

# **Baltimore County After-School Opportunities Program**

## **FY2001-FY2002 Final Report**

Prepared as Phase 5 of the Evaluation for the  
Baltimore County Local Management Board

by

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# Executive Summary

## Overview

The Maryland After-school Opportunity Act of 1999 created a fund to assist parents in providing after-school care and programs for children. The Baltimore County Local Management Board (LMB) received a grant award in 2000 from the State of Maryland, Department of Human Resources, Child Care Administration, to develop and administer after-school programs in Baltimore County. The evaluation of the after-school programs was divided into five distinct phases. The first phase of the evaluation developed the overall evaluation plan.<sup>1</sup> The second phase developed the administrative data system in cooperation with the organizations providing the programs.<sup>2</sup> The third phase involved analysis of program processes and outputs, with the report focusing on the program from its first implementation in November 2000 through August 2001. This report describes phase four of the evaluation that involved the design, conduct and analysis of survey outcome data. It includes updates of program data through December 2001. The final phase will be the analysis of external outcome data and preparation of the final report with data through June 2002.

The Baltimore County after-school opportunities expected to involve nearly 800 middle and high school students and 79 staff at 23 program sites overseen by eight different organizations or county agencies. The Woodlawn Public Library program, the only one for high school youth, began November 2000. Three Recreation and Parks programs began March 2001 (two for special education youth). Six YMCA and one Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) programs began June 2001, and nine Police Athletic League (PAL) programs began July 2001. Two therapeutic programs began in October 2001. The remaining program failed to start. Two of the Recreation and Parks programs did not operate during the summer. The PAL centers and two of the YMCA sites did not have fall 2001 programs. One YMCA site resumed and the other was replaced in spring 2002, and some PAL centers hosted LMB-funded activities. The programs had 49 identified staff during the academic year 2001-2002, most of whom had not staffed the programs during the preceding summer.

	<i>Plan</i>	<i>by5/01</i>	<i>by8/01</i>	<i>by12/01</i>	<i>by 5/02</i>
Youth	808	303	1,086	1,499	1,982
Program Staff	79	na	na	49	49
Program Sites	23	4	20	22	24
Organizations	8	2	5	7	7

Number of Programs and Participants by date

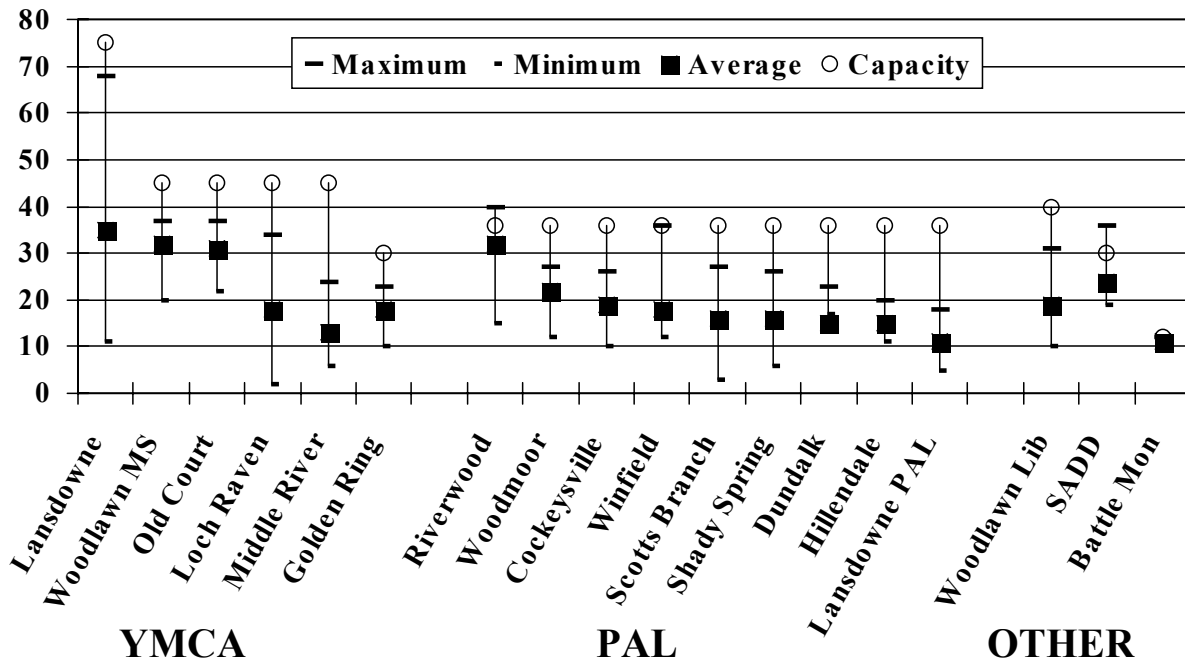
## Youth Participation

The Baltimore County after-school opportunities enrolled or involved 303 youth by the end of the 2001 spring trimester. Enrollment increased to 1,084 youth by the end of summer 2001, 1,487 by the end of fall 2001, and 1,983 youth had been enrolled by the end of spring 2002. The youth included about equal numbers of girls and boys, and came about equally from all three middle school grades. Mothers signed 90% of the application forms and 36% indicated the home had two parents. The programs drew students from at least 79 different Baltimore County

schools, with the Woodlawn Library program being the most diverse.

Each of the programs had different schedules. During the spring, the library program had specific seminars on selected days, while the other three programs operated five days a week (not always with the same youth scheduled) for 2.0 to 2.7 hours per day. During the summer, the six YMCA programs operated seven hours a day, five days a week, for eight weeks. The nine PAL programs operated three hours a day, three days a week, for six weeks. The library, SADD and Battle Monument programs had schedules in between. The programs during academic year 2001-2002 involved youth between 2.0 hours a day two days a week (Ridge Ruxton) to 3.5 hours a day five days a week (Dulaney Station, Key Point and Woodlawn Library).

An average of 365 youth attended the summer 2001 programs on the days they were offered, although not much was available on the PAL programs that kept little data. The average attendance by location ranged from 11 to 35 youth, however, as few as two youth or as many as 68 youth attended a summer program on any given day. The YMCA Lansdowne Middle School program planned for 75 youth, almost achieved its capacity on one day, but averaged 47% of its planned capacity. In contrast, the YMCA Woodlawn Middle School program had a smaller planned capacity and averaged 70% of capacity. The Battle Monument School summer program averaged 11 youth out of a planned capacity of 12 youth, and never had fewer than nine youth on any day. The Lansdowne PAL program averaged the same number of youth as Battle Monument, yet had three times the planned capacity.



Program Capacity and Summer 2001 Attendance

The fall 2001 Woodlawn Library and SADD programs had the same site coordinators as they did

during the summer, and they averaged more youth during their fall programs than during the summer. The Deer Park and Battle Monument programs had the same site coordinators in the fall as they did during the spring, and about the same number of youth both spring and fall. Two of the YMCA summer programs did not resume in the fall, and none of the other site coordinators continued. As a result, the YMCA programs combined averaged half the number of youth in the fall as they did in the summer. With the two additional sites in spring 2002, the combined average YMCA program attendance returned close to the summer level.

Attendance remained relatively stable during spring 2001. The attendance among the programs that began in the summer generally hit a peak within a week of their start, and then declined throughout the summer. The fall YMCA programs generally began with a lower attendance than the summer ended, but then increased throughout the fall. The Woodlawn Library (spring and summer), the Middle River (summer), and the Woodlawn Middle School (fall) programs retained less than half of its youth for one month or more. In contrast, the programs at Battle Monument (spring, summer and fall), Ridge Ruxton (spring and fall), Deer Park (spring and fall), Old Court Middle School (fall) and the two therapeutic programs (fall) retained about 90% of their youth for at least one month. Youth who were provided transportation, whose parents gave permission for checking school records, and whose parents participated at some time in the program had higher attendance than other youth.

The Baltimore County LMB after-school opportunities provided about 7,000 youth hours of supervised activity during the academic year of 2000-2001. The programs provided about 45,000 youth hours of supervised activities during the summer of 2001. They provided about 23,000 youth hours of supervision in fall 2001 and 46,000 hours in spring 2002. Pre- and post-tests at the PAL programs showed statistically significant increases in liking to read and knowing how to use reading strategies, but no change in understanding what they read.

The LMB after-school opportunities supervised about 120,000 hours of youth's time during the first twelve months of operation. This averaged 60 hours for each youth participating at some time during the startup years.

## **Program Outcomes**

The after-school opportunities had good images among other students. Three-fourths of the middle school youth reported that they went to the program the first time because they thought it would be fun. Three-fourths said they chose to attend the program on the day of the survey. Three-fourths said they were not made fun of because they were in the program. Parents largely agreed with youth on the motivation for initial attendance, but 40% said they gave their middle school youth no choice about going the most recent time. High school youth expressed less initial interest in the after-school opportunities than middle school youth, but were just as likely as middle school youth to say they choose to come on the day of the survey.

Choice to participate in the program was not the same as choice of what to do in the program. One-fourth (22%) of the middle school youth said they helped plan the activities and an

additional 34% said they helped some. About the same percent (23%) said they chose what they did each day and 59% said they had some choice. More parents than youth reported that the youth were involved in planning, but gave the same response on daily choice. High school youth reported the same amount of planning and choice as did middle school youth.

The after-school programs primarily focused on relationship skills during the first year of the program. Six survey questions defined the concept of rights and respect. Most all (96%) of the middle school parents (96%), middle school youth, and most of the middle school (82%) and high school (68%) youth felt safe in the program. This suggests that the programs had done a good job of making sure youth felt their physical and emotional rights were protected so they felt safe and respected. They did not give personal development quite as high marks. The average scores for high school youth reflected the same pattern and were not significantly different from the scores of middle school youth. Staff reported in their surveys that the programs helped youth develop relationship skills more than external skills. When asked what signs indicated that the program was benefitting youth, one site coordinator summed it up, “Relating to others in a gentle manner and being responsible.”

The more youth felt that their rights were respected, that they were physically and emotionally safe in the program, the more they reported developing skills. Most middle school youth (70%) and their parents (86%) reported that the after-school opportunities helped a lot to keep them out of trouble. Fewer (52%) high school youth gave the same response. Over three-fifths reported that they were learning skills they would need in the future. Two-fifths (40%) of their parents said the programs helped their middle school youth a lot in their regular school work, and most of the rest (58%) said it helped some.

Half or more of the middle school youth felt good about the after-school programs: 66% said they liked all of their leaders and helpers, 58% said they got to be with friends, 54% said the program was “fun,” and 54% thought a lot of other students would like a program like theirs.

Youth overall had a 54 average score on the respect scale. Youth at Middle River, SADD, Ridge Ruxton, Key Point, and Shady Spring had significantly higher than average scores.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Respect</i>	<i>Emotion</i>	<i>Self-det</i>	<i>Develop</i>
Total	54	44	42	34
Golden Ring MS	53	<b>58</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>49</b>
Loch Raven Academy	58	<b>59</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>49</b>
Middle Rive MS	<b>72</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>
Old Court MS	52	38	39	40
Southwest Academy	14	-5	34	-28
Woodlawn MS	55	29	36	6
Stricker MS SADD	<b>66</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>44</b>
Deer Park MS	45	19	32	9
Battle Monument	57	<b>71</b>	42	<b>76</b>
Ridge Ruxton	<b>77</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>71</b>
Key Point	<b>77</b>	36	14	34
Dulaney Station	50	21	13	13
Dundalk PAL	48	<b>50</b>	<b>48</b>	38
Scotts Branch PAL	52	<b>61</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>69</b>
Shady Spring PAL	<b>63</b>	<b>68</b>	28	<b>40</b>
Winfield PAL	42	40	42	27

**Bold**—Significantly higher than average p<.05

Average Quality of Life Scale Scores by Location

Youth had a 34 average score on personal development, with youth at eight locations having significantly higher scores.

Middle school youth most frequently (26%) mentioned that they liked the field trips, followed by physical activities like going outside or playing in the gym. Homework time or help was explicitly mentioned by 11% of the middle school youth. Parents most frequently (20%) mentioned activities in general and the emphasis on homework (20%).

Half (50%) of the staff reported that they were very satisfied with the program overall, and an additional 42% reported that they were satisfied. They expressed greatest satisfaction with their relationships with the youth in their programs, with 60% very satisfied and 33% satisfied. Staff expressed least satisfaction with the training they received. Staff satisfaction related strongly to the benefit they felt the youth received from the program and marginal to the pay they received. Most important to youth benefit was the relationship staff reported with the youth.

Unfortunately, data from the public schools do not show that the after school opportunities helped youth academically. The more youth participated in the after school program during academic year 2001-2002, the more their grade point average dropped from the prior year. After school participation did seem to help seventh graders pass the functional reading test, but did not affect their school attendance.

## **Recommendations**

The middle school youth most frequently recommended bigger and different types of snacks and fewer rules (often about using snack machines). High school youth most frequently recommended that some youth be excluded, and that some of the activities or seminars be changed. Parents most frequently recommended that after-school opportunities be offered on more days, than they involve more field trips, and that they provide more time for homework.

Summarizing all of the information available so far, the evaluator recommends the following:

- Provide as much continuity as possible in the programs, since substantial effort was involved in just getting them started
- Develop good linkages with host schools to enable helping students academically, while retaining enough separation that both students and teachers sense the different purposes
- Involve more youth and youth with greater needs while ensuring that they do not diminish rights respect foundational to personal development and emotional well-being
- Retain youth for longer periods of time to make it easier to move beyond building relationships to more effective personal development and academic enrichment
- Provide as many enrichment programs as possible to give youth diverse experiences, while carefully balancing homework time and free time
- Ensure all the programs are committed to providing experiences that enhance youth's quality of life, and that their staffs have the necessary training
- Continue to provide materials, supplies and transportation to support program activities, while realizing that these do not substitute for quality staff and parental involvement

- Develop ways to increase the commitment of parents or guardians to the program as their involvement expands the programs' resources and increases continuation of youth
- Consider expanding after-school opportunities to both the academic year and summer, to all of the days that school is in session, and to some days when school is not in session