BEYOND 3:30: A MULTI-PURPOSE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR INNER-CITY MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Phase II Report

Research & Information Services

Toronto District School Board

September 2013

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Beyond 3:30: A Multi-Purpose After-School Program for Inner-City Middle Schools - Phase II Report
Maria Yau, Bryce Archer, Amie Presley & Karen Kozovski

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Prepared by:

Maria Yau
Bryce Archer
Amie Presley
Karen Kozovski

Organizational Development/Research & Information Services
Toronto District School Board

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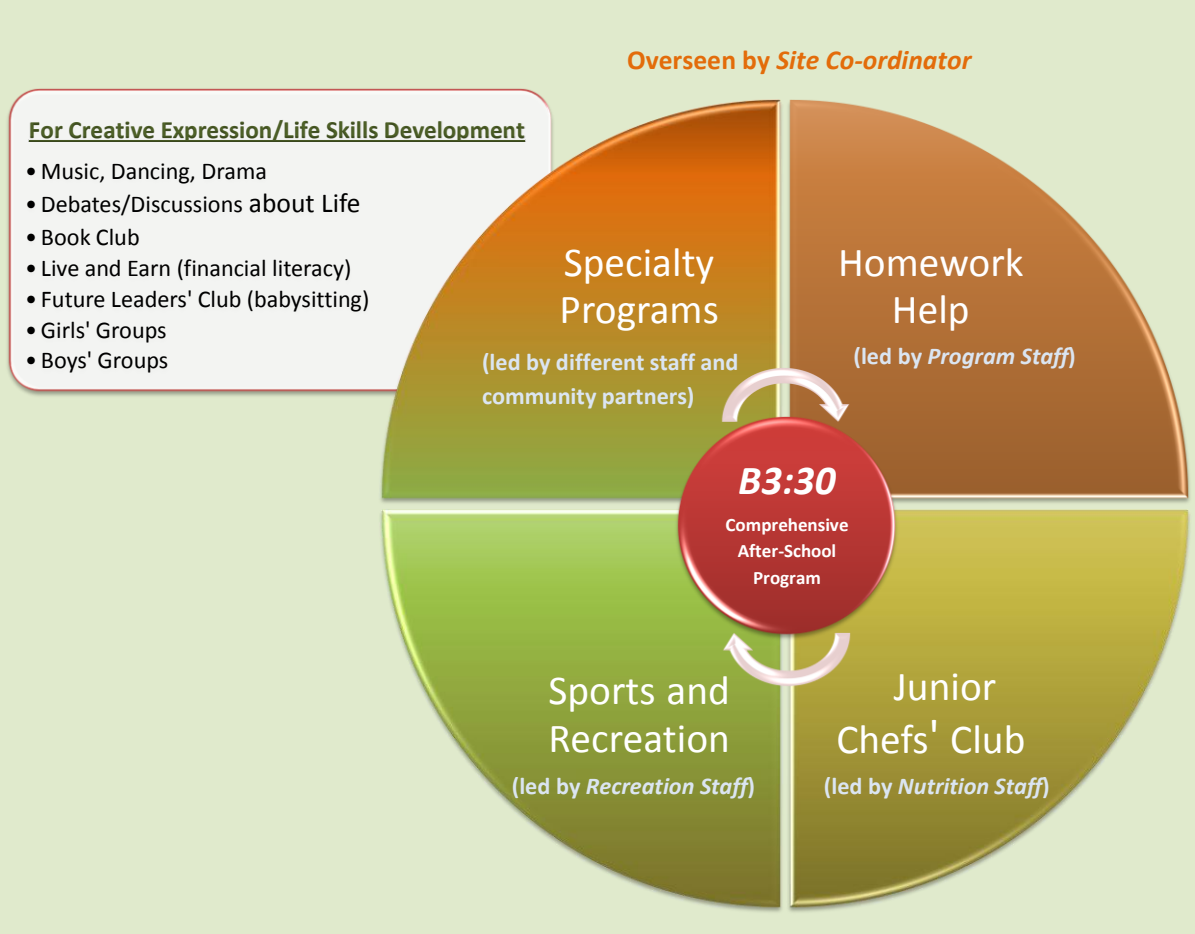
INTRODUCTION

This Phase II evaluation is a continuation of a Phase I study on an innovative, multi-purpose after-school program, called *Beyond 3:30* (hereafter referred to as B3:30). This after-school program was first piloted in 2009-10 in seven middle schools under the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC) program. The origin and the catalyst for the creation of this program are outlined in the Phase I report.

In essence, B3:30 aims to provide adolescents in high-needs communities an extended and comprehensive after-school program. The intent is to level their playing field by creating a safe after-school environment with enriched meaningful activities for their holistic development. As such, B3:30 offers multi-faceted structured programs within the school premises every school day between 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Figure 1 illustrates the core program components, key activities, and the personnel involved at each B3:30 site.

Figure 1: Beyond 3:30's Components and Program Deliverers



In partnership with the Toronto Foundation for Student Success (TFSS)[1], the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and the Toronto Community Foundation, the TDSB expanded B3:30 from the original seven pilot sites in 2009-10 to 13 MSIC middle schools by 2011-12 with a total average daily attendance of 380 participants. This means that every day after school, nearly 400 middle-school children in Toronto's high-risk neighbourhoods were in a safe place engaging in an array of organized enrichment activities with other students under the supervision of trained staff.

With the research funding support from the Ministry of Education, the Phase I evaluation of this program was completed in 2012. The Phase I study was a retrospective assessment of the program in its early implementation years. The report includes a detailed description of the history, structure, staffing, and components of the program. Based on interviews and open-ended surveys conducted in 2011-12, key observable impacts of the program, as well as initial challenges and ongoing barriers, were identified.

The continuing funding support from the Ministry has allowed the Phase I research to be expanded by tapping into a wider scope of information sources in order to answer the following three research questions in this Phase II evaluation.

1. Who were the B3:30 participants in terms of their backgrounds, characteristics, and needs?
2. How could the observable impacts identified in the Phase I report be validated and substantiated?
3. Based on the cumulative findings gleaned from both phases of the research, what are the conditions required to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of B3:30?

[1] The TFSS is an arm's length charitable foundation of the TDSB. Since the inception of B3:30, the TFSS office has been closely involved in raising funds, soliciting and establishing community partnerships, and managing the program at different sites.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the three research questions in this Phase II evaluation, multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data were employed (see Figure 2). Quantitative data for this study were garnered from the following data collection methods and centrally available data sources.

1. ***B3:30 Registration and Attendance Records*** – For tracking and research purposes, participants' registration and attendance records were captured in a central database maintained by the Program Office. This database provides detailed information about the participants and their attendance patterns.
2. ***Program Year-end Surveys*** – Near the end of the school year, all participants were asked to respond to an anonymous online survey. This survey consisted of closed-ended questions on participants' attendance, opinions about and satisfaction with the program, as well as the benefits they perceived to have gained from the program. In addition, school administrators were requested to respond to their version of the Program Year-end Survey with a few closed-ended questions about program impacts. For this study, results from the latest (2012-13) year-end surveys were examined.
3. ***TDSB's 2011-12 Grade 7-8 Student Census*** – In November 2011, the TDSB conducted its second Grade 7-12 *Student Census* in all its schools. This system-wide survey covered a wide range of topics such as student demographics, in-school and out-of-school experiences, self-perceptions, physical health, and emotional well-being. This comprehensive survey has yielded valuable information for this study with comparative data. For instance, data extracted from the latest *Student Census* reveal some of the participants' characteristics, as well as the challenges they had in and outside of school compared to the non-participants in their own school and the overall population in the school system. In addition, since this latest *Student Census* was administered in mid-November when B3:30 participants had already taken part in this daily after-school program for about eight weeks, some immediate outcome information can also be extracted from this *Student Census* data source.
4. ***Canadian Achievement Test (CAT4) Results*** – CAT4, a Canadian standardized test, was administered every fall in the TDSB's MSIC schools to assess students' foundation skills in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. For this study, the Fall 2011 CAT4 data were employed to gauge the initial academic standing of B3:30 participants compared to the non-participants in their schools.
5. ***2011-12 Student Report Cards*** – While long-term academic growth needs to be observed over time, student report card information was used in this research to determine if there

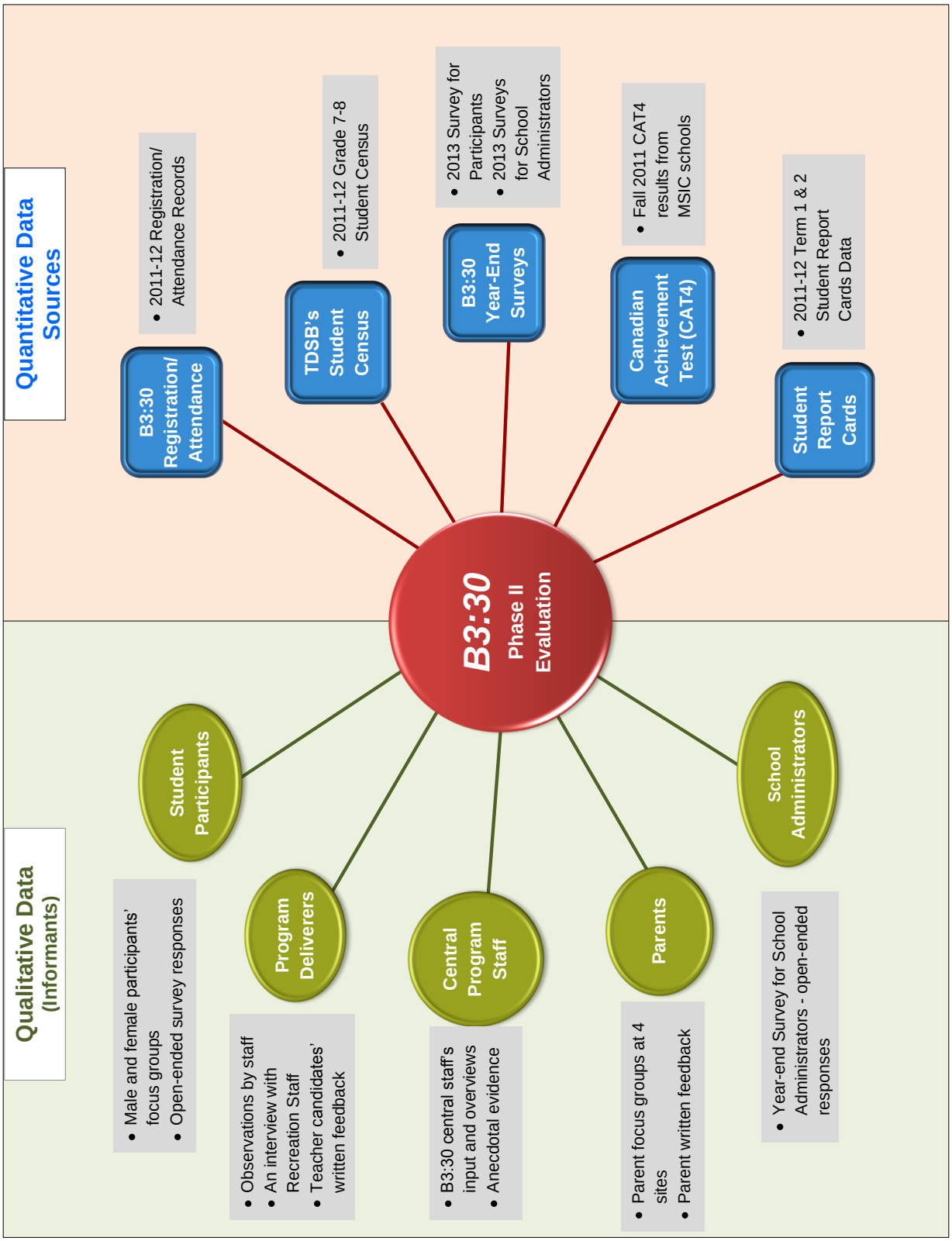
were improvements in participants' learning attitude and skills based on their school teachers' first- and second-term report card assessments.

To substantiate the quantitative findings, qualitative data were gathered from various stakeholder groups with the use of multiple data collection methods and sources.

1. ***Participants*** – Two gender-split focus group interviews with nearly 30 participants were conducted at one school site. In addition, open-ended responses of over 300 participants to their Program Year-end Survey were included in the content analysis.
2. ***Program Deliverers*** – Throughout the school year, observations by front-line staff at different sites were documented. These front-line staff included Site Co-ordinators, Homework Club's Program Staff, Nutrition Staff from the Junior Chefs' Club, and Recreation Staff who led Sports and Recreation. An individual interview was conducted with a Recreation Staff who provided insights into the participants' needs and program impacts. York University's teacher candidates who had their placements to assist the Program Staff were also asked to provide their written feedback in an open-ended questionnaire towards the end of their internship.
3. ***B3:30 Central Staff*** – Ongoing consultations were made with the Program Director and Program Manager for their input about broader program issues such as program structure and contents, central support, community partnerships, funding and organizational needs, and program efficacy.
4. ***Parents*** – B3:30 offered Community Dinners for participants' parents and families every few months. Near the end of the 2012-13 school year, focus groups were organized at four school sites to interview parents[2] who attended the Community Dinners. Their comments add to the findings from a parent-family perspective.
5. ***School Administrators*** – While a few principals were interviewed in the Phase I study, this Phase II evaluation analyzed the open-ended responses of nine school administrators in their Program Year-end Survey. Their comments were used to triangulate the input from other informant groups.

[2] The term, 'parents', is used throughout this report as an umbrella term to include parents, caregivers, and guardians.

Figure 2: Data Sources for Phase II Evaluation



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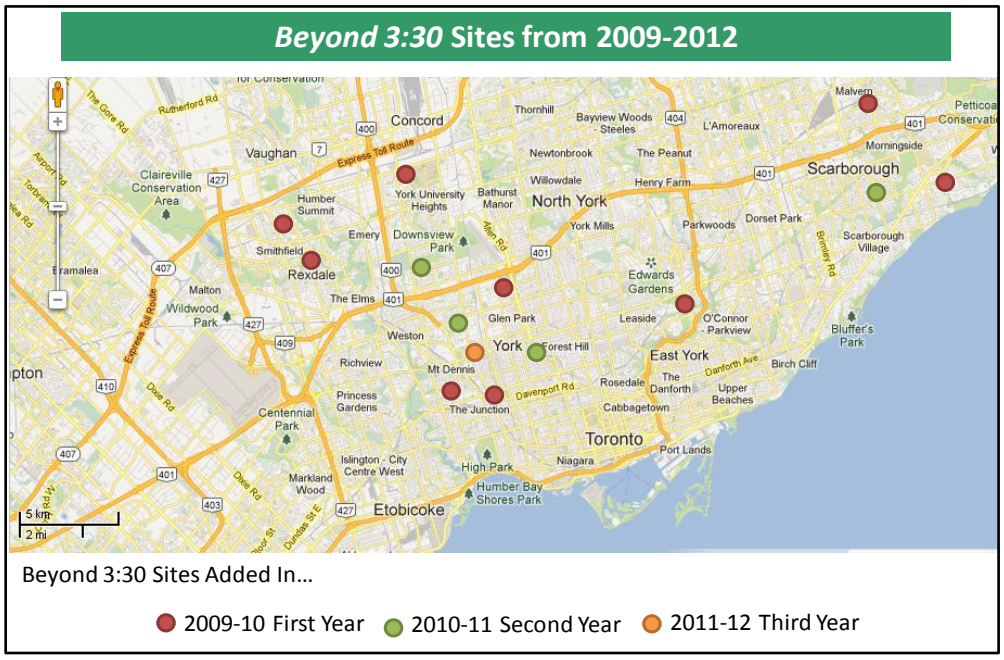
FINDINGS

FINDINGS

Program Sites and Attendance

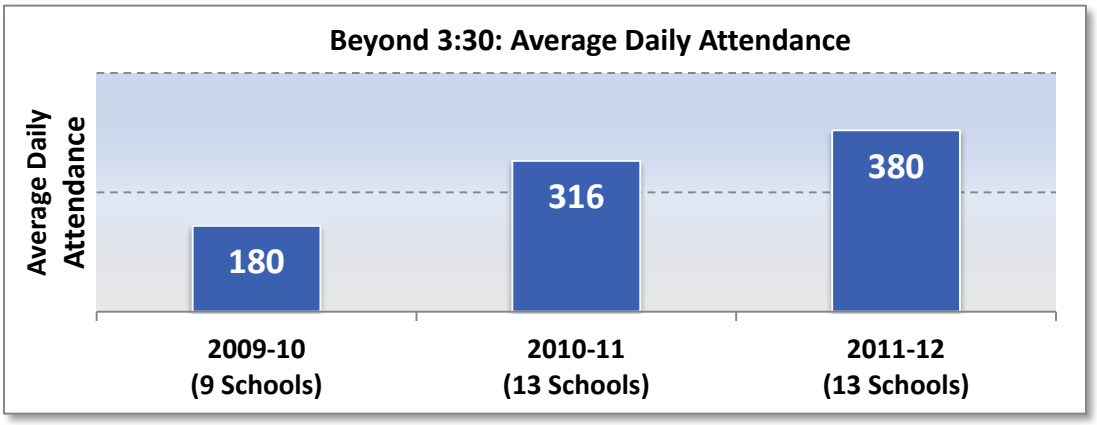
Dependent on the availability of funds, B3:30 expanded gradually from the initial seven pilot sites in 2009-10 to 13 MSIC middle schools[3] across the city by 2011-12. Figure 3 shows the locations and the additional sites over the three years.

Figure 3: Beyond 3:30 Sites from 2009-2012



With the growing number of sites, the average daily attendance in this after-school program rose from 180 students in the first year to more than double (380) in 2011-12 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: B3:30 Average Daily Attendance, 2009-2012

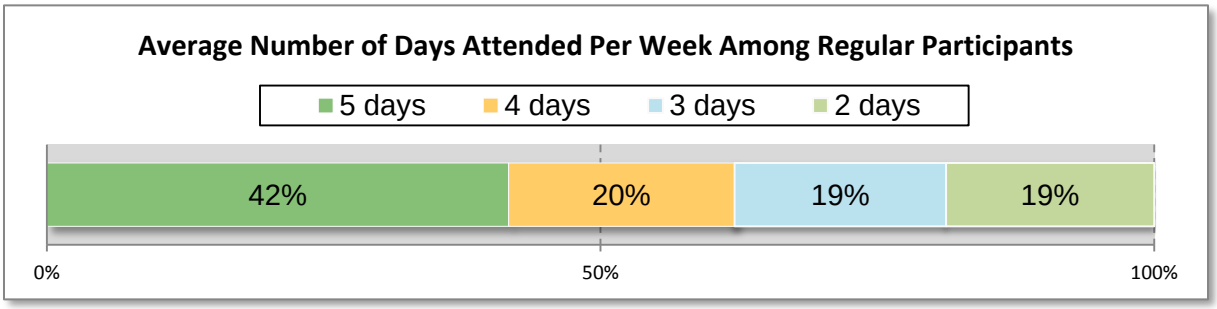


[3] It should be noted that a couple of these schools were K-Grade 8 schools. See Appendix 1 for the list of schools.

A closer examination of the B3:30's central registration/attendance data indicates that in 2011-12, over 720 students in Grades 6-8 were recorded to have attended the program more than 20 times throughout the school year. These students represented about 13% of the total Grade 6-8 population of the 13 middle schools that hosted the program. A further analysis shows that these participants could be categorized into two groups.

1. ***Occasional participants***: Less than half of the participants (321) were recorded to have attended the program between 21 and 60 days during the school year.[4]
2. ***Regular participants***: Over half of the participants (400) took part in the program for more than 60 days throughout the school year. The Program Year-end Survey indicates that on average, most (81%) of these regular participants attended B3:30 for at least three times a week. The remaining 19% of the regular participants joined the program for about two days a week (see Figure 5). According to the Program Year-end Survey, for students who attended the program less frequently, two common reasons were: having to take care of siblings at home, and/or their parents wanted them home sooner when the days darkened earlier especially during the winter months.

Figure 5: Average Number of Days Attended Per Week



Source: B3:30 Year-end Survey for Participants

In this study, where possible, findings about the regular participants were compared to those of occasional participants and non-participants in the 13 middle schools. These comparisons would provide a deeper understanding about the background, needs, and outcomes of the regular participants who attended the program frequently vis-à-vis those who participated occasionally or for a shorter period of time, and the rest of the student population (i.e., non-participants) in their schools.

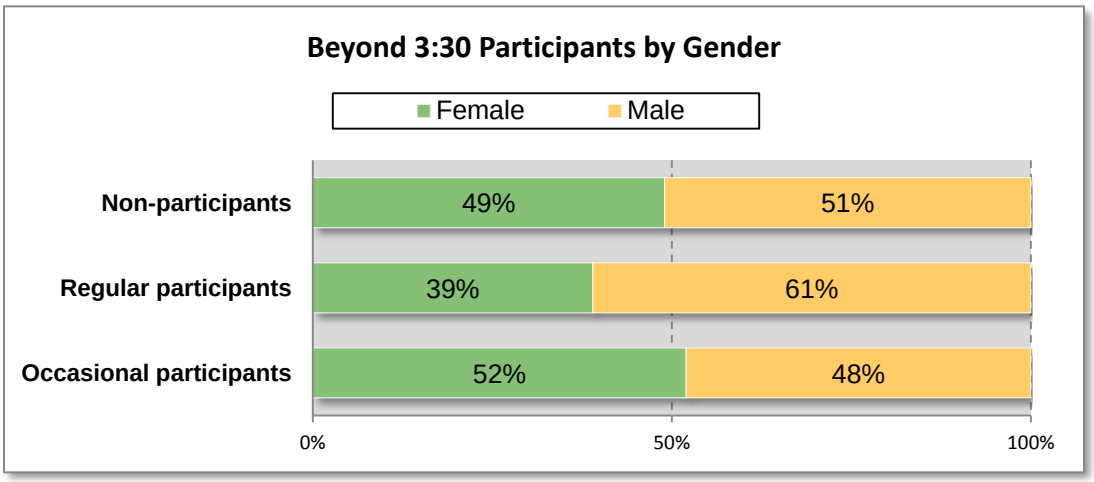
[4] Further study is needed to understand the attendance patterns of these occasional participants and their reasons for attending fewer days than other participants.

Participants' Profile

Gender distribution

While the gender distribution for the TDSB's general Grade 6-8 population was somewhat even (51% versus 49%), this was not the case among the B3:30 regular participants. For the latter, the proportion of male to female students was high, with 61% of the regular participants represented by male students. This uneven gender split was not apparent among the occasional participants. There was indeed a slightly higher representation (52%) of female than male students who attended the program occasionally (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Beyond 3:30 Participants by Gender



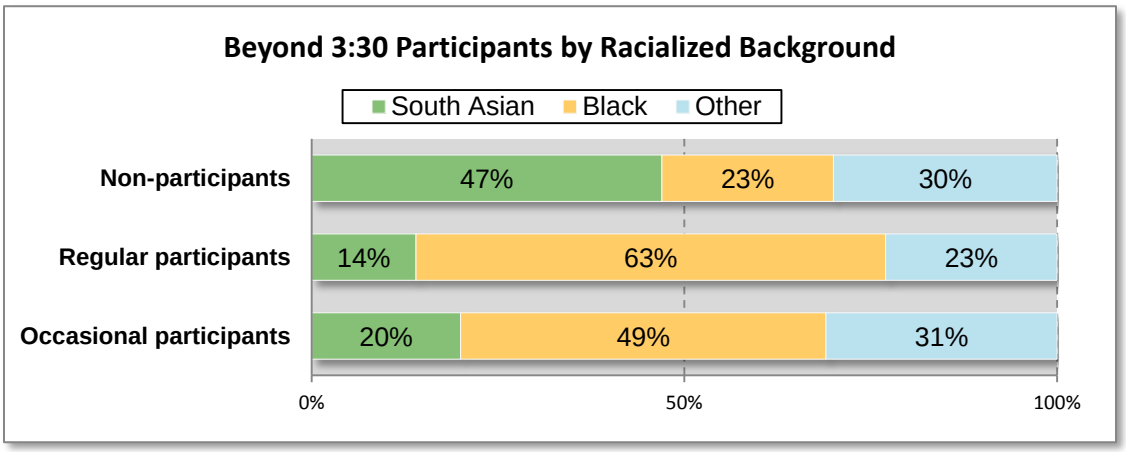
Sources: B3:30 attendance database, and TDSB's 2011-12 School Information Systems

Ethno-racial backgrounds

The largest racialized group attending these 13 middle schools were students who identified themselves as South Asian (47%), followed by those who identified themselves as Black (23%). These two groups represented the majority of program participants. In contrast to the larger number of South Asian students attending these schools, the largest proportion of program participants (both regular and occasional) were Black students, followed by a smaller number of South Asian students[5] (see Figure 7).

[5] This is an important point to bear in mind when comparing the findings of these students. Since the racial backgrounds of the regular participants and the occasional participants were more similar than with the non-participants (i.e., the rest of the school population), the occasional participants should be considered as a more comparable group for determining outcome differences for the regular participants.

Figure 7: Beyond 3:30 Participants by Racialized Background

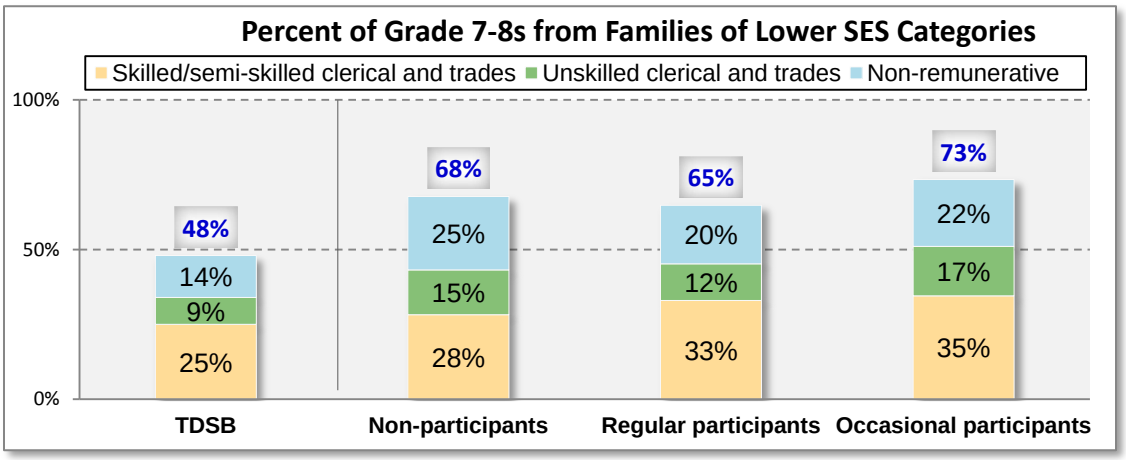


Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Socio-economic status (SES)

While less than half (48%) of the TDSB's general student population was from lower SES backgrounds, the respective proportion for the 13 middle schools was significantly higher (68%) (see Figure 8). As expected, the SES backgrounds of the B3:30 participants matched those of their fellow students.

Figure 8: Beyond 3:30 Participants by SES Background

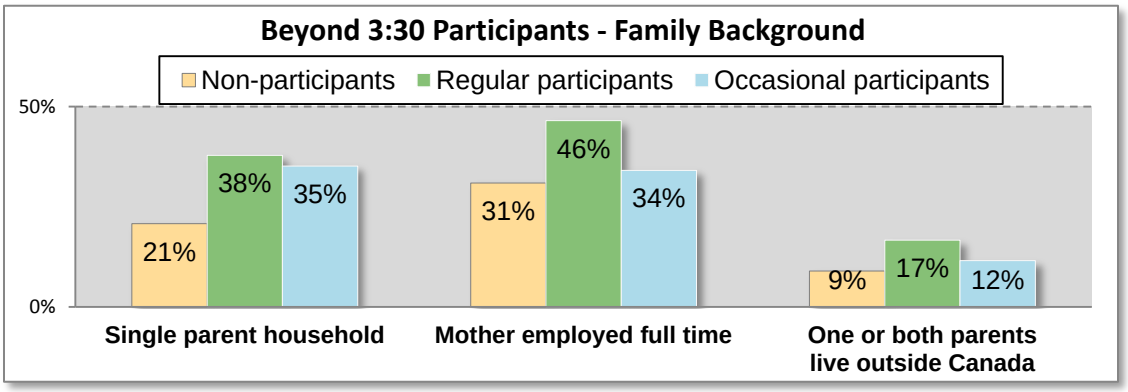


Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Family background

Qualitative data indicate that many B3:30 participants had little adult supervision after school. The TDSB's 2011 Student Census data supports this anecdotal finding. When compared to their schoolmates, B3:30 participants, especially those who attended the program regularly, reported a higher likelihood to be living in single-parent households, to have at least one of their parents living outside of Canada, or to have a mother who worked full-time (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Beyond 3:30 Participants - Family Background

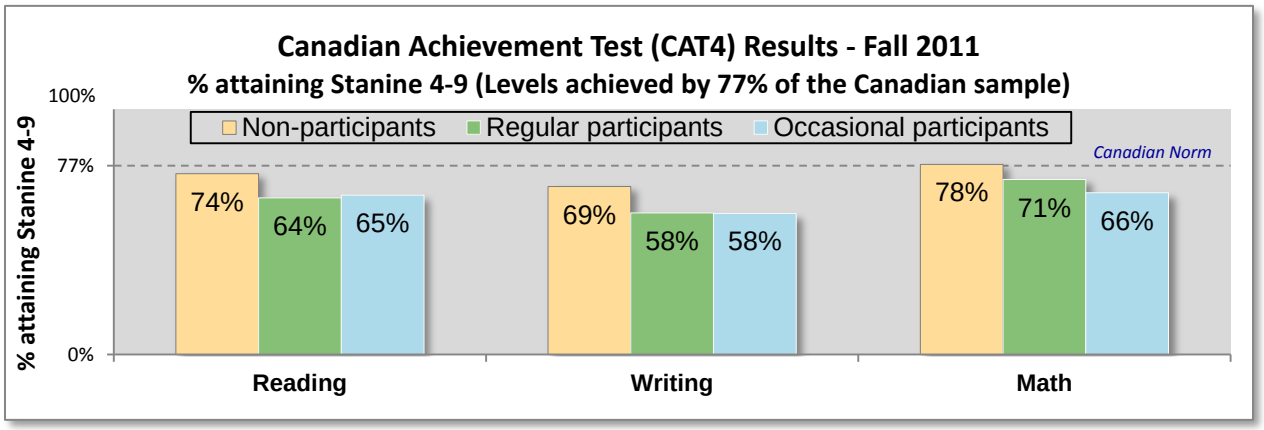


Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Achievement and opportunity gaps

The Fall 2011 standardized test (CAT4) results for the MSIC schools were extracted to assess the initial academic standing of the 2011-12 B3:30 participants versus the non-participants. These test results show that students in the 13 MSIC middle schools generally performed below the Canadian norm (77%) in Reading and Writing, but were at par in Mathematics. For both regular and occasional participants, their results were even lower in all three literacy and numeracy areas (see Figure 10). In other words, many participants started off with a lower academic standing than the non-participants in their schools.

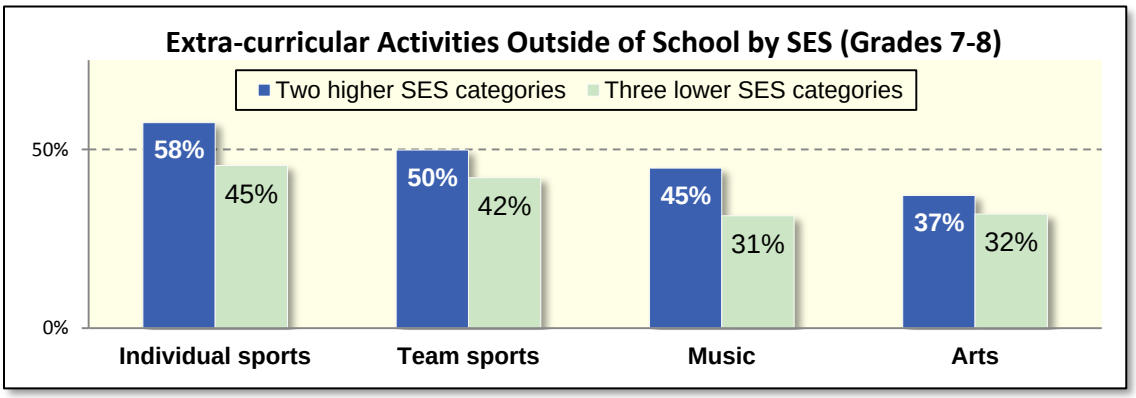
Figure 10: Beyond 3:30 Participants - Achievement Gaps



Source: *Fall 2011 CAT4 data from MSIC database*

Aside from achievement gaps, both quantitative and qualitative data further reveal significant opportunity gaps among students in relation to their SES backgrounds. Both rounds of the TDSB's *Student Census* (2006 and 2011) indicate that students from lower SES backgrounds were less likely than their higher SES counterparts to have opportunities to participate in after-school activities such as sports, music, and art (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Extra-curricular Activities Outside of School by SES (Grades 7-8)



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

During focus group interviews, B3:30 participants were asked how they spent their time after school before joining the program. The majority replied that they had nothing much to do. After returning home from school, they faced boredom. Some slept in the afternoons. Many tried to entertain themselves by watching television, playing video games, using the computer, or listening to music. One student admitted that he was always on his video game console and was not interested in anything else. While some students were home alone, others had siblings, whom they looked after or fought with. A few were responsible for chores, such as cooking or cleaning.

> *If I wasn't here, at **Beyond 3:30**, I'd go home and I won't bother doing my homework and I'd fight with my siblings and then I'd go sleep.*
>
> **Participant**

Instead of going home right after school, some participants reported that they hung out at nearby shops, malls, fast food places, or outside at parks and parking lots. These students were aware of the dangers and negative influences in their neighbourhoods. Some consciously avoided any involvement because, as one student remarked, they would otherwise be "doing something stupid," such as "taking drugs or being pregnant."

B3:30 Staff members were aware that a few participants had previously been part of gangs, especially in neighbourhoods heavily affected by crime or drug trafficking. Without the regular presence of parental authority figures in their lives, some gravitated towards older individuals and viewed them as big brothers or uncles. A Recreation Staff who was familiar with the

neighbourhoods commented that since there was a lack of structured activities in the area, students were more prone to making bad decisions and becoming implicated in dangerous situations.

Having examined the demographics, family backgrounds, and needs of B3:30 participants, the next section of this report discusses how this unique after-school program helped reduce the opportunity gap while producing multiple benefits for these students in high-needs communities. Nine impact areas were identified:

1. Safety and Enrichment Opportunities After School
2. Academic Support
3. Physical Activity and Health
4. Healthy Eating and Meal Preparation
5. Life Skills, Creative Expressions, and Leadership Development
6. Social and Emotional Well-being
7. School Behaviours
8. School Engagement
9. Family Relationships

In analyzing the multiple impacts, a before-during-and-after approach was used. Under each impact area, where applicable, a description of what happened to the participants before they joined the program will be presented, followed by a detailed discussion of the impacts during and after the program.

Multiple Impacts

- Safety and Enrichment Opportunities After School
- Academic Support
- Physical Activity and Health
- Healthy Eating and Meal Preparation
- Life Skills, Creative Expressions, and Leadership Development
- Social and Emotional Well-being
- School Behaviours
- School Engagement
- Family Relationships

Safety and Enrichment Opportunities after School

Students in a safe supervised environment after-school

Located within the school, B3:30 became a haven for the participants after school. In this setting they were able to avoid dangers and negative influences in their neighbourhoods, thereby lessening the likelihood of encountering deviant or challenging situations. As a Program Staff member remarked, "[It] keeps students off the streets."

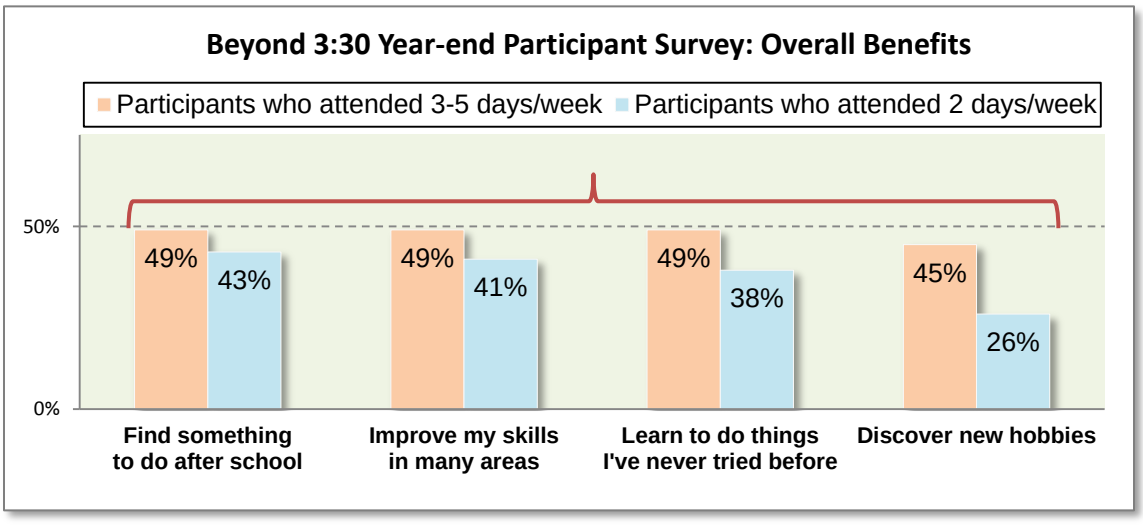
During focus groups, parents also talked about how the supervision and stimulation of the program had benefited their children. They realized how the program on one hand helped their children stay out of trouble, while on the other hand supported their children's growth and development.

> *It was nice to be in the environment in which the child is in every evening and see and meet the children and staff.*
>
> *It's really like a big second family.*
>
> **Parent**

Students engaging in a variety of enrichment activities

In addition to being a safe place, B3:30 provided a stimulating after-school environment for students to learn and explore a diverse range of activities they found interesting and meaningful. In the Program Year-end Survey, three-quarters of the participants indicated that as a result of B3:30, they had either found something to do after school, improved their skills, learned something new, and/or discovered new hobbies (see Figure 12).

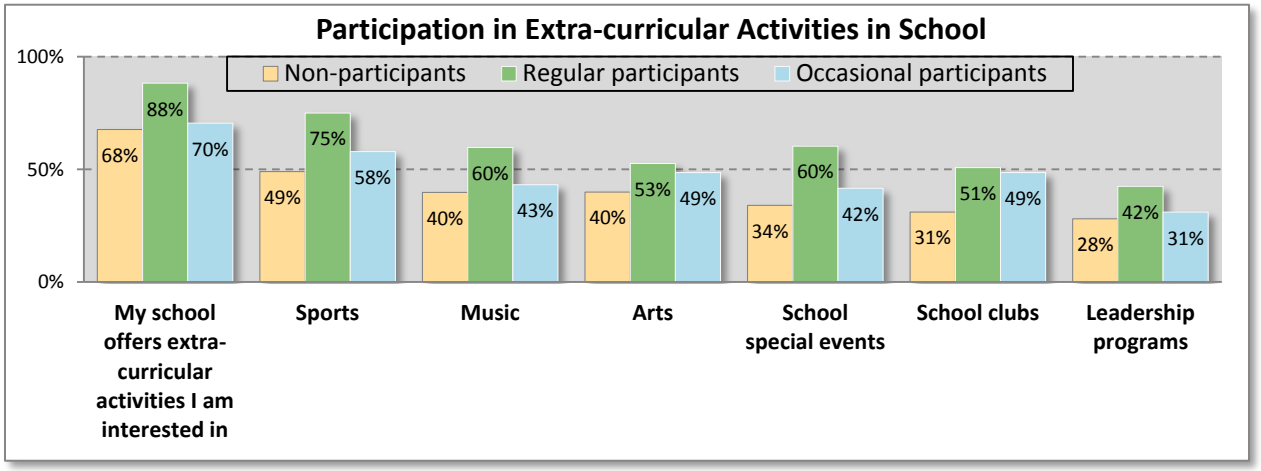
Figure 12: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey: Overall Benefits



In fact, when compared to all other students at their own schools, B3:30 regular participants were much more likely to report that their school offered extra-curricular activities that they

were interested in, and that they participated regularly in various extra-curricular activities after-school including sports, music, arts, special events, clubs, and leadership (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Participation in Extra-curricular Activities in School



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Reducing the opportunity gap

Parents appreciated how B3:30 had provided their children with otherwise unavailable opportunities to pursue different interests and develop new skills. Some parents further noted how the life skills the students acquired from the program, such as cooking and babysitting, were transferable and could prepare their children for part-time work or the future workforce.

Upon reflection, teacher candidates who assisted Program Staff also commented how this multi-dimensional after-school program had enriched the students' lives by exposing them to new ideas, activities, and opportunities.

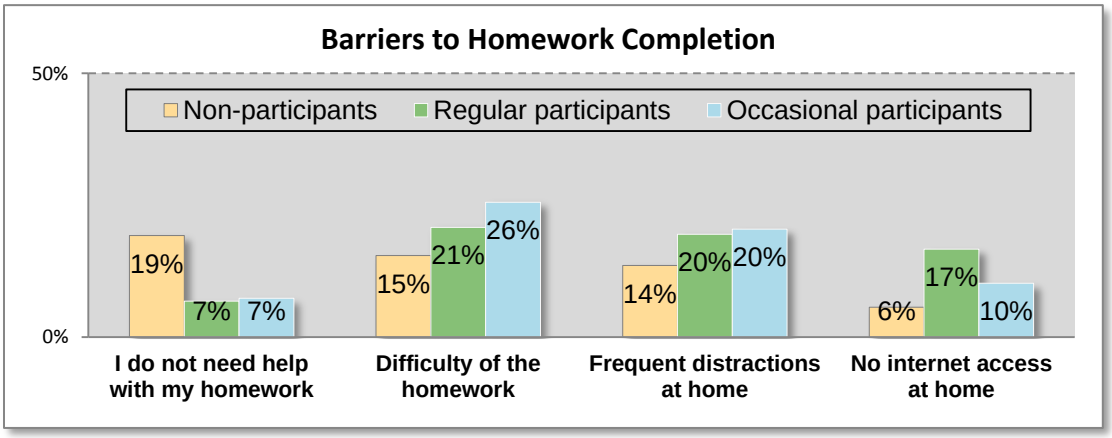
> ***Teacher candidates' comments:***
>
> *…[It] allows them to do different activities that they may not have opportunity to do outside of school.*
>
> *…[It] creates activities and events that allow them to gain experiences they may not always have access to.*
>
> *…It is important to have programs, such as **Beyond 3:30**, to promote equality within the community.*

Academic Support

Before or Outside the Program

Based on the TDSB's *2011 Student Census*, B3:30 participants were more likely than their peers to say that they needed help with their homework (93% versus 81%). They were also more likely to indicate that the level of difficulty, frequent distractions at home, and lack of internet access at home were common reasons that prevented their homework completion (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Barriers to Homework Completion



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

During and After the Program

Having someone to help with homework

In separate focus groups, parents and some students themselves reported that one of the main reasons for enrolling in the program was to receive help with studies and homework completion.

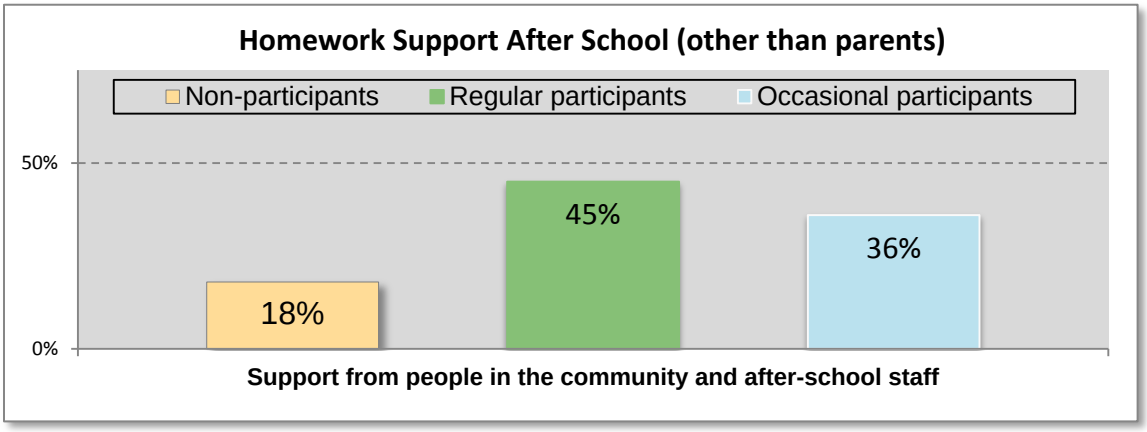
> ***Beyond 3:30*** *is important to me because I know she is somewhere safe and getting homework help after school.* – Parent

> *…last year, I was failing a lot and I needed help so I joined that to get my studies up…* – Participant

As a result of the daily academic support they received from the B3:30 Homework Club, regular participants were less likely than occasional participants or non-participants to report that there was no one helping them with homework after school. In fact, a much higher percentage of regular participants reported having after-school homework support from people in the

community, free tutors in school, or "teachers" – by most of whom they were referring to B3:30 staff (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Homework Support After School

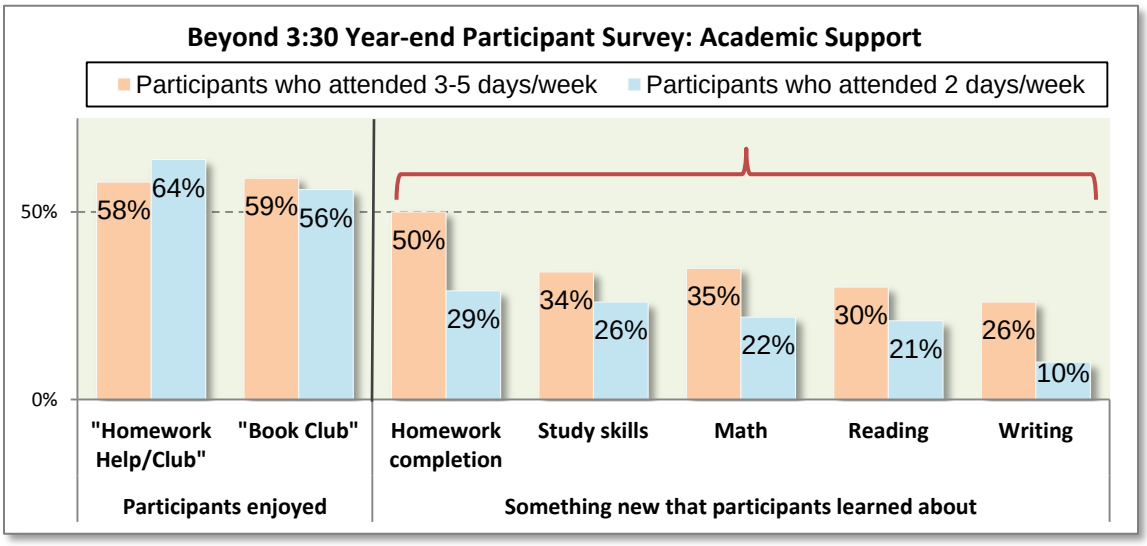


Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Effective homework help

The Program Year-end Survey further indicates that the majority of participants enjoyed the Homework Club offered at B3:30 and found it effective. Two-thirds reported in the survey that they had improved in such areas as homework completion, study skills, math, reading, and/or writing (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey: Academic Support



Students from a focus group talked about how the Homework Club's Program Staff helped them understand the material with a "motivational and structured" approach.

…Here, they actually make you do the homework… – Participant

…The staff helps so much with homework but they don't give the answers. They help us… [come up] the answers [on our own]. – Participant

[Program Staff] help you understand, with your homework… They make you understand how the homework is done… They explain it properly, like in class. They show you, in steps and everything… – Participant

A few students further commented in the focus group how the 45 minute B3:30's Homework Club was more flexible and effective[6] than their previous after-school homework club which was much longer, and which focused only on doing homework.

No one wants to do homework for that long. – Participant

Increased interest in reading

According to the Program Year-end Survey, the Book Club offered at B3:30 was also enjoyed by the majority of the participants (see Figure 16). In a focus group interview, students talked about how the Book Club had provided an environment where they could read and discuss books that interested them or that they could relate with. Nine out of the 11 students interviewed, stated that prior to B3:30 they did not like reading. However, through their positive experience with the Book Club, they developed a love of books and wished to have more reading materials for their Book Club.

Improved learning attitude

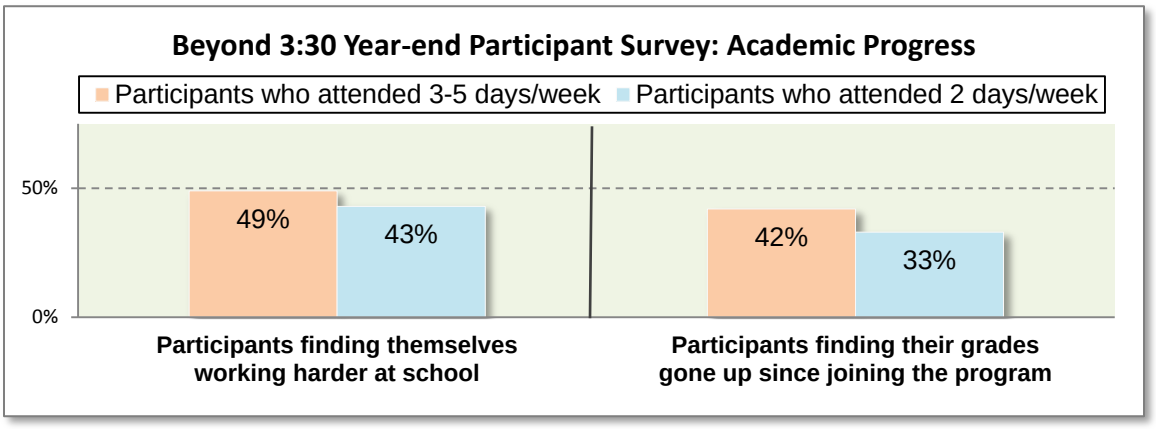
In the Program Year-end Survey, nearly half of the regular participants, especially among the regular participants, indicated that they had worked harder at school after joining the program. Forty-two percent were certain that their grades had gone up since then (see Figure 17). During focus groups, some students admitted that before attending B3:30, they had been failing, doing poorly, or not meeting their expectations; but as a result of the help from their Homework Club teachers, they were now on the honour roll.

*I feel good when I know I have completed my homework at **Beyond 3:30**.*

Participant

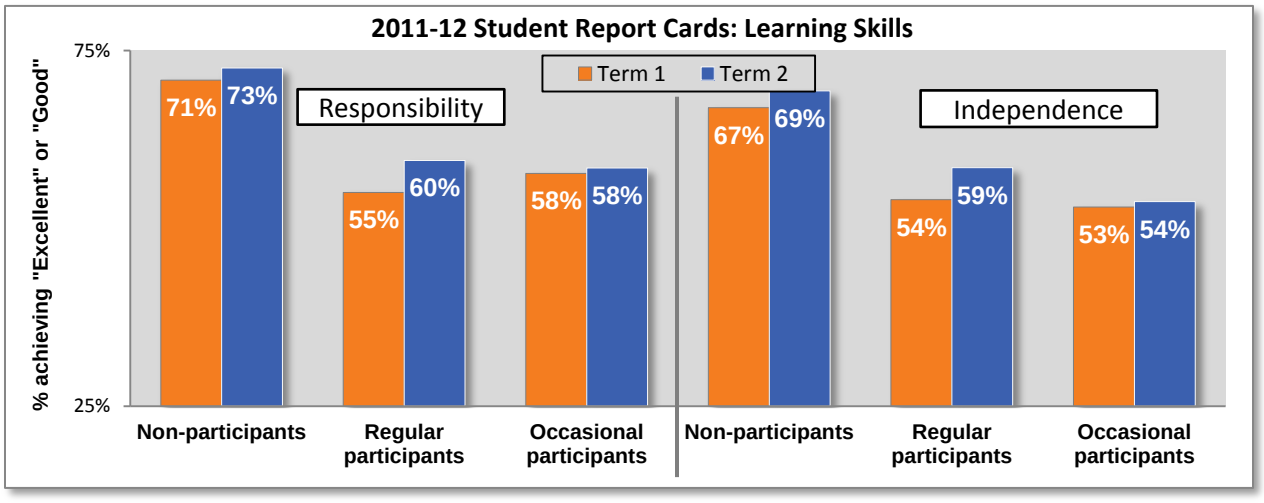
[6] According to these students, the B3:30 Staff were flexible in scheduling the time that students needed to complete their homework.

Figure 17: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey - Academic Progress



While hard data on the participants' academic progress will be tracked over time in Phase III and IV evaluations, an examination of the 2011-12 Term 1 and Term 2 student report card data indicate that regular participants as a group did make some noticeable gains in their learning skills. For instance, although fewer B3:30 participants than non-participants were rated by their school teachers as "good" or "excellent" in different learning skills, Term 2 report card data show at least an increased proportion of regular participants being assessed highly in their learning skills by the end of the second school term. Their rate of increase, especially in "Responsibility" and "Independence", was indeed greater than that of non-participants or occasional participants (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Student Report Cards - Learning Skills (Terms 1 and 2)



Parents' comments about their child's improvement in schoolwork

During focus groups, parents mentioned that one of the noticeable changes in their child's behaviour since attending B3:30 was their child returned home with their homework completed, which was not the case before. Parents appreciated the dedicated homework time, as well as the homework support offered by Beyond 3:30 Program Staff. The homework support was especially valued by parents who worked later hours and struggled to prepare meals for their families while supporting children with their homework. Many parents regarded the homework portion of Beyond 3:30 as one of the most beneficial aspects of the program.

Principals' observations

In the Program Year-end Survey for school administrators, two-thirds of the principals who hosted B3:30 agreed that the Homework Club Program Staff had helped their students with homework completion and study skills. Principals who had been actively involved in the program further noted that the majority of their student participants' grades had improved over the school year.

B3:30 staff observations

Throughout the school year, B3:30 staff from different sites documented some of the success stories about the academic progress made by their participants.

> *A few students at [one school site] were doing poorly in math. Those students decided to work hard during homework time at **Beyond 3:30** and when possible, the Program Staff gave them extra help as a group. All students did remarkably better during their last test before the holidays. Most notably two students went from getting 60% to 80% and another went from 30% to 90% and now claims that math is her favourite subject!*
>
> *One young boy was having difficulty with his reading comprehension and told the staff that he was stupid. Our **Beyond 3:30** staff found time to work with him one-on-one before his next book report. Later, he proudly shared the great mark he achieved.*
>
> *One of our staff worked with the students in the French Immersion class for a week during homework time leading up to a big test. Eight of the ten participants got a perfect score and one participant who had been failing proudly displayed the C+ he achieved.*

*The participants at [a school site] used their leadership skills to set-up an independent study group to support each other in creating their class projects. The **Beyond 3:30** staff supported them, but let the participants take the lead. The result …. All participants got the best marks in the class!*

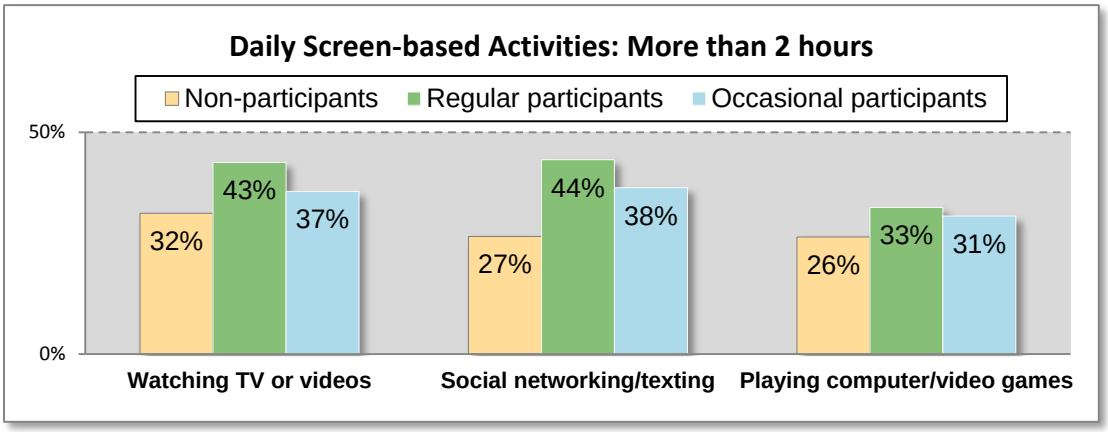
*A participant in the behavioural class at [another school site] is working on a special project for African Heritage month within **Beyond 3:30**. The staff thought of getting him to do this project as he never has homework. When the staff shared his work-in-progress with the VP [Vice-principal], the VP was shocked. The VP said 'This is the most work I have seen him do in the two years he's been in this school.'*

Physical Activity and Health

Before or Outside the Program

As mentioned earlier, both rounds of the TDSB's *Student Census* (2006 and 2011) show that students from lower SES backgrounds had fewer opportunities than their higher SES counterparts to participate in sports and recreation outside of school. Instead, they spent more after school time on screen-based activities, such as watching TV or videos, or playing on the computer for social networking or video games (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Daily Screen-based Activities



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

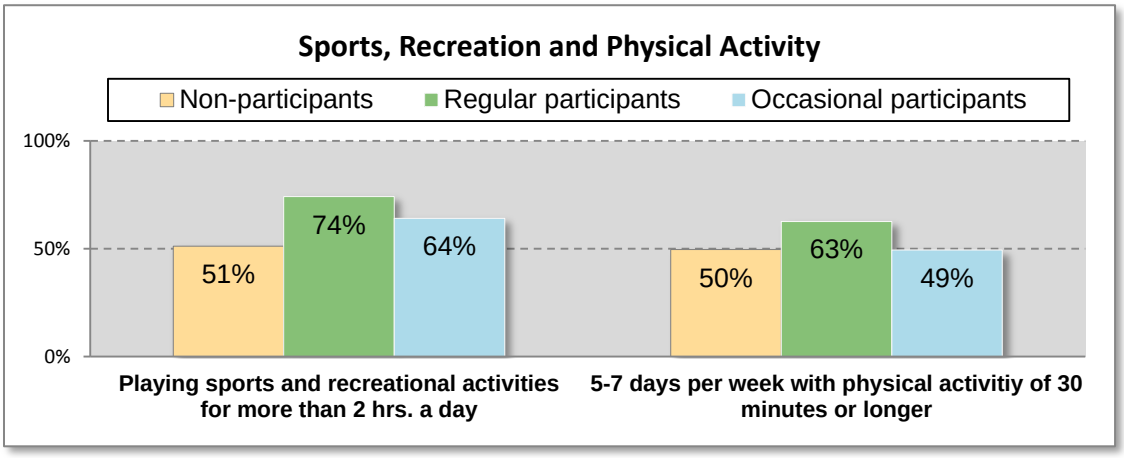
Although physical education is a part of the regular school curriculum, participants did not think that they had sufficient physical activity during the school day. They felt gym class was too short, did not occur on a daily basis, and did not provide many options beyond typical sports such as basketball, which did not appeal to all students. Furthermore, a few students reported that their enjoyment and motivation for physical activity during school time was negatively affected by the scrutiny from being assessed in class. As a student stated, "You're getting graded on it, so … it adds pressure."

During and After the Program

Increased physical activity and enjoyment

With the daily Sports and Recreation component offered at B3:30, participants spoke of being physically active every day. This can be corroborated by the TDSB's *2011 Student Census* data, which show that regular participants were much more likely than their other schoolmates to report being physically active for at least 30 minutes per day during a week, or having participated in regular physical activity every week (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Sports, Recreation, and Physical Activity



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Aside from the increased amount of time, participants talked about being able to relax and to have fun time in physical activities, without the pressure of being assessed.

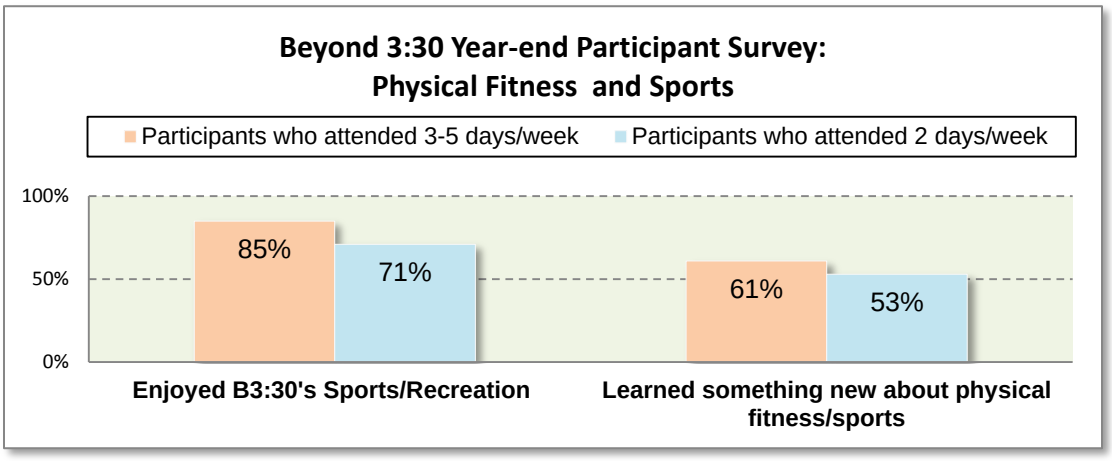
In addition, participants were introduced to a greater variety of sports and recreation, broadening their interests in physical activity and health, especially among the students who did not participate on school-based teams. For instance, with the support of their Recreation Staff, a few students took the initiative to learn and teach their peers dance routines.

> *One female participant wanted the DPA to be more fun. She found the 'Thriller' choreography on YouTube and asked the staff if she could teach it to the other participants. Everyone enjoyed learning the dance and they performed it, and taught it to their parents at our October community dinner.* – Program Staff

> *When you're in **Beyond 3:30**, you get to have fun because you're not getting graded or anything. So, you're trying your hardest but…you don't have that pressure of getting graded.*
>
> **Participant**

In the Program Year-end Survey, most of the participants, especially regular participants, reported enjoying the Sports and Recreation component of the program, and having learned something new about physical fitness and activity (see Figure 21).

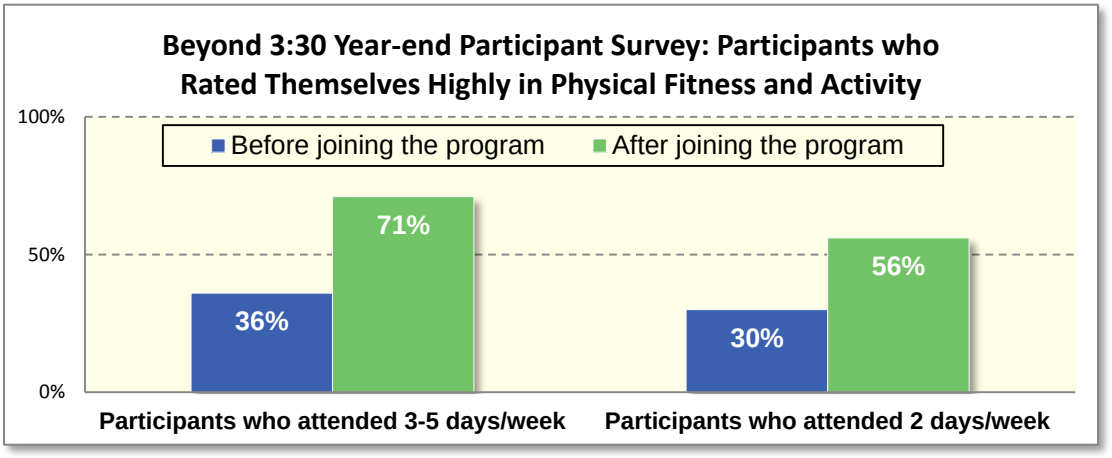
Figure 21: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey - Physical Fitness and Sports



Improved physical fitness and health

As a result of the increased daily physical activity, higher level of enjoyment, and greater variety of physical and recreational activities, participants found themselves more physically fit and active. When asked in the Year-end Program Survey to assess their own physical fitness before and after joining the program, the proportion who rated themselves highly active (i.e., Levels 8-10 out of a scale of 1 to 10) doubled by the end of the school year - from 36% to 71% among the regular participants, and from 30% to 56% for those who attended the program for two days a week (see Figure 22).

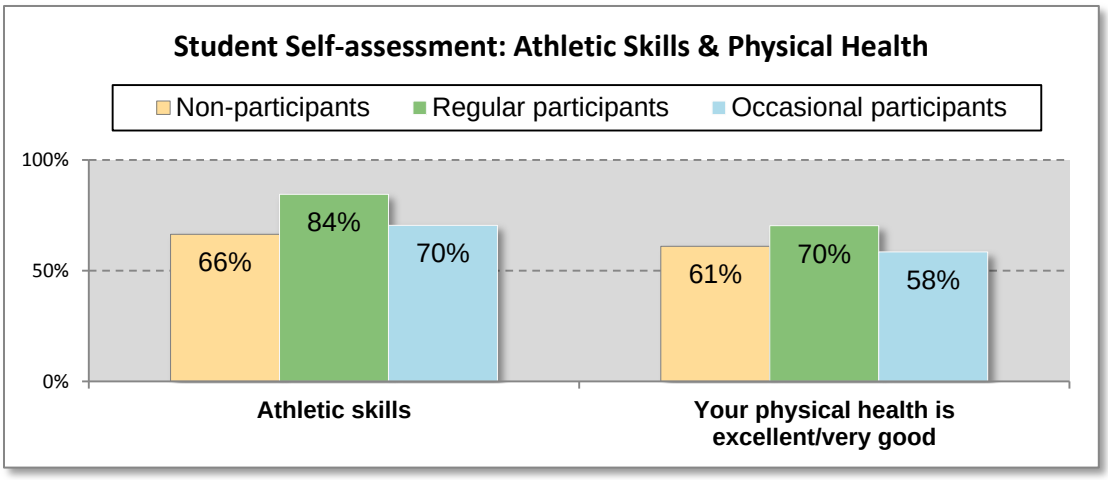
Figure 22: Physical Fitness and Activity - Self-assessment Before and After B3:30



In fact, based on the TDSB's *2011 Student Census* data, B3:30 regular participants were more confident about their athletic skills, and were more likely to report their physical health being

excellent or very good, when compared to all other students in their own schools including occasional participants (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: Student Self-assessment - Athletic Skills and Physical Health



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Parents in their focus groups also observed an improvement in their child's physical health.

> *My wife wasn't in agreement at first but we thought we would give it a try. It's worked out really good. His athletic skills and physical skills have improved... It's a wonderful program.* – Parent

Developing related social skills

In addition to being physically active, fit and healthy, participants developed other associated skills such as teamwork and sportsmanship. For instance, a baseball tournament organized among several Beyond 3:30 groups helped students recognize their need for extra practice, motivating them to unite and cooperate as a team. At another school, students teamed up to support one participant who enjoyed sports but had severe physical limitations, which led to over-exertion of his physical capacity at times. As his peers became more aware of his situation, they regularly checked with him to see if he needed a break or assistance from staff. With growing understanding for one another's needs, it was evident that the group was gradually bonding and showing compassion for each other.

Healthy Eating and Meal Preparation

Before the Program

In the Program Year-end Survey, most participants indicated how little they knew about nutrition or cooking before joining the program. During focus groups, a few participants expressed concern for their family members' poor diets, which was frequently limited to fast food or take-out as their parents worked long and late hours. Another participant recalled that before attending B3:30, she would whittle away her time by eating a box of donuts at a coffee shop after school. With regard to meal preparation, B3:30 staff observed that not only did most participants not know how to cook, some were simply unaware of basic kitchen safety, such as handling hot ovens or kitchen knives.

During and After the Program

Developing healthy eating habits

One of the key benefits of the Junior Chefs' Club was the promotion of healthy eating among the participants. Nutrition Staff taught students about nutritious diets and demonstrated live with recipes. They emphasized cooking with vegetables. Several participants pointed out that they began consuming more vegetables and using them more often in their own cooking. Some students were so inspired that they took the initiative to look up healthy recipes on the Internet to share with the B3:30 staff as suggestions for the Junior Chefs' Club. On their own, students developed a greater awareness by recognizing the value in the cooking lessons and noticed changes in their bodies. One student talked about how she had lost weight as a result of the healthy eating habits that she developed from her Junior Chefs' Club.

> *I noticed I feel better when I eat healthy,...*
>
> *I don't eat at [fast food places] that much anymore, because I looked at a hamburger once and it was full of grease. I thought about how little fat we use for a whole meal at (**Beyond 3:30**) and it grossed me out.*
>
> **Participant**

Acquiring cooking skills

In addition to healthy eating habits and knowledge about nutrition and diets, participants had learned and improved their cooking skills, using proper techniques and strategies in the kitchen. Participants acknowledged their proficiency around the kitchen, and some even expressed how much they enjoyed cooking because of the Junior Chefs' Club.

> *I love to cook! My friend and I are master chefs!* – Participant

I cook when I feel like it, but since I like it, that is often. Everyone tells me my cooking is FABULOUS! – Participant

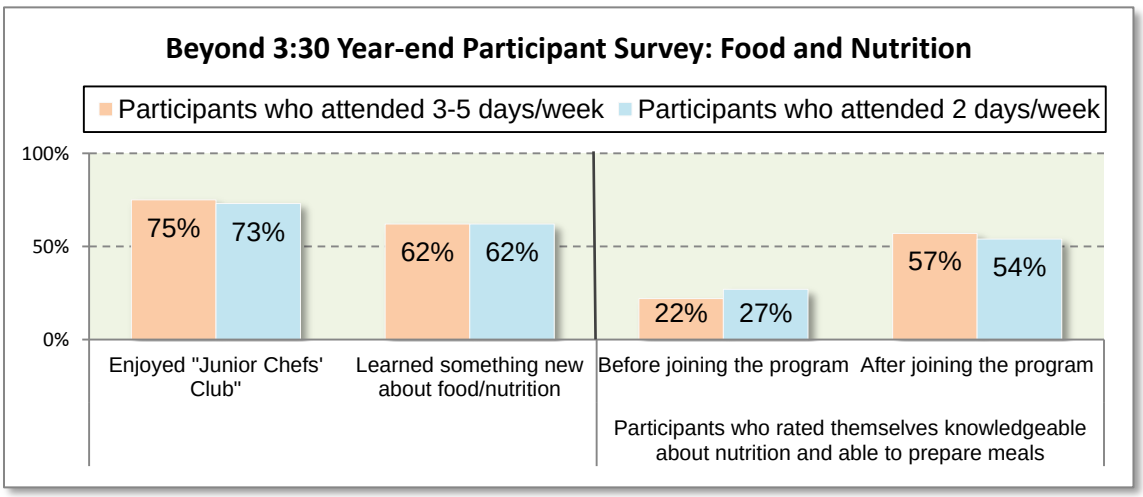
Two students grew so fond of cooking after joining the program that they were awarded at a B3:30's Community Dinner for their efforts in the kitchen. Another participant came to enjoy cooking so much that he was motivated to continue at home even after the program was over.

The Program Year-end Survey clearly demonstrates that regardless of how frequently the participants took part in the program, the majority enjoyed the Junior Chefs' activity and learned something new about food and nutrition. When asked to self-assess their ability to prepare a meal and their knowledge about nutritious diets before and after the program, the proportion who rated themselves high on a 10-point scale increased by more than double, especially among those who attended the program frequently (see Figure 24).

*I wish I joined **Beyond 3:30** earlier. If I had, I would be more comfortable in the kitchen, but I will continue to practice at home and come back and volunteer…*

Participant

Figure 24: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey - Food and Nutrition



Life Skills, Creative Expressions, and Leadership Development

Life skills

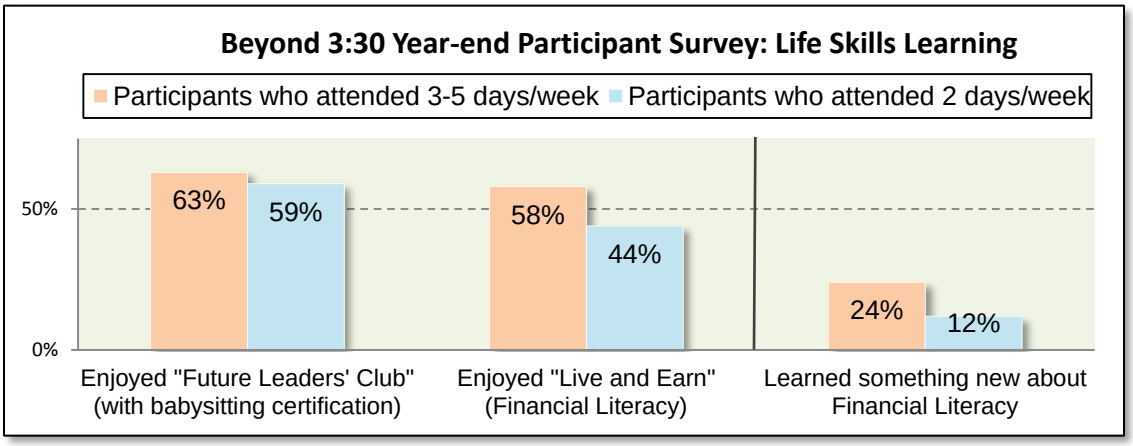
Aside from cooking skills, participants also developed other life skills through a variety of specialty programs offered at B3:30. For instance, participants learned about various health-related issues, such as personal hygiene, and were engaged in specialized training that qualified them for such skills as babysitting. At one school, participants applied their newly acquired babysitting skills at a B3:30 Community Dinner by creating and offering age-appropriate events for the younger children. The babysitting training course had indeed equipped participants with a wide array of skills and parents were greatly appreciative of the practicality of these skills.

> *My son now knows how to deal with emergencies. It gives me the relief that I don't have to pack everyone up or call someone over [to help me]* – Parent

> *It is an important program because it provides…living skills (cooking, first aid, baby-sitting) and assists in building communication and social skills.*
>
> **B3:30 Staff**

Participants also enjoyed workshops that offered other life skills such as money management. Compared to students who attended the program for two days a week, regular participants were more likely to indicate that they learned something new about financial literacy (see Figure 25).

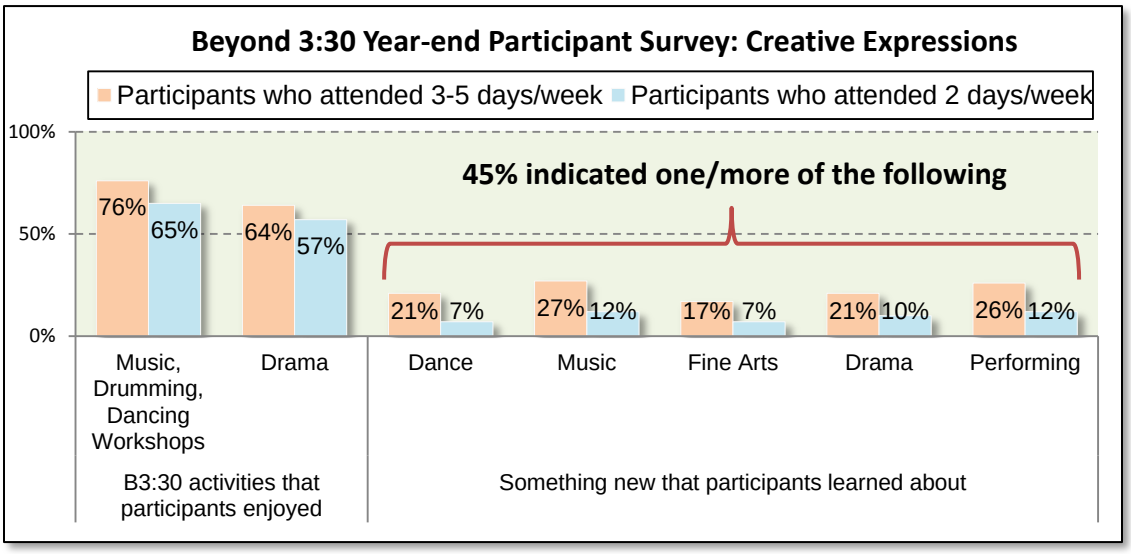
Figure 25: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey - Life Skills Learning



Creative expressions

Other specialty workshops included poetry writing, drawing, arts and crafts, hairdressing, knitting, crocheting, and "making things of my own design." In the Program Year-end Survey, the majority of participants indicated that they enjoyed the music, dance, and drama activities offered in the B3:30 Specialty Programs. Nearly half of the participants agreed that they had learned something new in various creative expression areas (see Figure 26).

Figure 26: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey - Creative Expressions



Leadership skills

Apart from specific specialty workshops, many opportunities arose throughout the program for students to develop other important character traits such as responsibility, fairness, creativity and leadership. For instance, students were invited to offer suggestions for the program. Their input of creative ideas led to more enthused interest in the program itself. As mentioned earlier, one participant took the initiative and taught her peers a dance choreography as a Daily Physical Activity exercise. In other instances, students volunteered to help others with homework or with exercises and drills in the gym. Some participants used their leadership skills to set up an independent study group to support one another in creating their class projects. To further encourage students, staff members modeled leadership skills and delegated tasks for students to lead and follow through.

Sometimes the leadership opportunities were unplanned, yet provided excellent ways for the students to take charge. In one particular instance, two participants demonstrated leadership in the kitchen when their Chefs' Club Nutrition Staff was absent for the day. Despite their initial

anxiety about leading the class, they successfully ran the Chefs' Club for the group on that occasion. At another site, two participants took the initiative to show new members around the kitchen. These two individuals eventually explored leadership roles outside of the Junior Chefs Club.

When asked about leadership skills they acquired in the program, participants in a focus group spontaneously reported a real-life scenario that they were proud to share. With the encouragement and guidance of their Recreation Staff, participants worked together to plan and write a persuasive letter to their school principal requesting access to the school's computer lab for program use. Their group effort was rewarded when the computer lab was finally made available to them during the program time.

In the Program Year-end Survey, over a third (35%) of the regular participants agreed that they had learned something new about leadership skills.

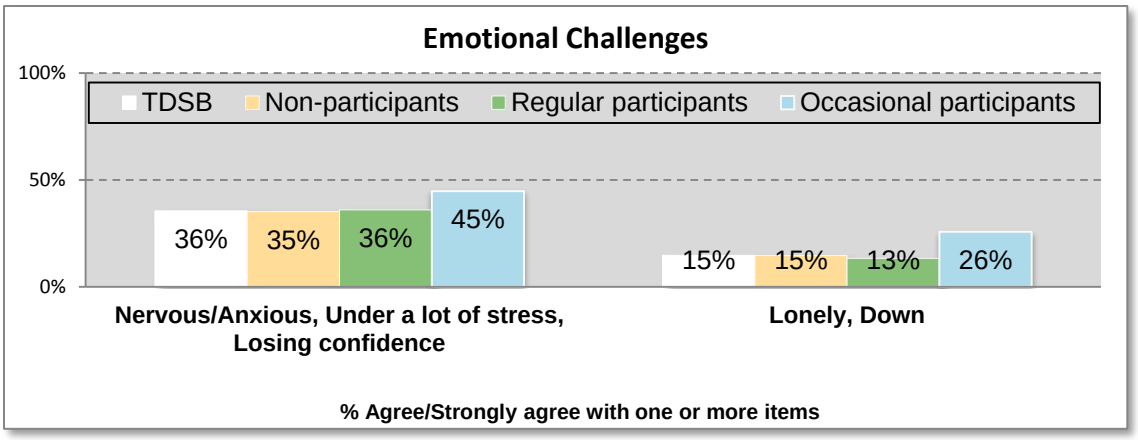
> *…they are given the opportunity to lead, that leadership aspect, which doesn't always happen in the classroom; we are flexible and open to it. Give them the opportunities.*
>
> **B3:30 Staff**

Social and Emotional Well-Being

Before the Program

According to the TDSB's *2011 Student Census*, about a third (36%) of the students in Grades 7-8 in the general population reported feeling nervous, anxious, under a lot of stress, or losing confidence all the time or often. At the same time, about 1 in 7 (15%) of the Grades 7-8 population said that they always or often felt lonely or down. These percentages were similar to those of the students in Grade 7-8 in the 13 middle schools including the regular B3:30 participants (see Figure 27). (It should be noted these proportions were noticeably higher among the occasional participants.)

Figure 27: Emotional Challenges



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Anecdotal data garnered from different sources indicate a range of social and emotional challenges faced by some of the participants. For instance, B3:30 staff noticed cases where some of their students isolated themselves from others, experienced anxiety in group situations, or lacked self-esteem to act comfortably around peers. A few testimonies from program staff, parents or participants themselves reveal cases where students were with suicidal thoughts or on medication due to an anxiety disorder. There were also participants who were withdrawn and shy about participating in activities because they were new to the school, had recently arrived in the country, or had difficulty speaking English.

During and After the Program

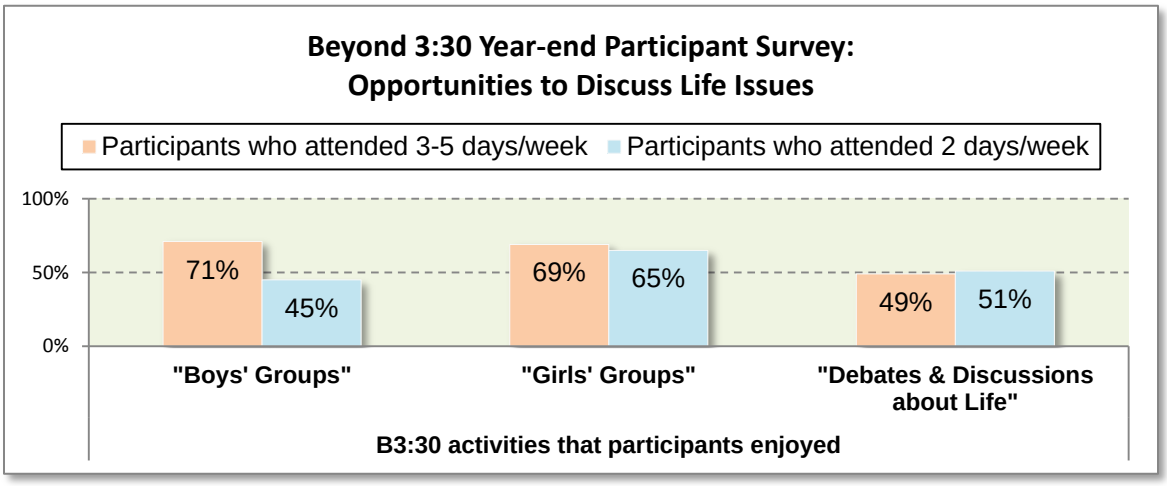
A content analysis of various qualitative sources of information show that one of the ways participants were able to build up their self-esteem, self-worth and confidence was through the guided conversations and the care given by the B3:30 staff.

Opportunities to discuss life issues

On a regular basis, specific time and opportunities were provided for participants to explore life issues pertaining to their well-being or topics they could relate to. Through ongoing discussions and debates about life and through their Boys' and Girls' Clubs, participants learned there were alternatives in life and that they did not have to follow others, which helped them recognize their self-efficacy. Participants, especially regular participants, reported that they enjoyed the Boys' and Girls' Clubs and the dedicated time for "Debates and Discussions about Life" offered in the program (see Figure 28).

> *School only focuses on academics and when you come to **Beyond 3:30**, … the questions are about life.*
>
> **Participant**

Figure 28: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey - Opportunities to Discuss Life Issues



At one school, a Recreation Staff shared a personal experience on how he overcame prejudice. Students were so captivated by his story that they felt safe to share their stories as well. Since then, participants developed a greater respect for one another, and those who never interacted with the others began to open up and connect with their peers. At another school, one student shared the following:

> *In Grade 7, I kind of fell into a depression and I wanted to hurt myself and like, I got into fights with a couple people and then, when I fought someone, I knew … I had to do something quick before I go into gangs and stuff. And that's when I started to come to Beyond for the grades and for everything else. And then me and [my Recreation Staff] clicked because we had a bad past and he told me how to deal with it … hopefully, … the program [can continue]'cause [there are] many good things going on.*

Affirmations from sensitive and caring staff

It should be noted that all these positive responses relied on the existence of sensitive and caring front-line staff. As commented by the participants in focus groups, they felt respected and valued as individuals by the staff in B3:30. This feeling instilled in them a sense of self-worth. Furthermore, the non-threatening and non-judgmental environment created by the staff made participants feel comfortable in expressing themselves and sharing personal stories with others, resulting in greater bonding among the group members.

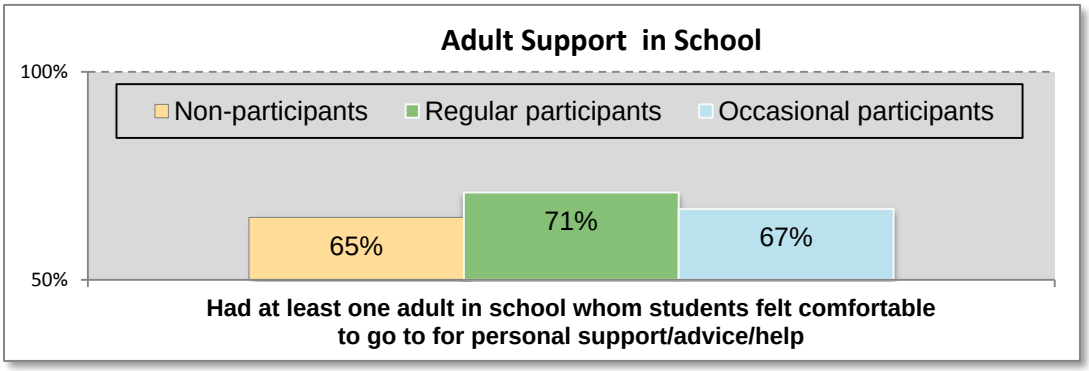
> ***Beyond 3:30*** *makes me feel special about myself.*
>
> **Participant**

While giving students a safe space to share and explore, B3:30 staff were at the same time mindful of not placing too much pressure on participants who were shy or not open initially. Staff were also sensitive to participants' family situations. On one occasion, the topic of Father's Day was introduced in a group discussion. Knowing that a few participants did not have fathers present in their lives, the Recreation Staff who guided the conversation changed the subject.

> *[It's] a positive and supportive place for people to express themselves.*
>
> *One activity that I like to do is to ask students to tell a joke or story, sing a song, do a dance, just to see what they have. They have stuff inside them that we don't know…this was sort of a free form. They excel at it. Some kids are really good outside the box. We give them that space and we are surprised at their talents. One of the students would make up stories all along and have the kids laughing and enjoying so it's great.*
>
> **Recreation Staff**

Based on the TDSB's *2011 Student Census*, the proportion of students reported having at least one adult in school whom they felt comfortable to turn to for personal support, advice or help, was higher for the B3:30 regular participants than for the occasional or non-participants in their schools (see Figure 29).

Figure 29: Adult Support in School



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Increased confidence and improvements in communication and social skills

Improvements in self-esteem built a foundation for students to work on their communication and social skills. Students talked about learning how to speak up for themselves and recognizing their personal growth. Participants who were initially shy had opened up, made friends, and became more expressive and engaged in group activities.

> *My twins are very introverted and being in **Beyond 3:30** has brought them out of their shyness – they talk a lot more at home as well.* – Parent

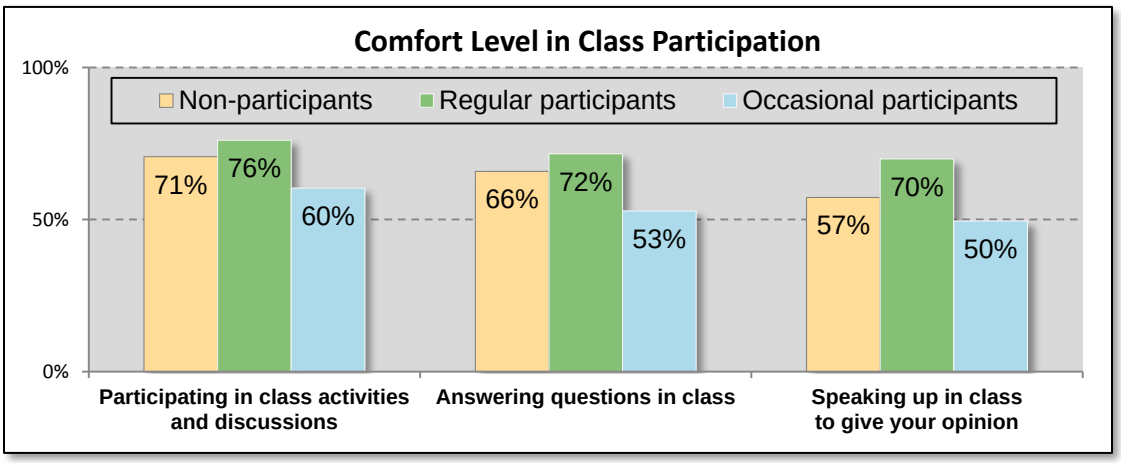
> *Before she couldn't even speak in class. She had to write it down and I had to say it for her. It was sad. And then I [asked her to] come to **Beyond**, and [now] she's learned how to speak in front of people…*
>
> **Participant**

As well, those new to the country became more confident in participating and making new friends. A participant acknowledged the support at Beyond 3:30 for helping him overcome his speech impediment. Parents also valued the opportunity B3:30 provided for their children to socialize with students from grades other than their own.

> *I like the fact that there are grades 6, 7, and 8's. My son is [in] grade 6. Without the program, they would only know their own grade. This mixes all the grades together. It's nice having friends from other grades.* – Parent

In fact, *the TDSB's Student Census* data indicate that B3:30 regular participants were more confident or comfortable than their schoolmates to participate in discussions, answer questions, or offer their opinions in class (see Figure 30).

Figure 30: Comfort Level in Class Participation



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

School Behaviours

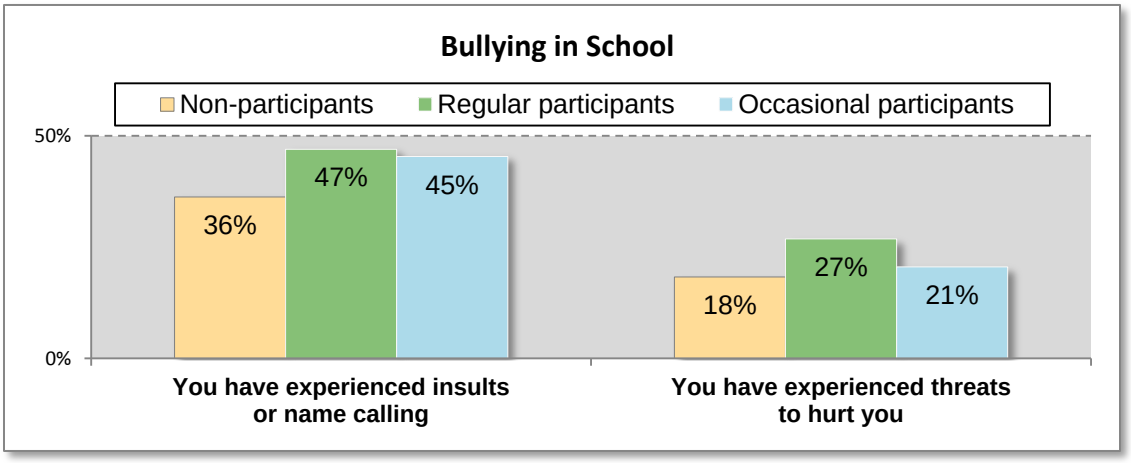
Before or at the Early Part of the Program

At the beginning of the program, participant behaviour issues were a common, ongoing challenge for front-line staff. Common manifestations included poor or negative attitudes or rebellion against B3:30 staff, constant complaints about everything at the program, displaying boredom, isolating oneself from the group, and disruptive behaviours, such as acting like a class clown. A few children were hyperactive and had difficulty focusing, making it difficult for staff to follow through with tasks. Aggressive incidents, though rare, occurred in physical fights. Some students with a stronger influence over their peers affected group dynamics with their negative behaviours.

B3:30 staff recognized that some of these behaviours were rooted in problems that occurred during the school day. For instance, a few participants confided they were being bullied at school. According to the TDSB's *2011 Student Census*, B3:30 participants appeared to be more likely than other students to have experienced insults, name calling, or threats of harm at school (see Figure 31). Many participants also commented that they found it more difficult to make friends during school time, as everyone was too busy focusing on academic tasks.

> *You're so busy with work. You have no time to talk to friends sometimes.* – Participant

Figure 31: Bullying in School

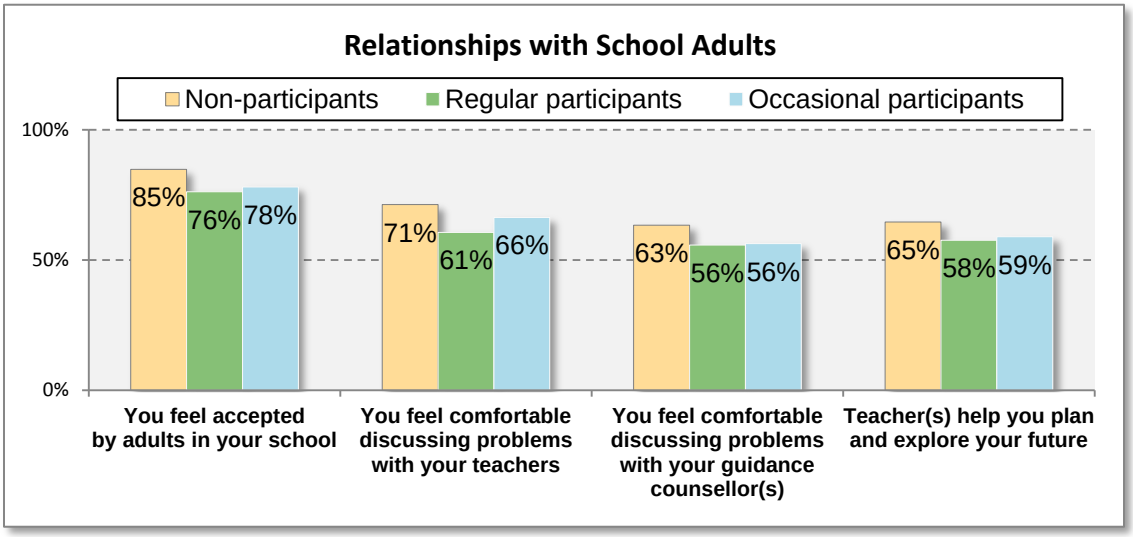


Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Apart from peer relationship issues, the TDSB's *2011 Student Census* indicates that in comparison with non-participants, the B3:30 participants seemed less connected with their teachers. They were less likely to report that they felt accepted by adults in school, felt

comfortable discussing problems with their teachers or guidance counselors, or have their teachers help them plan and explore their future (see Figure 32).

Figure 32: Relationships with School Adults



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Adding to the challenges they encountered in school, some participants were experiencing difficulties at home. For instance, one student, who was known to have anger management problems, did not live with her parent due to relationship problems. In another instance, it was learned that a student who was having difficulty interacting with others was staying with his family at a shelter.

During and After the Program

B3:30 staff resolved behavioural concerns and addressed disciplinary issues through various program components and activities.

Instilling pro-social behaviours through planned activities and diverse program components

The Boys' and Girls' Clubs, mentioned earlier, allowed participants to learn about and discuss topics such as peer pressure, bullying, family dynamics, drugs, gangs, sexual education (protection, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy), and healthy relationships. In the Boys' Club, for example, male students learned about the role of young men in the world, or relationships from the male perspective.

> *Students liked to think outside the box. They liked to learn about things that were beyond what they would hear from family, from home, and they were encouraged to share with their parents what they had learned.*
>
> **B3:30 Staff**

These discussions taught participants the importance of making positive life choices.

In addition to guided conversations, drama skits and team building activities were organized to increase participants' self-awareness of interpersonal interactions and to engage them in conflict resolution, cooperation, and effective communication with each other. Participants were always reminded that they were not only part of a program but also part of the community. They were encouraged to act as good citizens in the program to ensure harmony.

Program staff also realized that the wide variety of structured program components had helped divert participants' attention away from aggressive behaviours. Staff noticed that when participants were provided with specific tasks or activities, they behaved better because they focused their efforts toward achieving a goal instead of acting out. For instance, they witnessed how one hyperactive student became a "completely different child" when he was in the kitchen focusing on his meal preparation tasks which he enjoyed. Another participant, known for her anger problems, developed her interest in cooking and always took responsibility in helping out in the kitchen.

> *…It was like being in a big family so you could learn to get along with other people.*
>
> *…Me and [another participant], we used to fight all the time. Back in March, me and her were fighting, like every day, like physical fights. It was bad but then we came to **Beyond** and I started talking to her and realized I had really no reason to be fighting with her…*
>
> **Participant**

Behavioural contracts

Behavioural contracts were used with certain students when deemed necessary. In one specific case staff members were proud of a participant who had been on a behavioural contract for his first year in the program; but in the following year, staff members noticed improvements and no longer had to discuss with the student about his behaviour, and as a result, he received the participant of the month award.

In another instance, program staff helped a student become increasingly aware of her own behavioural issues. When she was given the option of being placed on a behavioural contract, she decided to change her attitude and eventually became more polite and helpful with others. Participants reflected that when they misbehaved, program staff would make sure that disciplinary action was applied appropriately to allow them to learn from their mistakes.

Staff initiation

Aside from planned activities or behavioural contracts, in many instances, staff initiated conversations or worked directly with individual students to resolve challenging behaviours or

situations as they arose. For instance, in response to a bullying incident at one school site, expert visitors were invited to conduct workshops on anti-bullying, homophobia and discrimination. Staff members mediated between the participants and resolved the conflict, leading to a better understanding and respect for one another.

In other instances, B3:30 staff acted proactively to deescalate certain situations. For example, a Site Co-ordinator from one school visited the participants during the school day to observe and address their in-school behavioural issues, resulting in improved behaviours after school. In another incident, a student began to distance herself from a "bad" crowd after her program staff talked with her about life choices. As a result of her distancing, this student avoided a situation that involved the police, and expulsion from school. The student was grateful for B3:30 in keeping her away from trouble. Since then, the staff observed major improvements in her behaviour.

Besides having personal dialogues with participants who had behavioural concerns, some program staff redirected the focus of their participants by guiding them to make group contributions with their creativity and leadership potential. For instance, students who stood out as "natural" leaders were assigned to various helping roles, such as assisting staff members to run a program component or organize their peers to transition calmly between programs. Other students were encouraged to use their creative ideas to diversify the program activities. In one instance, a student was assigned as an assistant for DPA and she enjoyed the opportunity of contributing fun games for the group. Another participant, who often complained about boredom, was encouraged to replace his negativity with positive suggestions. It turned out that he had great programming ideas and subsequently became more involved in the group.

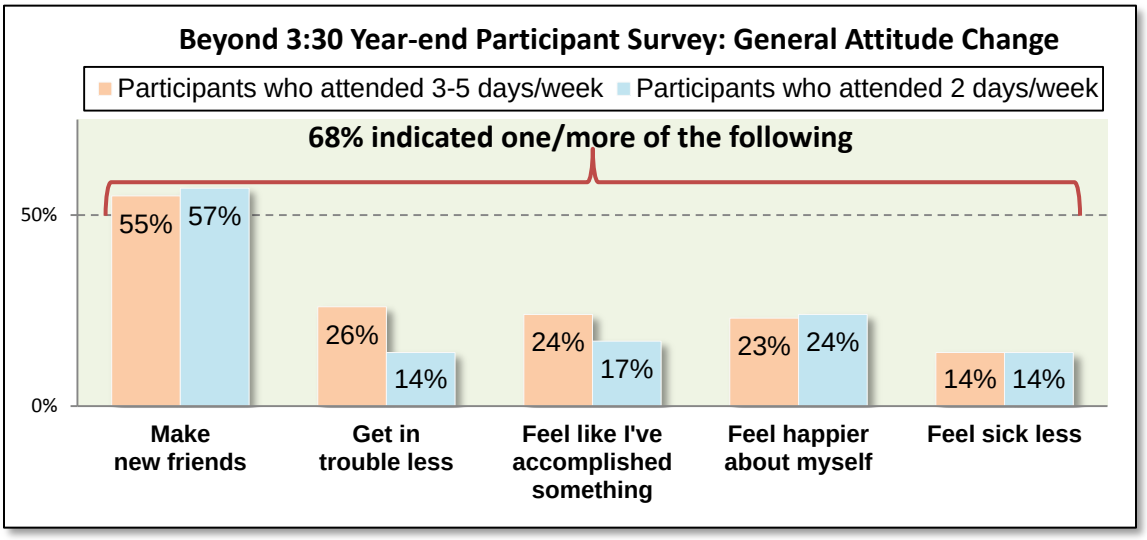
Improved behaviour in school

With guidance and care, students' behaviour improved over time. School principals noticed that their student participants began to communicate with greater respect at school and very few were referred to the office for disciplinary reasons. In their Program Year-end Survey, some principals also agreed that the majority of their student participants had presented fewer behavioural issues since participating in B3:30. As a school administrators added,

> *I was amazed to see … approximately 50 participants arrive and immediately put their bags and coats down and organize themselves into groups so that they'd be ready for a student-led DPA.*

In the Program Year-end Survey, over two-thirds of the participants admitted that after joining B3:30, they made new friends, got in trouble less often, felt they accomplished something, felt happier, and/or felt less sick (see Figure 33).

Figure 33: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey - General Attitude Change



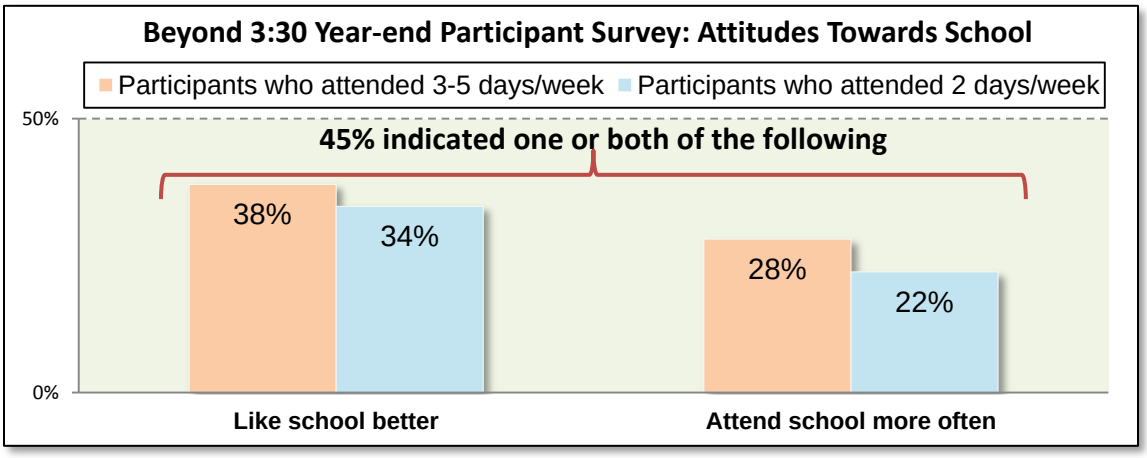
School Engagement

During focus groups, students agreed that they enjoyed school more since attending B3:30. Many perceived Beyond 3:30 as a club, which gave them a strong sense of belonging.

> ***Beyond 3:30*** *is a family.* – Participant

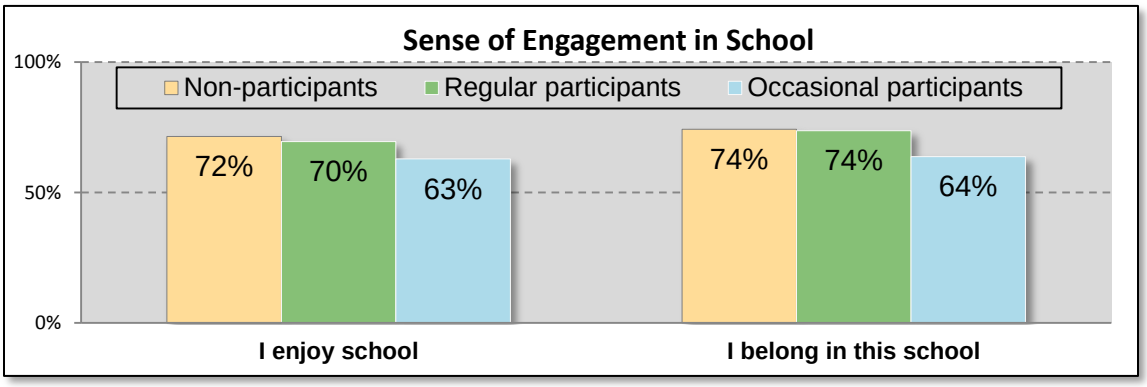
While it is unknown what proportion of the participants enjoyed school and had regular school attendance prior to the program, 45% indicated in the Program Year-end Survey that B3:30 had helped them like school better, and attend school more often (see Figure 34).

Figure 34: Beyond 3:30 Year-end Participant Survey - Attitudes Towards School



According to the TDSB's *2011 Student Census*, the proportion of regular participants who reported enjoying school or felt a sense of belonging in school all the time or often, were significantly higher than those of occasional participants, and were about the same as the non-participants in their schools (see Figure 35).

Figure 35: Sense of Engagement in School



Source: TDSB's *2011 Grade 7-8 Student Census*

Parents observed that their children always looked forward to going to Beyond 3:30 and were reluctant to leave. They realized that for their children, B3:30 was a relief from school demands, yet the program concurrently supported school adjustment. For instance, they commented during focus groups how the program had made school easier for their children because of the extra academic help from B3:30 staff. Parents also noted how Beyond 3:30 staff had lessened their children's school anxiety by teaching them strategies to handle school-based pressures. One parent further pointed out that Beyond 3:30 had altered her child's perception of school that it was no longer just a place for 'work', but a place where students could have fun and enjoy learning.

Family Relationships

Increased communication between parents and children

Parents noticed a positive impact of the program on their family life, especially in parent-child relations. Participants themselves sensed that there were improvements in their relationships with parents. They shared with their parents about their B3:30 experiences, opening up conversations among family members.

> *"J" always has fun and exciting things to say at the end of the day.* – Parent

One participant who was staying at a shelter with his family had difficulty interacting with others at the beginning. As he became more engaged with the program, he shared with his mother about how much fun he had with the group, how he learned about social skills, and how he was making friends along the way. Unfortunately, the family had to relocate, and the staff and students organized a farewell party. The whole family was deeply appreciative of the support and the positive impact that the program, the staff and the participants had on their child.

> *Thank you so much for the staff at **Beyond 3:30**. Our family has been having a hard time lately and the program is so good for "J." He is so excited to attend and I noticed how much it livens him up. Thank you.* – Parent

> *Before, I used to come in and you know, hi mom, bye mom, go to bed. But now I can tell her different [things], you know, I can talk to her.*
>
> *…I'm starting to get better with my parents but it's really hard because they don't tell me that they're proud of me and stuff like that so it's hard. Hopefully, they'll have **Beyond 3:30** in high school.*
>
> **Participant**

Some parents further noted how the support offered by the program to their child had also benefitted the whole family. For instance, parental stress was reduced when students arrived home fed and with their homework finished.

Taking up responsibility at home

Parents were impressed to see their children taking up more responsibilities at home, for example cooking or helping out with the family. There were students who recognized the need for assistance at home and openly expressed their concerns for their parents, who did not have time to prepare meals for the family.

> *My parents work a lot and most of the time don't eat well. I want to learn how to cook so I can make sure they are eating well and stay healthy. Also, if they don't*

have to worry about the meal, then I'm helping them not be so stressed out. – Participant

At home, these participants voluntarily applied their newfound interest and knowledge in nutrition and cooking they acquired from the program by preparing healthy meals for their families.

She had never cooked a meal at home before and proudly told [me]…she learned to cook in ***Beyond 3:30****. –* Parent

Parents welcomed their children's initiation and allowed them to prepare family meals, some on a regular basis. They were appreciative of how their children prepared food at home, cleaned up more often, and became more involved with family responsibilities.

In addition, students at one site learned about cost saving in their Junior Chefs' Club. Having noticed their Nutrition Staff using flyers for grocery deals to purchase food for the Chefs' program, participants initiated a discussion on coupons, weekly sales, and price comparing. This became part of the routine during their Junior Chefs' Club. Students shared the cost-saving tips at home, and joined in on grocery trips with their parents. Their knowledge and experiences benefited their families, boosted relationships with their parents, and instilled in them their sense of responsibility at home.

> *[I saw] clear difference in my child's life.*
>
> **Parent**

Celebrating and building a stronger sense of community

Lastly, B3:30 organized and offered Community Dinners at least three times during the school year. The Community Dinners, which were prepared and hosted by the students themselves, brought together parents, family members, and friends to celebrate the participants' accomplishments. At these dinners, awards were conferred such as 'outstanding leader', 'great cook' or 'good listener'. The Community Dinners gave participants an occasion to showcase the different skills they acquired from the program through performances or meal preparations for their parents and guests. Parents were also given opportunities to share their feedback. This inclusive approach fostered greater family relationships and a stronger sense of community.

Conditions for Effectiveness and Sustainability

- Program – Content, Structure, Location, and Environment
- Staff as Sensitive and Caring Adults
- Central Co-ordination and Support
- Close Collaboration with School Administrators and Staff
- Ongoing Research and Evaluation
- Community Partnerships and Sustainable Funding

CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

A review of the findings from both the current and Phase I studies clearly indicates that a number of conditions need to be in place to assure effectiveness and sustainability of this unique after-school program for adolescents in inner-city neighbourhoods. These conditions can be categorized into the following six broad areas.

1. Program - Content, Structure, Location, and Environment

a. ***Comprehensive and multi-dimensional content***: It is apparent throughout this study that one of the reasons for the success of B3:30 is its holistic approach with programs that foster academic growth, physical fitness, healthy eating, life skills, artistic expressions, confidence, leadership, social-emotional health, and positive engagement in school and at home. All these are important for the well-being and success of adolescents, especially in light of the many students in inner-city communities who lack adult supervision or the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities after school.

> ***Beyond 3:30*** *is a place that I love. The staff there are amazing and the things we get to do are unbelievable. It lets me have a place to be instead of going out causing trouble. It opens many doors for me and since I have been going to* ***Beyond 3:30*** *I have gotten much smarter and much more mature. If there is any place I want to be after school it's* ***Beyond 3:30****.*
>
> **Former Participant**

b. ***Clear program structure***: To ensure that the multiple components of the program are run smoothly and effectively every day by a team of staff at each site, a clear program structure is critical. Having learned from the first two pilot years, the B3:30 Program Office has established clear guidelines, program manuals, resource materials, program matrices and plans, timetable templates, etc., for consistent and efficient implementation of the program across all sites. The established core structure and the manageable routine provided stability not only for staff but also for the participants. With clear expectations, students can follow set schedules and activities, cultivate a better sense of what to expect in their environment, and recognize their responsibilities for the group.

c. ***School as the program site***: There are many advantages for locating the program at the school site. First, it is a safe place that students and parents are familiar with and trust. Second, it is convenient, as students can attend the program right after school without the need to take extra time or transportation to get to another venue. This helps assure higher attendance rates. Furthermore, it is a cost-effective way to run a multi-faceted program, as many facilities are already in place in school. More importantly, by locating

inside the school, the program could become more integrated with the day school, as program deliverers could be more easily in contact with school administrators, teachers, and other support staff. This helps staff from both ends understand and address the needs of the participants more effectively and collaboratively.

d. ***Fun and non-threatening environment***: Another key reason for participants to keep coming to the program was its fun environment with a wide diversity of activities that they found intriguing. Without the pressure of being assessed or judged, participants felt relaxed to enjoy, learn, and explore different possibilities. The non-threatening atmosphere allowed participants, including those who were shy or withdrawn, to feel comfortable to participate in discussions and debates or to share their personal stories. This in turn helped build their confidence and self-esteem.

> *It's not how it's run at school. It's a slight change of programming that is not regimented in the way school is. The idea is fun. The idea of the program is to engage with the students.* – B3:30 Staff

Their engagement enabled them to acquire new skills, pursue different interests, expand their minds, and realize their strengths and potential.

2. Staff as Sensitive and Caring Adults

It is also evident in this research that one of the key elements for the effectiveness of this program is the staff who acted as caring adults for the participants. The many improvements documented in this report - including homework completion, increased confidence, leadership, and behavioural change - were attributed to the front-line staff whom participants could relate to and felt comfortable to turn to for help, advice, and support. As participants noted, their B3:30 staff made them feel respected, understood, valued, and recognized.

> *The staff at the program has boosted my self esteem more than ever… I met great people who have supported me in many ways.* – Participant

> *…They're nice to me and they don't treat me in any kind of bad ways and whatever they tell me is for my own good.* – Participant

*Five former **Beyond 3:30** participants are now volunteering with the program. They have matured and play a wonderful leadership role. They thanked staff for being caring and what they thought at the time was strict. They constantly tell participants to listen to staff "because high school is completely different, and what they help you with in **Beyond 3:30** really prepares you for high school!"*

B3:30 Staff and Former participants

Hence, the B3:30 Program Office has paid great attention in its hiring of and professional support for the front-line staff.

a. ***Hiring practices***: Efforts were made to recruit qualified young adults such as college or university graduates[7] whom the participants could connect with, who were approachable, who could be role models for the students, who understood the background and needs of the participants, and who were familiar with the community they served.

b. ***Professional development and training***: All B3:30 staff are required to undergo a one-week orientation and training prior to the beginning of the school year on such topics as developing healthy relationships with youth, safety protocols, and understanding cultural diversity and needs. During the school year, if funding allowed, further training on different issues, for example engagement and behavior management strategies, were offered for B3:30 staff on TDSB's Professional Development days.

3. Central Co-ordination and Support

To allow effective program delivery on the front line, central support and coordination is instrumental. The Program Office under the TFSS has been responsible for the overall program development and planning, hiring, staff training and support, developing and disseminating resource materials, establishing agreements with partner organizations, fundraising, and liaising with TDSB's central staff as well as interested and participating schools' principals.

4. Close Collaboration with School Administrators and Staff

While further research will compare the efficacy level of different program sites, anecdotal data reveal that the more effective B3:30 sites were the ones where collaborative relations between the B3:30 staff, school staff, and principals were well in place. As reported in the Phase I study, principals' support "would help smooth the issues around sharing school space and resources, site security, time conflict, or competition with other community use, and caretaking". Aside from operational considerations, this Phase II study also found that B3:30 staff, who could maintain close communication with the teaching or other school staff, were more effective in supporting their participants in, for example, homework or positive behavioural change.

[7] For example, Bachelor of Education graduates were hired as the Homework Club's Program Staff.

5. Ongoing Research and Evaluation

The different stages of B3:30 - from its initial conception, piloting to structural development and program expansion - have all been supported by evidence gathered from ongoing research and evaluative studies. As mentioned in the Phase I report, a part of the initial catalyst for creating this extended after-school program in inner-city middle schools was the findings from the TDSB's first *Student Census* in 2006. The TDSB's *2006 Student Census* study indicated that students from low-income neighbourhoods had less opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities outside of school, than students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Another impetus was the release of the Toronto Community Foundation's *2009 Toronto Vital Signs* report, which further elaborated how children, who were unsupervised after school, were more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour or become victims of crimes. Based on the TDSB's *2006 Student Census* data which identified the needs and locations of student population from high-risk communities, B3:30 was designed, funds were raised, and school sites were selected to pilot the program in 2009.

During its first two pilot years, informal evaluation was conducted to identify areas for improvement for this novel multi-dimensional program. The findings have helped enhance the efforts in continuous program development – for example, solidifying the structure of the program, developing guidelines and resource materials, improving its promotional strategies and liaison processes, enhancing its program database, and designing professional development and ongoing training for staff. Since 2011-12, with funding support from the Ministry of Education, formal multi-phase evaluation has been taking place. The two-fold purpose comprises of formative evaluation to inform practice on an ongoing basis, and summative evaluation to determine immediate and long-term impacts. These research and evaluation endeavours have been instrumental not only for ensuring program effectiveness, but also for securing the funds and support for sustaining and expanding the program, as well as for providing evidential information for other communities or regions to consider implementation.

6. Community Partnerships and Sustainable Funding

It cannot be emphasized enough that the sustainability of this extended after-school program across different sites relies heavily on community partnerships and external financial support.

a. ***Community partnerships*** have contributed to the success of B3:30 through the specialty programs (such as drama, dance, music, book club, money management, etc.) that various agencies have offered at various sites. This depended heavily on the availability

and resources of partner organizations that had the capacity, funding, and mandate to provide a specific and focused workshop series or program to this age group, and that could work in the schools through the B3:30 framework and scheduling.

b. Finally, the ***availability of stable funding*** remains key to the sustainability of B3:30. While the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has been providing the core funding for the program, the remaining operational funds still need to be raised from different sources including philanthropists, businesses, and organizations[8]. Sustainable and increased funding is crucial not only for allowing the program to continue at its existing sites but also for expanding it to other schools for the benefits of more youth in high-needs communities.

[8]In recent years, B3:30 has been supported by such non-governmental funders as ACE Bakeries, Arts for Children and Youth , Cavelti Family Foundation, First Book Canada, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Hadden Family Foundation, Jays Care, Loblaws, National Council of Jewish Women - Toronto Section, Royal Bank of Canada, Regent Park School of Music, and Rogers Youth Fund.

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List of B3:30 Schools between 2009 and 2013

School Name	Start Date
Brookview Middle School	2009-10
Carleton Village Junior & Senior Sports and Wellness Academy	2009-10
Dr. Marion Hilliard Senior Public School	2009-10
Greenholme Junior Middle School	2009-10
Joseph Brant Public School	2009-10
Lawrence Heights Middle School	2009-10
Rockcliffe Middle School	2009-10
Smithfield Middle School	2009-10
Valley Park Middle School	2009-10
Amesbury Middle School*	2010-11
Beverley Heights Middle School*	2010-11
Tecumseh Senior Public School	2010-11
Vaughan Road Academy**	2010-11
Silverthorn Community School*	2011-12
Bliss Carman Senior Public School	2012-13
D. A. Morrison Middle School	2012-13

* The program was not operated in these sites in 2012-13.
** The program was piloted in this school in 2010-11.