ABSTRACT
This report is the second in a series of focused reports supplementing the initial interim evaluation report. Each focused report provides a more in-depth analysis of one dimension of the evaluation. This report focuses on ACE center team responses to questions about the recruitment and retention of students in out-of-school (OST) time programs.
Executive Summary

The first installment of the 2013-2014 evaluation of the 21st Century After-School Centers on Education (ACE) program addressed implementation practices and was issued in February 2014. This analysis is the second in a series of supplemental reports focusing on the five essential elements of implementation practices in Column 2 of the logic model (i.e., alignment, recruitment and retention, ongoing monitoring, voice and choice, and professional development). This report is concerned with recruiting and retaining students in the ACE program.

Six dimensions of recruitment and retention practices are analyzed:

- Data use guiding decision-making about recruiting students
- Data use guiding decision-making about retaining students
- Current processes and strategies used to recruit and retain students
- ACE program personnel, regular school day personnel, partners, and community members specific roles related to recruiting and retaining students
- The target population of students and families (i.e., students most in need of academic assistance) being served
- Recruiting and retaining a diverse (right kids/right mix) group of students

ACE program team responses to the evaluation questionnaire generally convey deep interest in ensuring that high-need students are engaged and served effectively. Less common, however, is evidence of systematic recruitment and retention practices applied toward that end. The most salient of the preliminary conclusions in this report are summarized below.

Pervasive recognition that data use is key to effective recruitment. Nearly 85% of ACE programs report using some form of data to guide their recruitment practices. ACE programs with the most developed practice of data use tend to consider data from multiple perspectives, analyzing patterns across a campus, for instance, as well as individual performance data. Further, more advanced programs consult broader range of data and do so with an eye toward improving student engagement and achievement rather than for narrow compliance purposes.

The field has developed a healthy portfolio of recruitment and retention strategies. Three-quarters of programs report using multiple strategies to attract and retain students.

Recruitment and retention practices are at an early stage of systemization. Seventy percent of programs report that their recruitment and retention practices are standardized to some degree. Of these, however, most identify only broad categories of data consulted and few specify any thresholds triggering recruitment
Recruitment and retention efforts could be strengthened with greater engagement of program partners. Few program teams are taking full advantage of the support that appears to be available. Though more than three-quarters of programs report that school partners play some role in recruitment and retention, only six percent of programs report having clearly defined roles and responsibilities for recruitment and retention across program partners.

Too little attention is paid to recruiting the optimum mix of students. Although nearly 70% of program respondents indicate that they value a heterogeneous population in their programs, very few program teams articulated the composition of or rationale for their optimum mix of students.
How to Use This Analysis

This report is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Give you insight about recruitment and retention practices that are currently occurring across Texas ACE programs.
- Assist you in gauging where your practice falls along the continuum of responses to the questions in the interim report.
  - Categories were established by reviewing all text responses for each question in Interim Report I.
  - Text responses for each question were categorized according to dominant patterns.
  - Each center’s responses will fall into one of up to 6 categories (or types) of responses for each question.
  - Throughout this analysis, categories 1 and 2 represent a more comprehensive approach to recruiting and retaining students (use of both qualitative and quantitative information to guide decision making).
  - Responses in categories 1 and 2 also represent a more intentional and collaborative approach to addressing this implementation practice.
- Enable reflection on assessment of your practices in relation to those highlighted in the linked research article presented in this introduction.
  - The article articulates promising strategies currently used in OST.
  - The information presented will ideally help you think about how your work aligns with some of these best practice approaches for recruiting and retaining students and families in your ACE program.

Proposed use of this report:

1. **Read & document:** Spend time with this analysis as well as the linked article. What got your attention and why? Consider where your practice falls in relation to the practices presented. Are you where you want to be? If not, what resources are available to enable you to address related challenges? Create a written summary of what was most salient to you, keeping the state of your implementation practice in mind.

2. **Share & Convene:** Find the best way to share this information with your team (relevant stakeholders) and provide opportunities for them to thoroughly weigh in on the improvements you propose (insights from a variety of perspective will strengthen your plan).

3. **Decide & Act:** Determine the kinds of changes you can feasibly manage and create a plan of action to facilitate those changes to your current implementation practice.
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Introduction

This report is the second in a series of focused reports supplementing the initial interim evaluation report. Each focused report will provide a more in-depth analysis of one dimension of the evaluation. This report focuses on ACE center team responses to questions about the recruitment and retention of students in Texas ACE out-of-school (OST) time programs.

ACE program team responses to the evaluation questionnaire generally convey deep interest in ensuring that high-need students are engaged and served effectively. Less common, however, is evidence of systematic recruitment and retention practices applied toward that end. This is not to say that program teams are ineffective in recruiting and retaining students, but rather that they would be more effective with the benefit of clearly defined objectives and logically related, fully articulated, strategies.

Further, to the extent program teams do report a clear objective and focused strategy, it is too often limited to compliance purposes. We must move beyond compliance (e.g., 30-day enrollment period) as a stand-alone recruitment and retention strategy and begin to develop a continuous improvement mindset. Youth who are most in need of what OST has to offer require the field to rise to challenges much more complex than program rules.

Increased attendance in OST is significantly correlated with academic achievement, higher school attendance, more time spent on completing homework and positive extra-curricular activities, enjoyment and effort in school and better teacher reports of positive student behavior (Harvard Family Research Project Brief, Issues and Opportunities in Out-Of-School Time Evaluation, Issue 6, 2004). Unfortunately, these positive impacts will not be achieved if students do not regularly attend OST programs. Isolating the strategies that are effective in bolstering and sustaining participation amongst youth (especially those target populations that are most challenging to retain: older youth in under-served communities), particularly in transitional periods of their lives, poses an excellent opportunity for evaluation studies at the programmatic level.

The Harvard Family Research Project Brief: Issues and Opportunities in Out-Of-School Time Programs reviews several implementation and impact evaluations to in order to develop several promising strategies to attract and sustain participation in OST. Here is a link to this brief: http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/moving-beyond-the-barriers-attracting-and-sustaining-youth-participation-in-out-of-school-time-programs The following is a summary of these strategies:

- Help Youth Understand the Value of Participation
- Show Families the Opportunities Associated With Participation
- Reach out Directly to Youth and Their Families in Their Homes and Communities
- Match the Program’s Attendance Goals to Participant Needs
• Consider At-Risk Youth in Recruitment Efforts
• Recruit Friends to Join Together
• Hire Program Staff Who Develop Real Connections With Participants
• Hook Youth With Both Fun and Relaxing Times
• Link Academics to an Engaging Project
• Give High School Youth Extra Opportunities

The good news is that many Texas ACE programs have adopted one or more of these strategies. The next step is to bring more order, coherence, and intentionality to their implementation.
Approach to Analysis of Responses to Questions Addressing Student Recruitment and Retention

The tool by which information was gathered for the first interim evaluation includes six questions that focus on student recruitment and retention (Question 20, Question 22, Question 24, Question 26, Question 28, Question 30). These questions were developed with the intention of capturing the full range of strategies and practices present in programs across the state. There were 742 center responses for each of these questions. The review team read through all responses for each question in order to identify major themes. Once the themes began to emerge, patterns of responses enabled the review team to develop 5-6 categories for each question.

After sorting responses according to the categories, reviewers determined the dominant categories for each question (those with the most responses) and then distilled and in some cases summarized variations within those categories. This structure enabled reviewers to draw out both high-level themes as well as more nuanced findings for those categories with the highest frequency of responses.

It should be noted that the response categories used correspond to the responses provided, some of which reflect common misunderstandings of the questions. In this sense, this report does not always capture the information intended, though is nonetheless instructive.

For ease of navigation and to provide context, the analysis below is prefaced with the text of the question asked of the centers and the guidance provided for that question (Interim Report Guiding Document provided as resource on My TexasAce). Each response category is then listed and followed, respectively, by an analysis of the responses in that category. For each question, the analysis leads with the response category containing the most exhaustive answers for that question.

Analysis

This analysis will address the narrative responses to Question 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30 in the survey. There are up to 5 response categories for those ACE Centers that responded “yes” (i.e., numbers 1-4 or 1-5) and one response category for those ACE Centers that responded “no” (i.e., number 6). Below is the question as stated in the survey, the technical assistance guidance given for that question followed by all response categories for that question.
Question 20

**Text of Question 20:** [If you affirmed that you use data regularly to guide decision making about recruiting students in the ACE program by answering YES to the prior question], what is the evidence that you regularly use data to guide decision-making about recruiting students into the ACE Program? Please list the data that you regularly use. If NO, please explain. How might the regular use of data to inform your recruitment practice help you to be more effective in recruiting students into the ACE Program? What kinds of data might you use regularly that would help you to recruit students more effectively?

**Guidance Provided:** This question is asking you about the specific kinds of data that you use to inform your recruitment practices. For example, you may use PEIMS (Public Information Management System) data at the school you are partnering with and this can help you identify the students most in need. You may use the school’s improvement plan to help you to recruit students most in need. You may use other kinds of data.

**Response Category 1:** Program uses individual performance data and/or recommendations, but also considers patterns of performance among student groups to address achievement gaps among the groups (e.g., student group promotion rates and student groups target for improvement in Campus Improvement Plan). This category represents 13.75% of all responses.

**Response Category 2:** Program primarily uses student performance and behavior data (including benchmark assessments, STAAR performance, behavior referrals, poor attendance). May also reference previous evaluation reports. This category represents 57.95% of all responses.

**Response Category 3:** Program primarily relies on school staff recommendations. May also use previous ACE attendance data. This category represents 5.39% of all responses.

**Response Category 4:** Program uses an open-enrollment approach. Some state rationale based on partnering with a school-wide Title I campus or up to 80% of school is designated as “at risk” population. This category represents 4.17% of all responses.

**Response Category 5:** Program primarily uses student survey data and other sources of student feedback (such as average daily attendance reports from TX 21st) to achieve target number of students or to design activities that attract students to the program. May also recruit based on the class that was developed. This category represents 11.59% of all responses.

**Response Category 6 (NO):** Providing evidence to describe barriers to regular data use for recruitment. This category represents 5.25% of all responses.
Analysis Question 20

Response Category 1

Program uses individual performance data and/or recommendations, but also considers patterns of performance among student groups to address achievement gaps among the groups (e.g., student group promotion rates and student groups target for improvement in Campus Improvement Plan).

Nearly 14% (13.75%) of responses include descriptions of the ways both individual and student group data inform recruitment and retention strategies and practices. This percentage represents 102 out of 742 center responses. Additionally, these responses apply both quantitative (test scores, PEIMS, benchmark assessments) and qualitative (student survey to determine interests and engagement, classroom walkthrough or fidelity checks, focus groups) data in this context. The example below is illustrative:

Daily review of the activity report on TX21st which delineates student enrollment, student ADA, and student target numbers. Weekly, direct observations by Site Coordinators and Project Directors using various supervision templates including research based Region XIII model Classroom Walkthroughs for Continuous School Improvement which features collection of evidence of student engagement, statement of activity objectives, and innovative teaching strategies. Student school attendance, student grades, discipline reports, student STAAR data, Renstar results, At-Risk identifiers, TPRI, DRA, promotion rates, graduation rates, retention data is reviewed three times per year. Red folders containing checks for understanding, pre and post tests are reviewed by teachers daily, and monthly by school. Campus Data Meetings, ACE data meetings and Mr. individual review of his students includes qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data includes surveys, student reporting, student focus groups teacher, counselor, administrator, and parent observations. Quantitative data includes AEIS reports, Campus Improvement Plans, standardized testing, STARR Universal Screeners, teacher made tests, benchmarks, TAKS results, PEIMS data (such as attendance, behavior, etc.), referrals, individual and group promotion rates, graduation rates, and information regarding student criminal information. Campus data meetings take place a minimum of three times a year. Data used when recruiting students is program objectives, staffing criteria, job descriptions (based on activities students are interested in we look for specific skills), partners, activities, parent surveys, partner surveys, student surveys, school and central administrative surveys, core day teacher surveys, ACE staff surveys. Mr. is Meeting and exceeding the targeted number of students and families served at each center. 100% of Mr. Ali’s students fit the ISD ACE Enrollment Policy.

Additionally, the responses in this category stand apart from the others in that they tended to include evidence of intentional, ongoing and structured collaboration between ACE and regular school day leadership with respect to data review. For example:
Use of interim academic benchmark assessments and other formative academic assessments developed by teachers to identify students’ academic needs/deficiencies are used to target students – this pinpoints skills that students are failing to master academically and keeping them from mastering the STAAR assessment • Use of Campus Improvement Plan to help recruit students most in need of services • Meetings with Grade Level teachers to discuss student referrals and needs • Use of AT-Risk list to make referrals/recommendations • Visits with prospective students, as well as ACE students who have not been attending regularly • Use of student report cards information • Use of discipline referrals & attendance data to identify student behavioral support needs

Response Category 2

Program primarily uses student performance and behavior data (including benchmark assessments, STAAR performance, behavior referrals, poor attendance). May also reference previous evaluation reports.

Over half, 430 out of 742 (57.95%) of the narrative responses to Question 20 indicate that they use individual student performance data for recruitment purposes. This finding suggests that the majority of ACE programs seek and use a variety of student data to determine which students are most in need of services and in the planning of activities and ongoing support to identified students. The following is a representative response:

Initially, students in need were identified by the ISD administration and a copy of their names and grades were provided to the MSC who handled recruitment. Examples of indicators in the profile include: - student’s social and/or emotional needs as reported by trained and qualified school personnel. - academic performance (using District grade reporting system) – periodic review of academic performance of individual participants in ACE program occurs each six weeks or at 3 week intervals. - classroom behavior -student progress, or lack thereof (mock STAAR test results or other benchmarks) - Previous Final Evaluation Reports - Feedback from parents.

Additionally, these responses may also reference previous evaluation reports. For example:

Initially, students in need were identified by the ISD administration and a copy of their names and grades were provided to the MSC who handled recruitment. Examples of indicators in the profile include: - student’s social and/or emotional needs as reported by trained and qualified school personnel. - academic performance (using District grade reporting system) – periodic review of academic performance of individual participants in ACE program occurs each six weeks or at 3 week intervals. - classroom behavior -student progress, or lack thereof (mock STAAR test results or other benchmarks) - Previous Final Evaluation Reports - Feedback from parents.

Another common type of response in this category reports that performance data is
primarily used to target students in need of academic support. In most instances, by contrast, very basic forms of data are used to recruit students into the ACE program. See these two examples:

Data will now drive the targeted students for Project STAARburst. For the rest of the program, recruitment is based on registration and student attendance. Data would be helpful if the program was structured to be targeted students all around, however, the ACE program is open to campus.

Data is used from RTI/ECC meetings (grades and assessments), teacher input, and principal input to decide which students to target and what tutorial sessions should be offered. In addition to needs assessments, staff regularly asks students if they enjoy the enrichment activities offered to see if there are areas in need of changes. There are 83 students enrolled in ACE after school, with an average attendance of about 75 students. This shows that ACE students enjoy coming to ACE.

**Response Category 3**

*Program primarily relies on school staff recommendations. May also use previous ACE attendance data.*

Only 5.39% of narrative responses to Question 20 indicated that they rely primarily on school personnel recommendations. These response types represent 40 out of 742 responses to this question. Some view school day staff who have become invested in the success of the program as the best resource in identifying students to participate in ACE. For example:

The school principal decided that she was going to be the one targeting the students that she felt were at risk and that needed the most help academically. Once she had chosen all the students possible, I myself recruited students who want to return from the previous year. Also, at the beginning of the year a family night and registration night was taken place and students were recruited there as well.

**Response Category 4**

*Program uses an open-enrollment approach. Some state rationale based on partnering with a school-wide Title I campus or up to 80% of school is designated as “at risk” population.*

Four percent (4.17%) or 31 out of 742, of the narrative answers to Question 20 fit into this category of response. The comments in this group report that all students attending the school are at-risk and that they are therefore an open enrollment campus. For example:

Campus Data from the previous year is used to recruit students into the ACE Program. Being a Title 1 school allows eligibility for all students. Recruiting is
started before the school year begins and admission to the program is provided on a first come, first serve basis. Data for recruiting may not be available at that time. However, as the school year progresses, parents, teachers and/or administration may request that a student be enrolled in the program due to concern for the student’s progress. Consequently, the student would be enrolled to receive more than just the once or twice a week tutoring that the school provides. All available data, such as previous grades and STAAR results are utilized to begin recruiting at the beginning of each school year.

**Response Category 5**

*Program primarily uses student survey data and other sources of student feedback (such as average daily attendance reports from TX 21st) to achieve target number of students or to design activities that attract students to the program. May also recruit based on the class that was developed.*

A total of 86 responses out of 742 fit into this category of responses, representing 11.59% of total responses to this question. These responses primarily use attendance data to monitor the numbers of students they aim to serve. Strategies to boost enrollment reflect a strong commitment to connecting with student interests and needs. See examples:

Yes. The data used to recruit students into the ACE Program is our Course Outline form and a student sign up form to identify interest in the ACE Courses. Moving forward we will use info from PEIMS and data collected from school counselors. This will help us to identify and target the students who need ACE Courses.

Attendance logs are reviewed on a daily basis to check for availability in each grade level in accordance to required numbers, as noted in the RFP.

**NOTE:** Only 1.88% of the narrative responses provided insufficient evidence that data are used for recruitment. These responses account for the least number of responses (14 out of 742). For example:

The site coordinator communicates with the principal and other site coordinators and the program coordinator to get ideas for solutions to issues as they arise.

**Response Category 6 (NO)**

*Providing evidence to describe barriers to regular data use for recruitment.*

Thirty-nine out of seven-hundred-forty-two responses selected “No” to the preceding question, which accounts for 5.25% of all responses to this question. Many indicate that they see the value and that they will begin to use data. They also commonly state that because they are an open-enrollment campus they only enroll "needs-based" students at the behest of a teacher or school administrator. Some indicate that they use data after they
recruit students. See the following example:

I do tend to be guided more by the data after initial recruitment. If I allowed the data to generate my recruitment and waiting list rather than just parent interest, we would gain a student first mindset with no child having a reason to be left behind.

Preliminary Conclusions

Nearly 85% of ACE programs report using some form of data to guide their recruitment practices. This pervasive recognition that empirical information is relevant and useful to effective recruitment is a key building block for program improvement statewide. The field has developed an appetite for data use; the next step is to learn how to use data more strategically.

ACE programs with the most developed practice of data use tend to consider data from multiple perspectives. They refer to individual performance data to identify students in their target group, but they also look at achievement gaps among students groups and other patterns. Knowledge of these larger patterns will help ACE staff connect and show greater value to school leadership.

Programs with more developed data use practices additionally tend to use data for program design in order to improve student engagement and achievement. Programs with less developed practices tend to use data for compliance purposes (i.e., ensuring that minimum enrollment numbers are met).

Question 22

Text of Question 22: [If you affirmed that you regularly use data to drive decision making about retaining students by answering YES to the prior question], What is the evidence that you regularly use data to guide decision-making about retaining and engaging students in the ACE Program? If NO, please explain. How might regular use of data inform your student retention efforts? What kinds of data might you regularly use to inform your student retention efforts?

Guidance Provided: This question is asking you to consider and document how you use data to guide your decision-making about retaining students once you recruit them into your program. What kinds of data do you currently use that informs you about how to develop ways to keep students in the ACE program for 30 days or more, thus increasing the likelihood that they will become regular attendees and subsequently reap the benefits. Some examples of data might be monitoring the ACE program activities that have the most students attending on a regular basis, early warning systems that enable you to determine students in the ACE program that are at risk of quitting the program.
Response Category 1: Program conducts regular and ongoing collaborative data review and reflection with ACE program staff to address student performance (including retention issues). Uses qualitative data (survey, focus groups, ad-hoc feedback, regular school day personnel, parents and community stakeholder feedback) and quantitative performance information (AEIS, testing, Campus Improvement Plan, STAAR, TAKS, 21st Century reports: attendance, parent involvement). This category represents 14.28% of all responses.

Response Category 2: Programs use at least one source of performance data other than behavior records (attendance, grades, pre/post test) and may use some kind of satisfaction survey (student, teacher, parent) and or focus group on an ongoing basis to monitor and address changing student needs, program effectiveness, student interest. May contact parents about status of student. This category represents 28.03% of all responses.

Response Category 3: Student attendance and behavior data are the primary focus of retention strategies. Other sources of data not significant factors in program planning and adjustments. This category represents 17.92% of all responses.

Response Category 4: Primarily attendance and/or use qualitative information to drive student retention. e.g., feedback (some survey, mostly anecdotal) and state strategies used. This category represents 26.28% of all responses.

Response Category 5: Program provides insufficient evidence. This category represents 4.71% of all responses.

Response Category 6 (NO): Providing evidence to describe barriers to regular data use for retention. This category represents 8.76% of all responses.

Analysis Question 22

Response Category 1

Program conducts regular and ongoing collaborative data review and reflection with ACE program staff to address student performance (including retention issues). Uses qualitative data (survey, focus groups, ad-hoc feedback, regular school day personnel, parents and community stakeholder feedback) and quantitative performance information (AEIS, testing, Campus Improvement Plan, STAAR, TAKS, 21st Century reports: attendance, parent involvement).

There were 106 out of 742 responses that fit into this category, accounting for 14.28% of all responses. The differentiating characteristic of the majority of these responses (in addition to using both quantitative and qualitative information to guide their thinking) is that the roles of individual stakeholders are clearly structured and organized. Moreover, these programs tended to exhibit a holistic approach to creating effective and engaging OST programming. For example, student behavior issues are not considered in isolation but
rather are analyzed in the context of the broader student profile, enabling the team to identify multiple leverage points for influencing behavior. Additionally, program adjustments are considered throughout the year based on these data. For example:

Developing and implementing intentional activities based upon student surveys, CIP and Project Plan Goals. Working closely with Core-Day Kindergarten teachers in identifying specific ELA and Math deficits to address in ACE Kinder Korner activity. Collaborating with [ELA Curriculum Specialist], ELA curriculum specialist for GISD in implementing a phonemic-based program identified by data by [Data Specialist], data specialist for GISD. Working in collaboration with [Curriculum Specialist] in implementing Think Through Math, a State of Texas, researched based Math program designed for students in grades 2-5 who are struggling in Mathematics. Collaborating with the Boys & Girls Club of [Texas] to properly implement research based programs such as SMART Moves, Triple Play, and innovative career and college oriented programs such as Club Tech and Claymation. Other Types of Data Used and Purpose • Qualitative data used includes surveys, student reporting, student focus groups, teacher, counselor, administrator, and parent observations. This type of data helps decision making regarding programming for the students. • Quantitative data includes AEIS reports, Campus Improvement Plans, standardized testing, Renstar Universal Screeners, Texas Primary Reading Initiative (TPRI), District Reading Assessments (DRA), teacher made tests, benchmarks, TAKS results, STAAR results and benchmarks, TX21st Data (attendance, analysis of ACE student activities by attendance, parent participation, analysis of parent activities per participation rates ), PEIMS data (such as school day attendance, behavior, etc.), referrals, individual and group promotion rates, graduation rates, student intakes (when a student has a behavior challenge in GISD ACE the Site Coordinator and Project Director use the referral data to analyze and collaborate on the problem with the student and the student’s parent) and information regarding student criminal information.

Key Program Staff: School Administration, ACE Program Director, Site Coordinator, Parent Liaison, Instructor and school day teachers. Evidence: TEA data, Campus Improvement plan, school attendance records, semester grades, disciplinary referrals, individual program attendance, and written/verbal communication with key school personnel and administration. Statement: TEA reports and referrals from school officials have assisted with keeping students in the ACE program. Student surveys and voice/choice focus groups have also guided the decision-making process because we provide activities that members want to see in the program. Monitoring data allows program staff to determine which activities are meeting and which are not meeting the academic and social emotional needs of the students. Additionally, monitoring data allows for early intervention through the collaboration with school day teachers, counselors, and director of operations.
Response Category 2

*Programs use at least one source of performance data other than behavior records (attendance, grades, pre/post test) and may use some kind of satisfaction survey (student, teacher, parent) and/or focus group on an ongoing basis to monitor and address changing student needs, program effectiveness, student interest. May contact parents about status of student.*

The majority of responses, 208 out of 742 (28.03%) respondents, fall into this category. The programs in this response category do not have the same level of structure around data use as those in Category 1, but they nevertheless use a range of data in an adaptive way. See this example:

The ACE program uses data regularly to guide decision-making to help retain students by using the following indicators: • Progress reports each 3 weeks are used to guide decision making about retaining and engaging students in the ACE Program for 30 days or more • Weekly data is gathered from the (DMAC) Data Management Software for assessment and curriculum in Texas schools. • Attendance data is monitored on a weekly basis to ensure that students are attending school • Behavior referrals are monitored weekly to recognize behaviors that are being exhibited most often and causing students to receive multiple referrals to the offices of the principal/assistant principal/counselor • Parent conferences are held for students that are experiencing problems that may require feedback and recommendations.

Response Category 3

*Student attendance and behavior data are the primary focus of retention strategies. Other sources of data not significant factors in program planning and adjustments.*

133 out of 742 center responses fell into this category, which accounts for nearly 18% percent (17.92%) of total responses for this question. These responses indicate that attendance and behavior are the primary drivers used for student retention. Other sources of data are not represented as significant factors in program planning and adjustments. Some of these responses indicate that they make adjustments to activities and approaches (sometimes based on student/teacher/parent feedback) in order to retain as many students as possible.

We use data to determine whether or not we retain and engage our current students. Attendance is also as a factor in determining if our students are interested in the activities our program offers. If the attendance is low we determine whether we need to make changes to our program, or if the student is the correct fit for our program. We then can make a decision whether to keep the students or open up the spot to someone else.

Another significant driver for student retention is ensuring students meet the 30-day mark.
to be considered as a regular attendee. See this example:

We monitor activities to make sure they are engaging to the students. We use the Texas 21st system to determine students in programming at risk of not attending 30 days.

Response Category 4

*Primarily use attendance and/or qualitative information to drive student retention. e.g., feedback (some survey, mostly anecdotal) and state strategies used.*

These responses are the second most common for this question, representing 26.28% of the total number of responses (195 out of 742). Typically, no data use is mentioned aside from attendance. Many responses suggest that through the development of great programs students will continue to attend. Some responses indicate strategies that are identified as “promising” to boost enrollment and retention in OST more generally, such as providing transportation. Many indicate a strong commitment from school day personnel as indicated by their encouragement and follow-up with students targeted to attend. Many indicate their dedication to providing students with options and choice as a driver for retention.

Once students have been referred to the program, every effort is made to keep them enrolled and attending. At our campus, we increase the likelihood of student retention by meeting with parents to share program expectations for behavior and participation. We provide meals and late bus transportation, because transportation is a barrier for many of our students. We also provide small rewards to students with good attendance. With regard to data specifically, we closely monitor the sorts of enrichment activities that are most popular with students and take care to offer them frequently or add more sections whenever possible. Students also provide information about their activity preferences when they complete choice sheets every 6-week period. Both of these data sources help us plan engaging options that will keep students interested in the program. The principal reports that students are referred to the program primarily because of math needs, because that is the current campus goal; however, students who were already in the program may stay even if they weren’t originally referred for math.

We strongly adhere to student-voice, student-choice philosophy and we also observe which classes are most popular and most needed. We use those to continue to draw students and to retain them [sic]. We conduct student/parent and teacher surveys as to which classes they would like to see in the program.
Response Category 5

Program provides insufficient evidence.

The responses (35 out of 742) in this category lack specificity and were not conducive to analysis (4.71%). See example below:

Since ACE staff members are daytime staff as well, the ACE staff recommends the few students who are not attending ACE and detail how they would benefit from the additional help that the ACE program provides. All students are enrolled in the ACE program. Between the morning and afterschool offerings, there is a large daily attendance.

Response Category 6 (NO)

Providing evidence to describe barriers to regular data use for retention.

These responses account for 8.76% of total responses for this question (65 out of 742). The majority of these responses indicate that retention is not an issue for them generally. Most responses, however, identify opportunities to increase their use of data, e.g., by developing a survey or using other data to gain insight about which students require increased academic support. Some indicate that they do not intend to use data in the future because retention rates are currently sufficient. See this example:

At this time, the ACE program at HS does not feel there is a need to use data as a way to guide student retention decisions since the program already has a high retention rate. There are no plans at this time to use data to assist in student retention efforts. The programs running program is a big draw for the students and helps to maintain the high retention rate. The Project Director and Compliance and Quality Assistance Manager conduct on-going TX21st data monitoring to provide data-driven technical assistance. The Compliance and Quality Assistance Manager provides a Student Count report to districts, principals, and Site Coordinators monthly to demonstrate progress toward retention goals.

Preliminary Conclusions

The biggest divide is among programs that take advantage of a range of data to improve engagement and achievement as a means of retention versus those that use one or two sources of data (primarily attendance and behavior). In the latter group of programs, attendance patterns are used to gauge the effectiveness of particular activities, for instance. Program staff report that they adapt activities offered in view of declining attendance; but data use should not stop here. Programs that take advantage of a richer array of data are able to use data not only to signal problems but also to remedy them.
Question 24

**Text of Question 24:** [If you affirmed that you currently use processes and strategies to recruit and retain students into the ACE program by answering YES to the prior question]. Please describe in detail your processes and strategies for recruiting and retaining students into the ACE Program? If NO, what are your plans to develop processes and strategies to recruit and retain students into the ACE Program?

**Guidance Provided:** This question is asking you to document all of the different ways you recruit and retain students into the ACE program. You may interpret processes and strategies in a variety of ways.

A process is a plan that maps out how you will get from A to B. It identifies a way of doing a task. An example of a process is: ACE makes sure teachers have access to referral forms, teachers then place a completed form into a designated spot (ACE has a box in teachers lounge for example) and ACE staff pick these up daily and follow up with teacher’s referrals.

A strategy is a solution to move from where you are to where you want to be. Some examples of strategies include having ACE staff deliver presentations in classrooms during the regular school day or facilitate a fun and engaging activity during lunch break at the school. Another example of a strategy for continuous improvement of recruitment is to establish a feedback loop from ACE staff to teachers about which students are regularly attending ACE so that teachers are better able to refer students who will get the most benefit from the program.
**Response Category 1:** Programs use at least one source of data to identify potential students for enrollment in collaboration with school staff; program uses at least one outreach method and publicizes referral and enrollment processes; retention strategies have been developed (e.g., gathering feedback about student interests (to ensure engagement), ongoing monitoring, parental involvement, school staff involvement, student advisory, incentives and rewards. This category represents 26.68% of all responses.

**Response Category 2:** Program uses at least one source of data to identify eligible students; may use data to prioritize among eligible students; limited recruitment strategies or processes beyond identification and invitation; may reference retention strategies. This category represents 37.60% of all responses.

**Response Category 3:** Programs have established multiple strategies and clear processes for recruitment and enrollment. May include reference to retention strategies or processes. This category represents 10.51% of all responses.

**Response Category 4:** Open Enrollment. This category represents 9.56% of all responses.

**Response Category 5:** Limited reference to recruitment and enrollment; primarily focus on retaining students who enroll. This category represents 10.64% of all responses.

**Response Category 6 (NO):** Provide evidence to describe barriers to using processes and strategies to recruit and retain students. This category represents 3.09% of all responses.

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**Analysis Question 24**

**Response Category 1**

*Programs use at least one source of data to identify potential students for enrollment in collaboration with school staff; program uses at least one outreach method and publicizes referral and enrollment processes; retention strategies have been developed (e.g., gathering feedback about student interests (to ensure engagement), ongoing monitoring, parental involvement, school staff involvement, student advisory, incentives and rewards.*

Nearly 200 (198 out of 742) of the responses are represented in this category, which accounts for 26.68% of all responses to this question. The differentiating characteristics of this response type include the use of a recruitment and retention plan or policy; use of multiple outreach strategies; having well publicized referral enrollment processes; recruitment and enrollment strategies geared toward target population; and, school leadership permits access to school facilities and events for recruitment purposes. Most responses indicate that program staff also seek opportunities to engage parents and/or youth-serving community organizations in the recruitment process. Below are a few examples that illustrate many of these characteristics:
ISD ACE Enrollment Policy • Eligible participants should be those who can attend the full, comprehensive program, and ACE programs should design activities and adopt practices that support regular, sustained participation in order to show academic gains. Efforts must be made to effectively coordinate activities with regular school calendars and design programs that align with school day curriculum to meet the academic needs of the students. • ACE will actively recruit students that do not attend school regularly and/or, are of low socio-economic backgrounds and/or are students that are At-Risk. They will be identified through PEIMS and ACE will work with campus staff to communicate and enroll these. • ACE will actively recruit students who struggle academically, need support with their behavior, social and or emotional skill set, that have not been promoted or are in danger of not being promoted, that have not graduated or are in danger of not graduating. These students will be identified through monthly campus data meetings, by parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators. ACE will work with campus staff to communicate and enroll these students. Recruitment • Utilize campus data meetings, teacher meetings, parent referrals, counselor referrals and community meetings to determine candidates • Utilize input from campus administration via principal meetings to create list of candidates. • Meetings weekly with site coordinators principals, and teachers to collaboratively strategize ways to recruit students. • Meet and greet at Back to School night Retention: • Surveys every six weeks for student voice and choice • Ask teachers to follow up with students whose attendance has dropped from the ACE program. • Create a Retention Task Force.

Yes. We have a strategy for recruitment of students that is primarily based on the Campus Improvement Plan and individual referrals from principals, teachers, parents, and counselors. The retention process involves: a. use of monitoring software to gather data from district benchmarks (e.g. student academic achievement and attendance both in the regular school day and the ACE program), b. monitoring students’ at-risk of dropping out via activity participation and individual levels of achievement in the ACE program and regular school day, c. communication with counselors and CIS to assist with retention of students, and d. informal communication and school messenger to communicate with parents regarding retention techniques.

Response Category 2

Program uses at least one source of data to identify eligible students; may use data to prioritize among eligible students; limited recruitment strategies or processes beyond identification and invitation; may reference retention strategies.

This response category accounts for the highest percentage of responses (279 out of 742 or 37.60%) for this question. The most common strategies involve a combination of teacher recommendation and initial outreach to parents (with infrequent or no follow-up):
Site Coordinator reviews grade, attendance, and discipline reports and consults with teachers and principal to ensure that any student needing academic help is included in the ACE program. Teachers provide student recommendation lists to site coordinator. Parents of students that need help and are not attending the ACE activities are called. Reports, teacher recommendations, and parent call logs are on file.

I recruit students through data collected from school day personnel such as teacher recommendations, AMI, RMI test scores, mock and previous STARR tests scores and updated at risk lists. I also meet with parents to inform them of what the program is and what it is intended to do for the students.

At the conclusion of the 2012/2013 school year I asked teachers to make recommendations for students that would benefit from the ACE program during the 2013/2014 school year. Additionally, I received a copy of the students that failed the STARR test during the 2012/2013 school year. Over the summer I contacted parents of those students, explaining the program and encouraging them to enroll their student in ACE for the following year. During the school year I depend on teacher recommendations to determine what students would benefit from the ACE program. During the ACE program I use student surveys to determine what activities students would like to see.

Interestingly, there were several responses indicate that students are excluded from participation for reasons that might be viewed by other programs as the very reasons for recruitment:

Students are recruited in the ACE program by multiple methods. One method is by allowing the teachers and advisors to refer students based on the observed needs that they have assessed on a case by case basis. Students are also allowed to request to be in the program on their own and a small committee of staff that will either support or reject the student’s participation based on some criteria that would disqualify them such as excessive behavioral referrals, truancy etc.

**Response Category 3**

Programs have established multiple strategies and clear processes for recruitment and enrollment. May include reference to retention strategies or processes.

Seventy-eight out of 742 responses are represented in this response category, comprising a little over 10% (10.51%) of the total. Many in this category use surveys and other tools to gather information about student interests in order to design attractive programs. Some describe strong partnerships with schools with respect to recruitment. A representative response is provided below:

Site Coordinators hold an application day toward the end of the school year. Site Coordinator then develops a list of applicants and reviews them with the principal.
Together, they decide on approved applications. The Site Coordinator then notifies all applicants of application status. Should vacancies remain, Site Coordinators continue to advertise, using flyers and soliciting recommendations from teachers and school administration. If needed, a table is set up to recruit during the assigned “Meet the Teacher” night.

Response Category 4

Open Enrollment.

There were 71 out of 742 responses that fall into this category type, accounting for 9.56% of all the responses to this question. The commonality among these responses is that they expressed little or no challenge related to recruiting and retaining students. Many indicate that they have waiting list; often elementary schools (age when parents tend to be most engaged and seek out after-school). Many have school-wide Title 1 programs and thus all students meet “at-risk” criteria. Some just use a class roster from previous year to enroll.

Being at the Elementary level its easy to recruit and retain students, as soon as the word is out ACE is accepting students the request come in constantly. Currently I send home an ACE application and notice of a Mandatory Parent Meeting in the school packet that goes home with every child. The Meetings are packed. This is general sufficient for this program. If need be I have access to the Campus Electronic All Call System as well. The campus news and announcements also mention ACE enrollment and activity.

Response Category 5

Limited reference to recruitment and enrollment; primarily focus on retaining students who enroll.

There were 79 out of 742 of all responses that fell into this category, which accounts for 10.64% all responses. They typically describe strategies they use to attract and sustain student participation in OST. Many strategies presented in this category are considered “promising” in OST literature. The following response, for example, offers a compelling opportunity that the regular school in their community may not provide:

The strategy to get my students to attend is an incentive to come to the program. The incentive is an on-line driver’s education program so the students can get their learners permit. As new students come in they are polled to see what activities they think they would like to see brought to the program be it academic or enrichment. Polling is done on a continual basis to make sure we as ACE site-coordinators are up to date with the wants and likes of the students
NOTE: Less than 2% (1.88%) of all responses fell into this category and represent comments that were insufficient, left blank, or misinterpreted the question. See example here:

Yes, we are continuously finding the best methods and strategies of engaging with our students.

Response Category 6 (NO)

Provide evidence to describe barriers to using processes and strategies to recruit and retain students.

Twenty-three out of 742 responses were represented in this category (3.09%) of response types. Responses in this category fall into three major themes: 1) their grant is ending, which presents funding barriers to prevent hiring more staff or providing transportation to and from program; 2) difficulty recruiting and retaining students generally (no plan in place); and 3) not experiencing any issues with recruiting and retaining students, for example:

Recruitment has never been an issue, we are always at capacity.

Preliminary Conclusions

Three-quarters of programs report using multiple strategies to attract and retain students. Of these, nearly two-thirds use some form of data to guide their strategies. These findings indicate that program teams are energetic and intentional about recruitment and retention.

The findings also indicate, however, that program efforts could be more effective if anchored in a documented plan that identifies recruitment objectives, relevant sources of data, and opportunities for contact. Few programs referenced such a plan in their responses; rather recruitment and retention efforts commonly seem to proceed in an ad hoc manner.

Question 26

Text of Question 26: [If you affirmed that ACE Program personnel, partners, and community members each have a specific role related to recruiting and retaining students by answering YES to the prior question], What is the evidence that program personnel, regular school day personnel, partners, and community members each have a specific role related to recruiting and retaining students into the ACE Program? If NO, please explain. What are your plans to establish roles for ACE Program personnel, et al. in recruiting and retaining students into the ACE Program?

Guidance Provided: This question is asking you to comment on whether key ACE program stakeholders play a part in helping you recruit and retain students in the program. The
program may use strategies to recruit students that involve the explicit support of ACE staff, community partners, and regular school day staff. Role refers to the job or function associated with a specific person.

**Response Category 1:** Roles for ACE program, school, and community-based organization personnel are clearly stated and designate specific responsibilities for recruiting & retaining students into ACE program. This category represents 6.46% of all responses.

**Response Category 2:** School and community-based organization personnel assist in recruiting students into ACE program; some program partners assist with retention. This category represents 46% of all responses.

**Response Category 3:** School personnel recommend the ACE program to parents but do not assist in recruiting; some program partners refer. This category represents 24.39% of all responses.

**Response Category 4:** ACE staff are primarily responsible for recruiting and retaining students. This category represents 8% of all responses.

**Response Category 5:** Insufficient Evidence. This category represents 2.83% of all responses.

**Response Category 6 (NO):** Describe barriers that prevent program personnel, regular school day personnel, partners, and community members from having a specific role related to recruiting and retaining students into the ACE Program. This category represents 12.26% of all responses.

**Question 26 Analysis**

**Response Category 1**

*Roles for ACE program, school, and community-based organization personnel are clearly stated and designate specific responsibilities for recruiting & retaining students into ACE program.*

Forty-eight out of 742 fit into this category of responses, which accounts for 6.46% of responses. So, in short, very few programs have well-defined roles and responsibilities with respect to recruiting and retaining students. There is considerable variation in specificity among those that have defined these roles. The first example below is more representative, while the second describes a more developed model:

ACE staff develops flyers as described 3.3 and provide individualized support for each student to encourage them to succeed and attend ACE regularly. The role of regular staff is to help distribute information and promote ACE during their classes.
The Principal encourages students, as does the Counselor to help students see the value in ACE.

Ace program staff and school personnel have the commitment of several professionals that recruit for our program. There is the administration focusing on certain target groups that are in need of academic assistance. Also teaching staff recruit students who are performing below standardized test and need assistance. Counselor and Intervention Specialist focusing on students with social/emotional issues, plus get information about college and careers. OCI/ISS instructor referral of students with behavior problems that would benefit in our EWI class taught by the FES Ace staff member.

As the second example illustrates, there are natural roles that many school and program staff could effectively play with respect to recruitment and retention.

**Response Category 2**

*School and community-based organization personnel assist in recruiting students into ACE program; some program partners assist with retention.*

Close to half (46%) of all responses fit into this category, accounting for 342 out of 742 total responses. Thus, there is evidence of widespread willingness among school and community organizations to assist with recruitment and retention.

Representative examples include the following:

Teachers, school principal, and site coordinator are all involved in the recruiting and retaining process. Teachers, principal and site coordinator collaborate to determine which students need to be served in the ACE program. Teachers, principal and site coordinator constantly monitor students grades, behavior, and school day attendance.

A.C.E teachers who run continuous programs are tasked with recruiting and retaining students in their respective programs. School day teachers of these students often serve the purpose of recruiting and retaining the students from their class. Partners and community members often serve to inspire students to continue with the program and often put on workshops or demonstrations to keep interest in the afterschool program high. This can be seen with musicians, writers & outside partners that donate time, money and materials to program participants.

In some responses, program teams report that one sector of stakeholders are helpful but that they have not yet gotten the support they would like from another:

The Principal, Counselor and Teachers have been very proactive in assisting with recruiting students for the ACE program. The program has been running for the last
several years and we are striving to bring in community involvement for recruiting and general implementation.

These programs would benefit from examples of formal role descriptions as a resource as they work to improve the effectiveness of partners currently assisting with recruitment and retention and engage those partners who are not yet doing so.

**Response Category 3**

*School personnel recommend the ACE program to parents but do not assist in recruiting; some program partners refer.*

One hundred-eighty-one out of 742 centers responses are included in this category, accounting for approximately one quarter (24.39%) of all responses. These responses indicate a cooperative, but more limited, recruiting relationship with partners. The following examples are illustrative:

I request input from regular day teachers to identify students that might benefit from participation in the afterschool program for both conduct and behavior as well as homework help.

ACE personnel, regular school day personnel and partners are constantly referring students to the ACE program.

Given that the program partners in this category are sufficiently engaged to identify and recommend candidates for the program, ACE staff have the opportunity to build on this relationship by encouraging partners to support student enrollment more directly. Draft role descriptions could facilitate these discussions.

**Response Category 4**

*ACE staff are primarily responsible for recruiting and retaining students.*

These kinds of responses account for 8% of all responses to this question (59 out of 742 responses). Very few programs report that partners play no role in recruitment and retention. Most commonly, school and community partners are more passively helpful, permitting access to school facilities and events, for instance:

The school provides the opportunity for recruitment during orientation and we enroll the students. We are fully enrolled and all students are over 30 days+.

Perhaps if school personnel had a better understanding of the value added by the programs in this category, they could be persuaded to play a more active role in at least recommending if not helping to recruit students.
Response Category 5

Insufficient Evidence

Only 2.83% or 21 out of 742 responses were sufficiently vague to fall into this category of responses. Mostly, these responses offer a description of activities without indicating the parties carrying them out. The following response is typical of this category:

By communicating with each other on a consistent basis and ensuring roles are defined and aligned with programming needs. Included are email, texts, phone calls, and monthly meetings.

Response Category 6 (NO)

Describe barriers that prevent program personnel, regular school day personnel, partners, and community members from having a specific role related to recruiting and retaining students into the ACE Program.

These responses are the third most common for this question, making up 12.26% or 91 out of 742 responses. Responses in this category tended either to report that recruitment goals were being met without either role definition or assistance from partners or that recruitment was accomplished in a more seamless fashion:

Recruiting is not a problem at [redacted] Elementary. I have parents and students that ask for applications quite often.

No one has a specific role in identifying students for the ACE program. We work together as a unit to make sure we accommodate our students so that we may meet the need for our campus.

Although role definition might not be critical if recruitment goals are high-level and generic (simply meeting minimum enrollment expectations or ensuring that all enrollees have some kind of identified need, e.g.), a more strategic approach will likely be required if a program is to achieve more specific targets (“right mix”).

Preliminary Conclusions

ACE program teams have a promising opportunity to ramp up the assistance they currently receive from program partners with respect to recruitment and retention. Few program teams are taking full advantage of the support that appears to be available based on the following findings:

- Over three-quarters of programs report that school partners play some role in recruitment and retention.
Nearly half of program respondents report that partners actively assist with student recruitment and retention. Only six percent of programs report having clearly defined roles and responsibilities for recruitment and retention across program partners.

In other words, there appears to be ample willingness among program partners to share responsibility for recruitment and retention. The task for ACE teams is to activate this potential by initiating the conversation and offering draft role documents as first steps toward greater engagement.

**Question 28**

**Text of Question 28:** [If you affirmed that you are currently serving the targeted population of students by answering YES to the prior question], What is the evidence that you are currently serving the targeted population of students (i.e., students most in need of academic assistance)? If NO, please explain. What are your plans to begin to serve the targeted population of students (i.e., students most in need of academic assistance)?

**Guidance Provided:** This question is asking you if the students you are serving today are representative of the students that you initially identified and aimed to serve. If not, it asks why you were unable to recruit and retain the targeted population of student and families that you set out to serve. Who are the students that attend your program? Are these the students identified as most in need? If you are serving a different population of students, tell the story of how this happened. How might this affect the agreements and understandings that you established with the school you are supporting?
Response Category 1: ACE program has a formalized recruitment policy that establishes criteria for recruiting and retaining students into ACE; provides percentages of students in need that ACE is serving. Also, identifies a specific student profile. This category represents 15.76% of all responses.

Response Category 2: ACE Program uses a standard set of data to recruit and retain students; often, data set documented and or agreed upon or understood by school. This category represents 53.77% of all responses.

Response Category 3: School personnel are primarily responsible for determining the target population to recruit into the program; may also take referrals from community members or parents who request that a student is enrolled in ACE. This category represents 6.33% of all responses.

Response Category 4: Program asserts that it serves the students who are most in need of academic support (or “target population”), but provides little or no detail in support of this statement. This category represents 5.8% of all responses.

Response Category 5: Program has not identified a target population at the school; programs often explain that entire school population is designated Title 1 and thus eligible. This category represents 12.12% of all responses.

Response Category 6 (NO): Describe barriers that prevent a center from currently serving the targeted population of students (i.e., students most in need of academic assistance. This category represents 2.02% of all responses.

Question 28 Analysis

Response Category 1

ACE program has a formalized recruitment policy that establishes criteria for recruiting and retaining students into ACE; Provides percentages of students in need that ACE is serving. Also, identifies a specific student profile.

This category of responses accounts for 15.76% of all responses to this question (117 out of 742). These responses are characterized by the use of a formal policy that has been developed in collaboration with the regular school day administration (or other personnel) to recruit students into the ACE program. As evidenced by these examples:

ACE students at [Name of School] are served based on direct input from the administrators and teachers based on academic needs as stated in the ACE handbook, on the ACE [Name of Website]. webpage, and as required by the grant. Priority is given to students with academic need. The nomination criteria is as follows: 1. Failed STAAR. 2. Low score on STAAR 3. Failed Benchmark 4. Needs assistance with Math 5. Needs assistance with Reading 6. Limited English Proficient 7. Free Lunch Participant.
We also use the following data to ensure we are serving students that are in most need of academic assistance: • Day school grades/report cards • Day school and/or ACE benchmarks • Day school referrals • Day school absences • Students that meet with Advocates This is further evident and reflected by: • Students that are enrolled and show regular participation in TX21st • External Evaluation reports.

Per the GISD ACE Enrollment Policy Travis Elementary ACE program has 12% of the enrolled students are At-Risk, 100% are economically disadvantaged, 54% benefit from a research based social group, and 100% are in need of academic assistance. 100% fit the GISD ACE Enrollment Policy. Intentional student recruitment is key for a successful ACE program. Site Coordinators should recruit students who can attend the full, comprehensive program (3 hours a day). “Site Coordinators should adopt practices that support regular, sustained participation throughout the year. The ACE program is not designed to be a “casual, drop-in” program, and based on statewide evaluation results, students who attend more programming have higher levels of state assessment scores, fewer disciplinary incidents, fewer school day absences, and enhanced likelihood of grade promotion. ...the same students should continue to attend ACE programming throughout the entire year (fall, spring, summer). FAQ 2013-2014 Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers, updated March 19, 2013, http://mytexasace.org; (This is part of the parent handbook along with the Enrollment Policy)

Response Category 2

ACE Program uses a standard set of data to recruit and retain students; often, data set documented and or agreed upon or understood by school.

Over half, 399 out of 742, or 53.77% of responses to Question 28 fell into this category. The programs in this category tend to identify broad data categories that are referenced for recruitment and retention but are less specific about the criteria against which student data are evaluated. The following are three common examples:

Students most in need of academic assistance are identified through; • Non-academic achievement as documented by grades, test/assessment scores, behavioral problems in the regular school day and at home • Recommendations from regular school day staff • Recommendation from parents • Recommendations from community partners • Assessment scores from directed reading inventories or related instruments

We have access to all PEIMS information on students within the program.

The campus employs Evidence Based Enrollment practices (refer to CRRES document). Multiple data sources are used to monitor participation of the target audience. Program attendance through TX21st reports are used to capture attendance. The site coordinator-developed data sheets, which easily document
each student’s tier level, grouping, assessments, RTI referrals, and quartile reports are assessed to ensure that the program is targeting the intended population of students. Siblings of students that qualify for enrollment are extended the opportunity to enroll as well. This family support helps ensure the eligible child(ren) regularly attend the program.

Response Category 3

School personnel are primarily responsible for determining the target population to recruit into the program; may also take referrals from community members or parents who request that a student is enrolled in ACE.

Forty-seven of 742 (6.33%) responses to this question fell into this category. The distinguishing pattern in these responses is that program staff tend not to take ownership for identifying students for recruitment, but rather rely on referrals from others. Below is an example of this type of response:

Recommendations from regular school day staff, including administrators and teachers Parent recommendations and feedback

Response Category 4

Program asserts that it serves the students who are most in need of academic support (or “target population”), but provides little or no detail in support of this statement.

This response type accounts for a small percentage (5.80%) or 43 out of 742 of all responses to this question. These responses primarily consist of declarations without supporting information. One example provided below illustrates this:

It is evident that the ACE program is currently serving the targeted population of students based on the extended day recruitment efforts of ACE and regular and leadership school day personnel, through call-outs, to signed letters from guardians.

Response Category 5

Program has not identified a target population at the school; programs often explain that entire school population is designated Title 1 and thus eligible.

This response category includes 90 out of 742 responses, accounting for 12.12% of all responses to this question. These programs tend not to recognize that there can be significant variation among students at any given campus. One example of this response type follows:

Independent School District and partnered to serve the particular schools because they are most in academic need. All students at the school are targeted to recruit and retain because the school is low performing. The
data clerk provides the coordinator with report cards from previous year. Surveys are distributed to the families twice a year. Also, the coordinator receives referrals from the school staff.

**Note:** Approximately 4.17% of responses to this question did not adequately address the question. The failure came either in the form of insufficient information or they answered the wrong question in the space provided for question 28. These types of responses account for 31 out of 742 responses. See the following example:

Evidence includes emails with Dobie counselors sending us 10 plus students who need to make up service hours with our program.

**Response Category 6 (NO)**

*Describe barriers that prevent a center from currently serving the targeted population of students (i.e., students most in need of academic assistance)*

Fifteen out of 742 responses (or 2.02%) answered NO to this question. Many of these responses suggest that the entire school is in need of support and therefore targeted for recruitment. Other responses suggest barriers such as a lack of finances to provide transportation to the students most in need. Additionally, several examples cite the challenges associated with attempting to serve the neediest students, primarily citing a lack of parental support to enforce attendance. See example below:

The ACE program at this site has tried numerous times to recruit those students who are in the greatest need of assistance. However, due to the lack of cooperation from the parent, it makes it difficult to reach those students. Transportation is a factor in this situation. All the data in the world cannot make students attend or remain in the program if the parents do not cooperate. School day staff have assisted in encouraging the parents to complete the necessary paperwork and allow their students to attend, but getting those students who need it most can be a challenge.

**Preliminary Conclusions**

Seventy percent of programs report that their recruitment and retention practices are standardized to some degree. Of these, however, most identify only broad categories of data consulted and few specify any thresholds triggering recruitment or retention action. The overall picture suggests that program teams tend at best to have identified their target population at a high-level and know where to go to get information related to their general recruitment and retention objectives.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that nearly a quarter of the programs make no distinctions among students at a campus, default to the population referred by partners, or show no indication of clear targets.
Knowing whether or not a program is serving the intended student population is probably the most basic piece of information a program team should have. The lack of attention on this front, in contrast with the acute focus of the program at-large on the 30-day attendance objective, suggests that program performance metrics are too narrow.

Question 30

**Text Question 30:** [If you affirmed that you aim to recruit and retain a diverse (right kids/right mix) group of students into the ACE program by answering YES to the prior question], What is the evidence that you aim to recruit and retain a diverse (right kids/right mix) group of students into the ACE Program? If NO, please explain. What is your plan to recruit and retain a diverse (right kids/right mix) group of students into the ACE Program?

**Guidance Provided:** This question is asking how you determine the mix of students you need in order to be able to effectively retain and support a full cohort over time. Tell the story of who you serve and why? Do you consider the diversity of the student population that you serve? Is this an important factor and why? How does the diversity of the student population affect your ability to retain students in out of school time programming and thus support their success in school?
Response Category 1: Program has defined optimum mix based on multiple factors (ideally) and intentionally recruits to achieve that mix. This category represents 18% of all responses.

Response Category 2: Program has established conditions (multiple enrollment criteria, diverse activities, diverse program team, sibling enrollment) that tend to attract good mix, but does not intentionally recruit to achieve an optimum mix. This category represents 20.75% of all responses.

Response Category 3: Program staff are cognizant of the value of mix/diversity, but are not proactive in achieving it (in terms of setting conditions or recruiting); often expressed in terms of matching district or campus demographic profile. This category represents 30% of all responses.

Response Category 4: Program is open-enrollment; no criteria are used; might note that they don’t discriminate. This category represents 18.46% of all responses.

Response Category 5: Non-responsive; typically descriptive of program elements without addressing student mix. This category represents 6.46% of all responses.

Response Category 6 (NO): Describes barriers that prevent center from aims to recruit and retain a diverse (right kids/right mix) group of students into the ACE program. This category represents 6.19% of all responses.

Question 30 Analysis

Response Category 1

*Program has defined optimum mix based on multiple factors (ideally) and intentionally recruits to achieve that mix.*

Eighteen percent, or 134 out of 742, responses to this question indicate that they have defined an optimum mix of students and target recruitment accordingly. The most instructive responses describe the rationale behind the desired mix and the implementation strategies that leverage it. For example:

When we begin our recruitment process, we do try to balance our classrooms by meeting the needs of all our student populations. We analyze data to incorporate a heterogeneous group of high, medium, and low performing students within a classroom so that collaborative peer to peer tutoring / class work is effective.

At our campus, diversity includes the areas of student needs based on academic levels, intervention areas, and meeting different learning styles. Students within our program include a mix of students identified as Gifted and Talented (high performing in academics). These students are often siblings of our identified
students. The mix of these students into our program allows for peer-to-peer mentoring and leadership/collaboration development to take place. Students are able to learn from each other’s skill sets and further their knowledge through the use of incorporating GT strategies into our At-Risk population – this permits creativity and critical thinking among all students within our program (the implementation of program activities that appeal to our students does assist in retaining student enrollment. Our program provides for students with diverse learning styles (e.g., visual kinesthetic, auditory, tactile). TIER/Intervention levels are reviewed for diversity, student home language (TELPAS and need for application/practice of the English language), Peer Mentoring (to include mixed grades within MicroSociety component of program), enrollment forms, and student data are all indicators used to ensure the recruitment and retention of a diverse student population within our program.

In many instances, program leadership seeks diversity in order to avoid negative labeling:

ACE works closely with the athletic department to get the athletes involved in afterschool. These combinations allow for a diverse group of students. This diversity is essential because it helps students break the stigma of “labeling.”

Most of the responses in this category simply confirm that the program recruits with an eye toward diversity among students with respect to academic achievement, socioeconomic background and/or areas of interest. It is clear that students in these programs are purposefully recruited to achieve the “right mix,” but the responses offer little insight into the factors considered in determining the optimum mix and how the program is organized to get the most synergy from students’ differences.

Response Category 2

Program has established conditions (multiple enrollment criteria, diverse activities, diverse program team, sibling enrollment) that tend to attract good mix, but does not intentionally recruit to achieve an optimum mix.

One-hundred-and-fifty-four out of 742 (20.75%) center responses was represented in this category of responses. Program respondents in this category value heterogeneity and are intentional about designing programs that attract a variety of students. For instance:

ACE provides activities to meet academic and enrichment needs. Some classes focus more on academic, math/reading tutoring while other class focus on teaching elements of math/reading/science through projects (enrichment). ACE offers a wide variety of programming to recruit a diverse group of students, such as sports, capoeira, green teams, book worm club, theatre, music, gaming, and more. All ages and all ethnicities.

Other programs focus on establishing enrollment conditions that favor diversity:
I aim to recruit and retain a diverse group of students by offering registration forms in more than one language, holding registration and information rallies for international students and offering classes geared toward serving more than one kind of student.

The program leaders in this category have developed strategies effective for drawing a range of students, but could probably, on the whole, be more effective if they explicitly defined the mix they seek and were strategic in how that mix interacts. In other words, they have an opportunity to strengthen their programs by carrying their logic through to its conclusion. If diversity is a strategy, what is its intended outcome? How might recruitment efforts achieve the most potent mix with respect to reaching that outcome? How might activities be engineered to get the most benefit from student diversity?

Response Category 3

Program staff are cognizant of the value of mix/diversity, but are not proactive in achieving it (in terms of setting conditions or recruiting); often expressed in terms of matching district or campus demographic profile.

This category includes the most responses, with 30%, or 223 out of 742. The dominant theme among these responses is that although program teams appear to value a mixed population of students, they have not enacted strategies to achieve it. The following are representative responses:

The program is open to all students at each campus, and all students are recruited and encouraged to be a part of the program. We look for opportunities to pair students with mentors to assist those struggling students with students who can assist with homework assistance.

The students in my program are a mix of students with both academic needs as well as social/emotional needs. Many of my students may share the same interests, and many of them are interested in a wide variety of different subjects and activities.

In many instances, the program team focused on parity with the regular school population:

The students ACE serves are diverse as they mirror the diversity of students on the campuses we serve. Our ACE student population reflects the needs of students.

In short, the programs in this category recognize the value of a good mix of students, and sometimes take advantage of differences for peer-to-peer tutoring, for instance, but have not been purposeful in recruiting. In other words, the student mix happens more by chance than by design. Having recognized the value of heterogeneity, these programs are poised to take their programs to the next level by putting intention behind this belief.
Response Category 4

*Program is open-enrollment; no criteria are used; might note that they don’t discriminate.*

This category represents 18.46%, or 137 out of 742 responses. To the extent programs in this category discuss enrollment criteria or recruitment, they focus on student need. They typically indicate that little or no attention is paid to the mix of students. In many instances, the program focused on non-discrimination:

We recruit all students in need with no discrimination for demographics or other considerations. All students who need our program are encouraged to attend and to stay in the program.

The program is open to all students and reaches out to all students enrolled at the school regardless of race or limited abilities.

These program teams might benefit from technical assistance that builds understanding of the ways various mixes of students could strengthen program effectiveness.

Response Category 5

*Non-responsive; typically descriptive of program elements without addressing student mix.*

About 6.5% (6.46%) or 48 out of 742 responses indicate a misunderstanding of the question. These responses tended to describe variation in program activities without reference to impact on student enrollment. The following is a representative response:

There is a consistent level of diversity throughout the after school program. The activities and academic classes that are offered are based on needs assessment for the campus. The diversity of classes is developed by the campus needs assessment.

Response Category 6 (NO)

*Describes barriers that prevent center from aims to recruit and retain a diverse (right kids/right mix) group of students into the ACE program.*

A little over 6% (6.19%) percent or 46 out of 742 responses selected a NO response to this question. The majority of these responses report focusing solely on need, though many indicate an intention to consider mix in future years:

We would like to have a diverse group of students, yet our primary focus is to assist those students who are in greatest need of being in the after school program.
Currently, we offer services to all students who demonstrate an interest or a need. In this future, discussing recruitment and retention of a diverse group of students may become an ACE staff or CST meeting topic. Strategies to do so may include reaching out to students based on teacher recommendation for participation.

**Preliminary Conclusions**

There is an opportunity for the statewide leadership team of the program to raise achievement by guiding local programs toward more intentional and proactive recruitment and enrollment practices. Significantly, nearly 70% of program respondents indicate that they value a heterogeneous population in their programs. Thus, the field will likely to be receptive to this effort.

Very few program teams articulated the composition of or rationale for their optimum mix of students. Accordingly, as a first step toward improvement, state leadership should consider offering assistance aimed at helping local teams get clear about the mix they would ideally enroll and why. Resources summarizing the research findings regarding implications of various population mixes should be shared to set the stage for this assistance.