

**Baltimore County
After-School
Opportunities Program
FY2003 Final Report**

Prepared for the
Baltimore County Local Management Board

by

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Executive Summary

Background

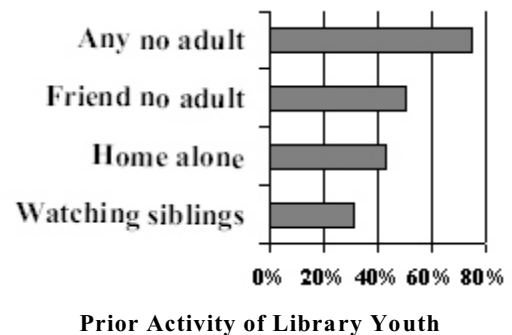
The Maryland After-School Opportunity Act of 1999 created a fund to assist parents by providing after-school care and programs for children. The Baltimore County Local Management Board (LMB) received a two-year grant award in FY2001 from the State of Maryland, Department of Human Resources, Child Care Administration, to develop and administer after-school programs in Baltimore County. The grant was renewed in FY2003. The LMB commissioned an evaluation of the FY2001-2002 after-school program, and used the results to develop targets for the FY2003 programs. This report evaluates the FY2003 (academic year 2002-2003) programs in relation to the target goals.

The LMB funded after-school opportunities in FY2003 starting in September 2002 at four locations administered by three other county agencies. The Baltimore County Public Library provided after-school opportunities at the Woodlawn Public Library for high school students. The Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks provided after-school opportunities at Battle Monument School and Ridge Ruxton School for secondary school youth with special education needs. The Baltimore County Police Department provided after-school opportunities at the Scotts Branch Police Athletic League Center for elementary school children through a subcontract with Camelot Learning. The opportunities expanded in early 2003 through a contract with the YMCA of Central Maryland to youth at seven middle schools: Deer Park, Golden Ring, Loch Raven Academy, Old Court, Southwest Academy, Stemmers Run and Woodlawn Middle Schools.

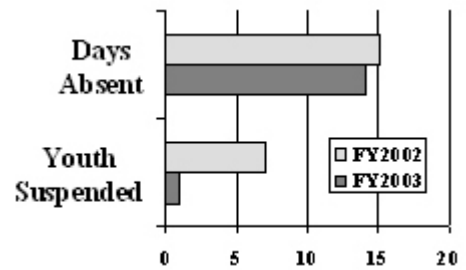
Outcomes

Baltimore County Public Library After-School Opportunities (Woodlawn Public Library)

- Involved 104 high school youth between September 17, 2002, and May 30, 2003, 36% of whom had been involved the previous year
- Supervised 13,824 youth-hours, exceeding the target of 13,770 youth-hours; 75% of the youth had spent some weekday afternoons without adult supervision prior to the program
- Averaged 69% of its 40-youth capacity for the year, below the target of 75%. However, it averaged 84% of its capacity January-May after a slow start in the fall
- Had 27% of its enrolled youth attending half or more of the program days, exceeding the target of 10%



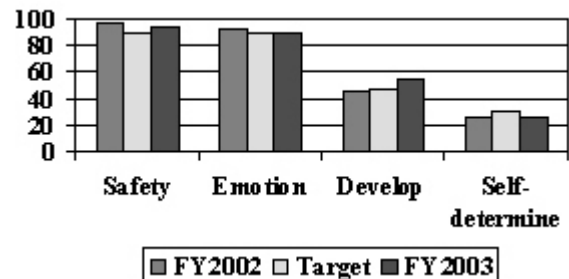
- Youth missed 1.0 fewer school days and received 0.2 fewer suspensions during FY2003 than FY2002, but did not meet the targets in these areas
- Grade point averages dropped by 0.4 between FY2002 and FY2003, opposite the targeted increase, especially among those with better than a C-average in FY2002
- Youth satisfaction scores exceeded the targets for personal development, self-determination and safety-respect. They fell below the target on emotional well-being
- Maintained a ratio of 13 or fewer students per staff on 65% of the program days, below the target of 90%
- Retained all three paid staff for the full year, but retained four volunteer staff for only a few days each, for an average retention of 43%, below the target of 60%
- Two-thirds of the youth rated staff highly, exceeding the target for feeling respected by staff but slightly missing the target for liking staff (but higher than the previous year)
- Staff expressed great satisfaction on the benefit of the program to the youth, their relations with the youth and with the organization of the program, exceeding the targets
- Received 72% positive ratings from community representatives, exceeding the 65% target.



Library Youth Absence & Suspension

Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks After-School Opportunities
(Battle Monument and Ridge Ruxton Schools)

- Involved 46 special education youth between September 30, 2002, and May 29, 2003, 73% of whom and been involved in the previous year
- Supervised 9,930 youth-hours, missing the target of 11,080 youth-hours; 70% of the youth had spent weekday afternoons at home with an adult prior to the program
- Averaged 87% of its 18-youth capacity at each location, below the target of 95%
- Had 72% of its enrolled youth attend half or more of the program days, missing the target of 95%
- Three of four parent satisfaction scores met the high targets, with personal development higher than the previous year
- Maintained a ratio of five or fewer students per staff on 99% of the program days, exceeding the target of 90%
- Retained 100% of the staff until the end of the program, exceeding the target of 80%; 15 staff worked the full year and one staff was added in March
- 81% of the youth rated staff highly on two measures, exceeding the youth target of 70%; 94% and 100% of the parents rated staff highly, exceeding the parent target of 90%

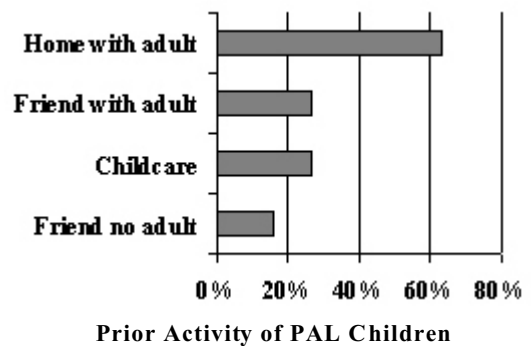


Parent Satisfaction with Recreation and Park

- Staff expressed great satisfaction on the benefit of the program to the youth, their relations with the youth, and their personal satisfaction with the programs, equaling or exceeding the targets
- Received 96% positive ratings from community representatives, exceeding the 65% target.

Baltimore County Police Department After-School Opportunities
(Program by Camelot Learning at Scotts Branch PAL Center)

- Involved 37 elementary school children between October 1, 2002, and May 30, 2003, none of whom had been involved in the previous year
- Supervised 2,271 youth-hours of children who generally spent weekday afternoons with an adult or older siblings prior to the program
- Averaged 39% of its 40-youth capacity for the year, declining from 47% in the fall to 35% in the spring
- Had 35% of its enrolled youth attend half or more of the program days
- Maintained a ratio of 10 or fewer students per staff on 93% of the program days
- Retained 50% of its staff for the full year
- Had no targets and collected no outcome data except attendance.



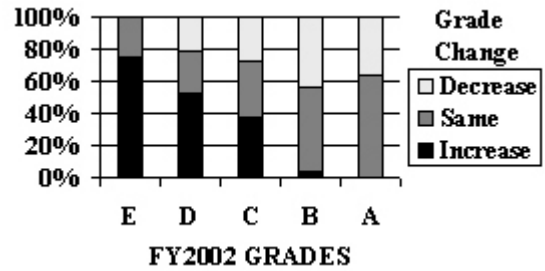
YMCA of Central Maryland After-School Opportunities

(Deer Park, Golden Ring, Loch Raven Academy, Old Court, Southwest Academy, Stemmers Run and Woodlawn Middle Schools)

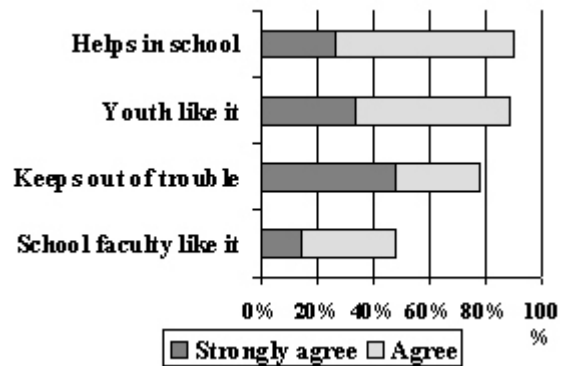
- Involved 345 middle school youth between January 7 and May 30, 2003, 20% of whom had been involved in the previous year
- Supervised 34,650 youth-hours, a little more than half of the target of 63,360 youth-hours planned for the full academic year; 31% of the youth had spent some weekday afternoons without adult supervision prior to the program
- Averaged 68% of its planned capacity for the year, exceeding the target of 60% overall; the five programs that began in January exceeded the target of 60% but not the two that began in March and April
- Had 58% of its enrolled youth attend half or more of the program days, lower than the target of 60%, but higher than the previous year; the programs at Deer Park, Golden Ring and Old Court exceed the 60% target
- Failed to achieve the targeted overall increase in drug knowledge, increase in drug refusal skills, and decrease in pro-drug attitudes. However, pre-post measurement for the same youth showed some increase in knowledge at four of five locations and some decrease in pro-drug attitudes at three of the locations
- Failed to see any increase in youth satisfaction scores in the target areas of personal

development, self-determination, safety-respect and emotional well-being

- Exceeded the targeted increases in parent satisfaction with the programs in all four areas
- Youth missed 1.2 more school days and received 0.2 more suspensions during FY2003 than FY2002, opposite the direction targeted although not statistically significant
- Grade point averages increased in FY2003 for youth with C averages or below in FY2002 by less than the target amount, and declined for youth with B or A averages
- Maintained a ratio of 10 or fewer students per staff on 93% of the program days, exceeding the target of 90%
- Retained 87% of the staff through the end of the program, exceeding the target of 80%. Six of the seven locations exceeded the target
- 59% and 60% of the youth rated staff highly on two measures, missing the targets of 70% for each
- 89% and 92% of the parents rated staff highly on the two measures, exceeding the targets of 70% and 81% respectively
- Staff expressed satisfaction on the benefit of the program to the youth that equaled the target, but reported relationships with the youth and satisfaction with other aspects of the program slightly below the target
- Received 70% positive ratings from community representatives, exceeding the 65% target.



Grade Change for YMCA Youth



Community Assessment of YMCA Program

Summary and Recommendations

Youth

The Baltimore County Local Management Board supported after school opportunities in FY2003 that targeted four different groups of youth. High school youth had one program located in a public library adjacent to a high school. Middle school youth had programs located in seven middle schools. Elementary school youth had one program located in a Police Athletic League center. Secondary school youth with special needs had programs at two of the County's special education schools. Lack of adult supervision prior to the programs suggest the need for the opportunities, and recruitment and retention of youth suggests the demand for the opportunities.

Findings:

- Three-fourths of high school youth, one-third of middle school youth, and almost no elementary or special education youth spent weekday afternoons home alone

- without an adult present prior to the program
- The special education program operated at about 90% capacity, the high and middle school programs at about 70% capacity, and the elementary school program at about 40% capacity
- Continuity of attendance was higher among special education youth (72%) and middle school youth (58%) than among elementary (35%) or high school youth (27%).

Recommendations:

- The program for elementary age children should be eliminated first if all the programs cannot be maintained, as it was least able to attract and retain children, and the children it did attract had alternative adult-supervised activities.

Academics

There is little evidence to show that the YMCA after-school program helped youth achieve academic success. However, the programs began during the middle of the academic year and operated on two-fifths or less of the school days. This may have been too short a time for the programs to really help the students. It could also be that the students with academic problems were more likely to enrolled in after-school opportunities. This evaluation can only be suggestive, limited by the availability of data and large variations among groups of youth.

Findings:

- After-school youth with below average grades in FY2002 could and did improve their grades in FY2003, while youth with above average grades in FY2002 who had less room for improvement saw they grades decline
- The percent of the time youth attended the after-school programs did not affect changes in grades or suspensions
- Youth at one YMCA site had half a letter grade higher grade point average in FY2003 than in FY2002, while youth an another YMCA site had half a letter grade lower grade point average

Recommendations:

- Judgements about the value of the after-school programs should not be based at this time on their contribution to the academic performance of students. If this is an important criteria, the programs need to operate longer, have controls for self selection, and have a different way to measure grade change for sixth grade youth
- The YMCA should look for characteristics of its programs at Golden Ring and Old Court Middle School sites that might explain their positive relationships with youth academics, in contrast to its programs at Stemmers Run and Woodlawn Middle School sites

Start-up

The opportunities provided through memorandums of understanding with other county government agencies started in September or early October and served youth for the full

academic year. The opportunities provided through a contract with a private organization could not begin before January due to the long time required for the LMB to develop and issue a formal request for proposal, receive and evaluate proposals, and negotiate a contract with the selected bidder. Only then could the successful bidder begin to recruit and train staff, negotiate arrangements with the schools, purchase materials and supplies, and recruit youth.

Findings:

- The Woodlawn Library attendance increased from 45% capacity in the fall to 84% capacity in the spring, and regular attenders increased from 22% to 35%
- The earliest starting YMCA program (Southwest) averaged 81% of capacity and the later starting programs averaged 59% (Stemmers Run) and 45% (Deer Park)
- Almost half of parents' recommended changes to the YMCA program involved expansion to the complete academic year, if not the full calendar year
- Only 20% of YMCA youth had attended the previous year's program, and a key reason for youth dropping out this year was that it was not like last year.

Recommendations:

- Funding and contractual issues need to be dealt with so that after-school opportunities can start at the beginning of the academic year
- Program continuity from year to year is important, and programs should continue for as much of the calendar year as possible.

Staffing

Staff determines the success of an after-school program. There must be enough staff with the right characteristics and training. Programs need to rely on paid staff even though volunteers can be helpful.

Findings:

- One-eighth of the middle school youth volunteered that staff was one of the best parts of the program, while one-fifth said staff was one of the two things to be changed
- Youth at the longer operating programs (Woodlawn Library, Battle Monument, Ridge Ruxton) rated staff more highly than those at the YMCA programs that began in the middle of the year
- Most of the staff at the school-based opportunities had their primary job at the school
- 78% of staff was very satisfied with their relationships with the youth, but only staff at Battle Monument and Golden Ring were very satisfied with their training
- Four-fifths of staff expressed satisfaction with their pay, with one-fourth very satisfied
- Most of the programs maintained the desired youth to staff ratio, but site coordinators frequently expressed the desire for more staff
- The Woodlawn Library maintained all its paid staff, and none of the volunteer staff who left due to demands of their paying job.

Recommendations:

- Recruitment of staff at school-based opportunities should begin among school staff with as much lead time as possible
- Enjoyment of relationships with youth should be central in hiring decisions as relations are the key motivators for staff
- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on training before the program begins, suggesting the importance of early recruitment.

Activities

Activities are key to the success of the program. Youth, parents and community representatives focus on the activities and how youth develop through them.

Findings:

- Half of the middle school youth and one-seventh of the high school youth specifically mentioned field trips when asked what they liked about the program
- Almost half of both middle school youth and high school youth volunteered other specific activities as the best part of the programs
- Both youth and parents focus more on non-academic activities than on academic activities
- The Life Skills Training curriculum produced no overall change in knowledge or attitudes although some change occurred among youth who attended most; site coordinators felt it was too much for such a short period of time and 10% of the middle school youth suggested it be changed
- Most recommendations for program change involved more number and variety of activities, particularly field trips.

Recommendations:

- Provide as many activity options as possible which are consistent with the program purpose
- Take the youth on as many field trips as the program can afford
- The Life Skills Training curriculum should be used over a full academic year rather than just a few months.

Community Relations

After-school programs that share space with school or other agency programs must develop good relations with the program environment. In the longer term, the support of the broader community is needed to maintain and expand after-school opportunities.

Findings:

- Community representatives outside the high school and middle school programs gave positive ratings on 70-72% of the items and those related to the special education programs gave positive ratings on 96% of the items
- Positive ratings were highest in the areas relating to the school

- The relationships of the programs with parents, vendors and the outside community were not well known by the community representatives surveyed
- Many suggestions for change involved expanding the after-school opportunities to more students, more locations, and more days in the year.

Recommendations:

- Develop stability and continuity of the after-school opportunities
- Maintain the positive relations that have been developed with the school communities
- Make more visible effort to become known through stronger relations with parents, vendors and other parts of the community outside the school.

Conclusion

The process for securing and allocating funds for after-school opportunities funded through the Baltimore County Local Management Board has led to delays and discontinuities in the programs. The FY2003 opportunities did not consistently build upon the FY2001 and FY2002 programs. Long-term change should probably not be expected without program continuity. Even short-term change is difficult to identify when data are differentially available and where cause and effect cannot be clearly separated. This evaluation does not show clear and consistent effects on the academic achievement of the youth involved in the programs. This, however, may not be the prime importance of the Baltimore after-school opportunities or the measure of its success. The data do suggest that after-school opportunities for middle and high school age youth are needed in Baltimore County. Youth, parents and the schools liked the opportunities that have occurred and want them to continue and expand.