elev8 OST program. All the correlations displayed in the figures are significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  level.

Figure 1E: Students who attended more days in Elev8 OST were more likely to participate in high school preparation activities

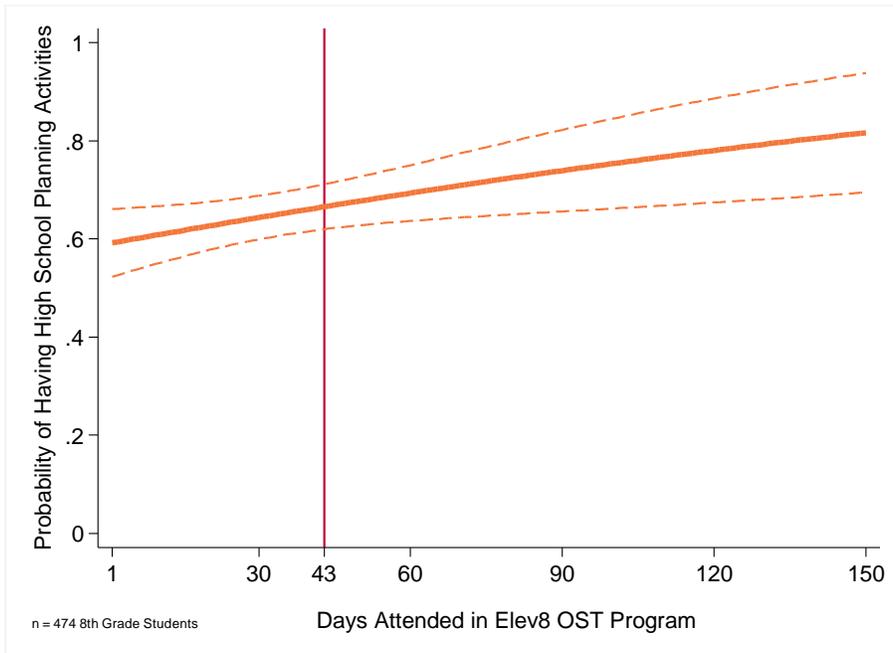


Figure 2E: Engaging in more high school planning activities is associated with a greater likelihood of high school planning

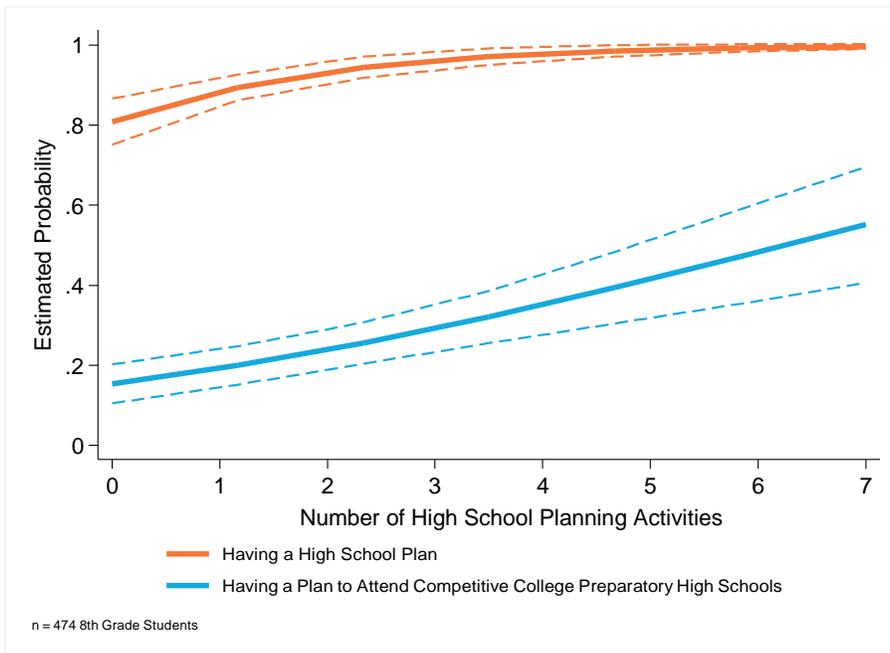


Figure 3E: Students who attended more days of Elev8 OST are more likely to report planning to apply for a competitive college-preparatory high school

