



21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER
YEAR 4 EVALUATION REPORT (2016-17)

Grantee: Kids Creative

Project number: 0187-17-6036

Participating Schools: Joseph O. Loretan Campus (P.S. 536, Archer Elementary School, and the Bronx Little School)

Program Name: R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx (Reaching Out Creatively to Kids)

Date: September 2017

INTRODUCTION

Youth Studies, Inc. (YSI) is conducting a four-year evaluation of the R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx Program, a 21st Community Learning Center (21CCLC) initiative to provide needed youth development and academic enrichment services to students attending the following New York City public schools, all of which are located on the Joseph O. Loretan Campus in the Bronx:

Schools

P.S. 536

Archer Elementary School

Bronx Little School

The R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx Program is collaboration between two non-profit, youth-serving organizations, Kids Creative and Roads to Success. The mission of the collaboration is to provide consistent, quality, comprehensive year-round programming that addresses the ongoing needs of the youth, their families and the community. The out-of-school time programs focus on academic achievement, college and career exploration, student empowerment, the arts, science and exploration, community building and conflict resolution.

The purpose of this report is to describe key evaluation findings from Year 4 of the evaluation. This cross-site analysis brings together data on student- and program-level characteristics. The report draws on multiple sources of data, including official program records and observations of program activities made by YSI.

The impetus for the collection of evaluation data for many human services organizations is funder requirements. Furthermore, the New York State Department of Education required us to collect some of the data included in this report in connection with the requirements for the Annual Performance Report (APR). However, we believe this report has other vital uses, including the following:

- Identify areas where improvements are needed
- Motivate staff to continually strive for improvements
- Reward staff and youth for positive results
- Improve fundraising and community outreach by incorporating evaluation results in communications and proposals
- Identify training and professional development opportunities that address areas where improvements are needed

In our evaluation of your 21st CCLC grant, we set out to build a systematic process to regularly monitor the quality and results of services provided by your after-school programs. To make these evaluation findings really worthwhile, we hope program managers and frontline staff will use the information provided in this report to help improve services for youth and to ensure better outcomes in the future. Furthermore, these data will be collected on an annual basis.

We recommend taking the following next steps:

- Disseminate this report to program coordinators, frontline staff, and other interested parties

- Convene a “How Are We Doing?” staff meeting and use this report as a basis for discussion
- Develop a program improvement plan based on this data which:
 - designates responsibility for each component of the plan;
 - includes a list of actions for those responsible;
 - identifies deadlines for the completion of those actions; and
 - outlines a list of expected results
- Provide recognition to individuals and/or groups who show positive outcomes
- Include excerpts and specific findings in future proposals and other outreach communications
- Improve data collection efforts to maximize the utility of future evaluation reports

The R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx Program has several key objectives, as outlined in the original proposal. In Table 1 below, we include a list of the program’s performance indicators. Reporting on the status of each of these performance indicators is important in determining the program’s effectiveness and it is a requirement of the Annual Performance Report (APR). At the time this report was written, several pieces of data were not yet available to report on the status of these performance indicators during Year 4 of the program. YSI is currently working closely with Kids Creative and Roads to Success to review and analyze all pertinent data in an effort to report on the status of each of these performance indicators.

Table 1

Performance Indicator
1. 100% of students will participate in activities.
2. 100% of students will be active for at least 30 minutes
3. 100% of students will express themselves through music and contribute ideas for the final performance.
4. 85% of students will report increased understanding of music and performance skills.
5. 90% of students will complete projects showcased at mid-year and year-end events
6. 85% of students will report increased participation in art projects
7. 85% of students will report increased awareness of current social issues.
8. 85% of students will report increased civic engagement.
9. 85% of students will complete a final service learning product – (e.g. PSA video, Info Board, Fundraiser) or Journal from a direct service project (e.g. volunteering).
10. 75% of participants will report increased knowledge about healthier eating options
11. 85% of students will report increased understanding of technology
12. 85% of students will report improved communication skills
13. 85% of students will report improved presentation skills.
14. 85% of students will report swim skill and confidence increases
15. At least 25% of will parents participate in monthly meetings, workshops.
16. Site Directors report increased knowledge of parent concerns and resources available.
17. 85% of parent participants in workshops report increased knowledge on navigating school systems.
18. 85% of parents who participate in workshops will report using skills learned in workshops to improve the family, school and community environment.
19. 85% of parents who participate in programming report increased knowledge of day and afterschool needs and program design.

20. At least 50% of parents will participate in program design and feedback.
21. 2 parent volunteers per school from the parent council attend each community board meeting.
22. At least 40% of parents increase participation in school and civic activities.
23. At least 15% of parents attend each Parent Camp.
24. Parents will share knowledge with day and afterschool community.
25. An average of at least 10 parents and/or other adult community members attend each ESL/GED class.
26. An average of at least 10 parents and/or other adult community members attend each workshop/forum.
27. 85% of parent participants report increased sense of community
28. 85% of parent participants report learning of new skills
29. 85% of parent participants report increased knowledge and understanding of program
30. 95% of participants will engage in activities
31. 90% of participants will attend program regularly
32. 95% of participants will report that they enjoy program and learned something new.
33. 90% of regularly attending participants will attend 95% of school days offered
34. At least 75% of regularly attending participants in after-school and summer will maintain or improve Math and/or ELA proficiency.
35. At least 85% of the regularly attending after-school and summer participants will maintain or improve their academic performance on state assessments, reducing summer learning loss.
36. The proportion of regularly attending participants reaching proficiency on the NYS math and/or ELA assessments will outpace gains seen across the district.
37. 85% of students will report improved self-esteem, stronger parents and peers relationships, and greater connection to school.
38. 95% of regular participants will report learning about a variety of careers and skills.
39. 95% of regular participants will learn the basics about college and experience a college tour.
40. 80% or regular participants will improve research, communication and presentation skills
41. 90% of participants will report improved self- image, school and community image and knowledge of positive strategies for dealing with difficult social situations.
42. At least 75% of CBO staff will report that students' attentiveness and behavior in classroom activities improved through consistent program attendance.
43. 75% of participants will report an increased connection to their school and community.
44. Overall, 75% of after-school and summer participants will report a willingness to take academic risks and/or further their education.
45. 75% of after-school and summer participants will self-report a decline in risk-taking behavior.

In a future report, YSI will also provide Kids Creative and Roads to Success with information regarding the educational outcomes of participants. In particular, YSI will report on participants' educational performance in math and English language arts (ELA) as measured through report card grades and state assessment scores. At the time this report was written, this information was not available and therefore could not be included in the current report.

The report is divided into three sections. The remainder of this **Introduction** provides background on the 21st CCLC program and lays out the methodology used to collect evaluation data. The **Enrollment and Attendance** section summarizes the utilization of the R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx Program and describes key characteristics of those youth served by the program.

The third section of the report includes summary data from our **Site Visits** and a discussion of site visit findings. During each of these site visits, several activities were observed and evaluated using a structured observation tool. We provide an overall score on each of three program quality scales: (1) youth relationship building and participation, (2) instructional strategies, and (3) activity content and structure. Recommendations based on observations made at the program are also included in this section.

About the 21st CCLC Program

Authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the law's specific purposes are to: (1) provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet State and local student performance standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics; (2) offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs, that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students; and (3) offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for literacy and related educational development. The law defines 21st CCLC community learning centers as programs that offer academic, artistic, and cultural enrichment opportunities to students and their families when school is not in session (before school and after school, or during holidays or summer recess).

Methodology

YSI engaged in several evaluation activities during Year 4 of the evaluation of the R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx Program, including:

- *Review of program records.* The YSI evaluation team reviewed data maintained by individual sites through the Youthservices.net online attendance tracking system. Participating sites use Youthservices.net, a web-based data system, to collect data for all participating youth, including names, OSIS identification numbers, grades, enrollment dates, attendance, services received, and other personal data.
- *Formal observations of program activities.* The YSI evaluation team completed **three** site visits to the program over the course of the program year. The purpose of these visits was to conduct structured observations of activities. Secondly, YSI documented youth experiences in the program and evaluated program quality through the use of the Out of School Time Program Observation Instrument. The OST Observation Instrument evaluates program elements that leading experts agree result in positive outcomes for youth. The instrument allows us to rate program activities on various indicators addressing three key program quality domains related to youth development. The three domains include: 1) relationships and engagement (i.e. are youth supportive and

respectful of one another and staff and are they engaged in the activity), 2) instructional strategies (i.e. is the activity geared towards encouraging youth to push beyond their present level of competency), and 3) activity content and structure (is the activity planned and well organized). A narrative report describing each observation (including the strengths and weaknesses of each activity observed with suggestions for improvement) was sent to the program directors and grant manager after each visit.

- *Participant surveys.* Surveys of participating youth (in grades five and up) were administered twice during the 2016-17 school year. Survey responses were collected to document participants' impressions of the programs and to measure participant-level changes over time in a variety of outcome areas, including school engagement, behavior in and out of school, social skills, self-efficacy, etc. An analysis of the survey data will be shared in a future report.
- *Review of school records.* Students' fall and spring report card grades in math and ELA were collected by YSI to determine whether students showed improvements in their grades over the course of the year. In addition, YSI is waiting to receive students' standardized test scores in math and ELA from the New York City Department of Education.

ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

- A total of 503 youth participated in the *R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx* 21st CCLC program during the 2016-17 program year.
 - 340 students (68%) attended their program for 90 hours or more, thus meeting the official 21st CCLC definition as *regular* participants.
- Figure 1 shows the proportion of all student attendees who exceeded the criteria defining them as a *regular participant*.
- In particular, 159 students participated in the summer program during July and August of 2016. The average daily attendance for the summer program was 129 students per day.

Future reports from YSI will include a summary of the demographics of R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx's participants, including their gender, race/ethnicity, and grade level (to be reported both at the school- and grant-level). The New York City Department of Education has not yet provided this information to local evaluators.

Figure 1: Number of Regular Attending Participants (i.e. attended 90 hours or more)

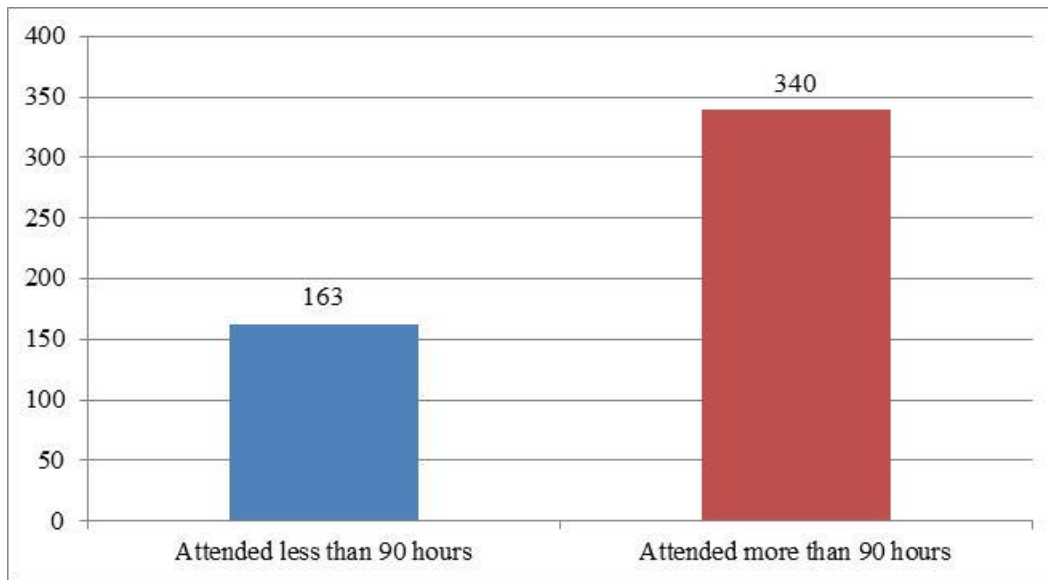


Table 2: Enrollment and Attendance

	# of Participants	% of Participants
<i>Enrollment and Attendance</i>		
Attended less than 90 hours	163	32.4
Attended more than 90 hours	340	67.6
<i>Total Enrollment</i>	503	

SITE OBSERVATIONS

Participating sites were visited by YSI for the purpose of evaluating program quality using a structured observation protocol. YSI conducted observations of several different after-school activities during three separate site visits during the program year. Our researchers use a validated assessment tool called the Out of School Time (OST) Observation Instrument to capture and rate observable indicators of positive youth development. Initially developed for a study of high performing TASC-affiliated after-school programs, the observation instrument builds on lessons learned through program observations in previous after-school studies, including the TASC evaluation (E.R. Reisner, R.N. White, C.R. Russell, & J. Birmingham, *Building quality, scale, and effectiveness in after-school programs: Summary of the TASC evaluation*, Policy Studies Associates, 2004) and the Study of Promising Programs (D.L. Vandell, E.R. Reisner, B.B. Brown, K. Dadisman, D. Lee, & E.M. Pechman, *The study of promising after-school programs: Examination of intermediate outcomes in Year 2*, University of Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 2005).

The OST Observation Instrument evaluates the program elements that leading youth development experts agree result in positive outcomes for youth. The instrument allows us to rate program activities on various indicators addressing three key program quality domains related to youth development. The three domains are:

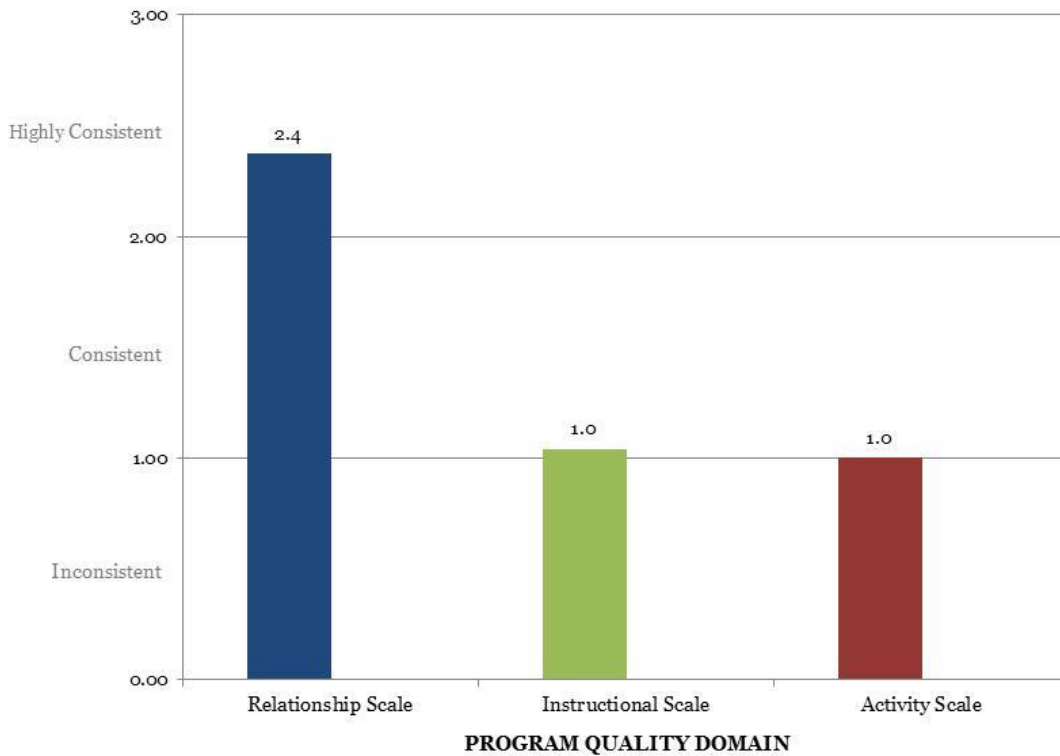
- **Relationship-building and engagement** encompasses items that measure how friendly and respectful youth are to each other and staff, how well participants listen and are engaged in the activity, and how positively youth and staff interact.
- **Instructional support** includes items that measure how much youth contribute their opinions and ideas during the activity, the extent to which staff supports youth positively and without taking control, and how much staff encourages youth to share their ideas and recognizes their accomplishments.
- **Activity content and structure** contains items that measure how well the activity is organized, how appropriately challenging the activity is, and whether it involves the practice or progression of skills.

Within each domain, items receive a rating from zero (the item is not evident) to three (the item is highly evident). Each observation of an activity lasts for approximately 15-30 minutes. These ratings provide a systematic method for evaluators to quantify observations of the elements of quality after-school activities found in programs. Below we include summary information from YSI's site visits during Year 2 of the evaluation.

Site Visit Findings

Below we summarize findings from YSI's site visits to the program conducted by YSI on 7/18/16, 1/6/17, and 5/3/17. Over these three site visits, a total of nine activities were observed, including: Visual Arts, Costume Design, STEAM, Choir, Science, and Movement.

Figure 2: Domain ratings for activity observations at the R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx Program

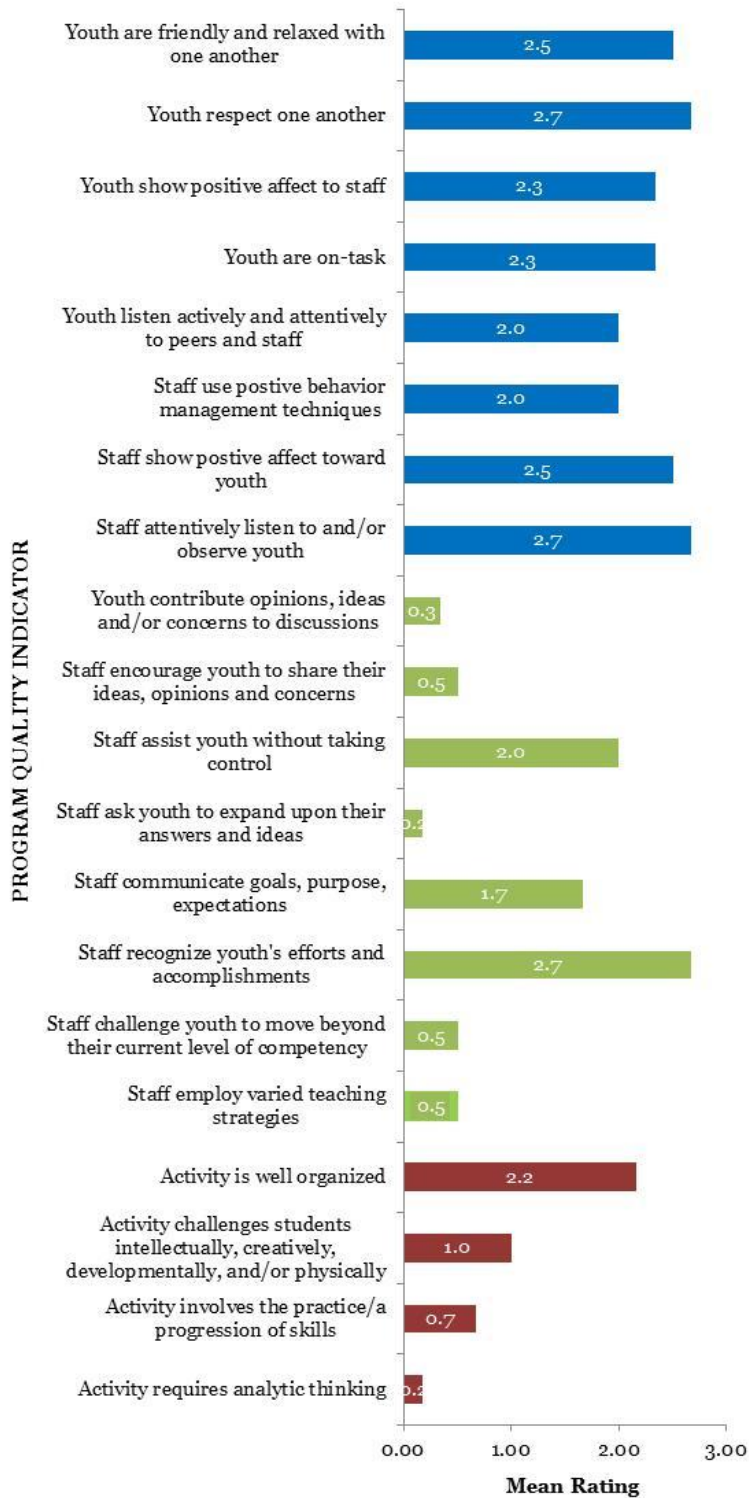


(NOTE ON READING FIGURES: Scores ranging from 0 to 1 indicate that this dimension or indicator of quality was inconsistent, or not typical of after-school activities observed. A score between 1 and 2 indicates that this element of quality is moderately consistent within observed activities. And finally, a score between 2 and 3 indicates that this particular aspect of program quality is highly consistent of activities observed within 21st CCLC programs.)

As seen in Figure 2, the Relationship and Engagement Scale received the highest average domain rating (2.4). In general, relationships among students and with staff members were very strong, and students were engaged in the activities at the program. Regarding the Activity Content and Structure Scale, generally quality ratings in this domain were somewhat consistent (1.0). Quality ratings on the Instructional Support Scale were also somewhat consistent (1.0).

Figure 3 provides a summary of the scores of each specific item on the OST Observation Tool. Again, blue bars pertain to items belonging to the Relationship Building and Engagement Scale; green bars pertain to items belonging to the Instructional Support Scale, and red bars pertain to items belonging to the Activity Content and Structure Scale.

Figure 3: Specific item ratings for the R.O.C.K. 2 the Bronx Program



Observer Comments: Relationship Building and Engagement

This domain measures the extent to which youth and staff are supportive and respectful of one another, how engaged youth are in activities, and whether staff members effectively provide guidance and emotional support to participants. As stated previously in this report, this domain was consistently, highly rated during activity observations. The relationship building and engagement level of participants observed during the activities were generally very positive.

One of the major strengths observed during site visits to the R.O.C.K. to the Bronx Program during the 2016-17 program year was the positive relationship building among participants and between participants and staff members. For example, in the Dance activity observed on 5/3/17, participants practiced a dance routine for an upcoming performance. During this observation, participants seemed to enjoy one another's company and smile at one another often. Similarly, in the Costume Design activity observed on 5/3/17, participants seemed to have fun with one another while they practiced placing head wraps on their partners. Throughout the observations, it was evident that the program was a warm and friendly place for participants to socialize and make friends.

During all site visits made to the program during the 2016-17 program year, the staff members seemed to share a very positive rapport with the participants. For example, in the observation of the Visual Arts activity made on 1/6/17, the instructor introduced participants to the concept of creating landscapes. The instructor was warm and friendly towards participants, but she also acted authoritatively. She called on participants by name and smiled at them throughout the observation period. In the Choir activity observed on 1/6/17, participants practiced reciting the lyrics to different songs. While doing this, the instructor observed participants carefully to see who was participating (and who wasn't), and he frequently showed participants positive affect. We encourage the staff members at the program to continue setting the stage for a warm emotional environment for participants.

Overall, the engagement level of participants during activities was also rather strong. This was especially evident during the summer program site visit made on 7/18/16. For example, during the Movement activity, participants enthusiastically followed along with the instructor as she modeled the correct way to perform different stretching exercises. They seemed to pay close attention to the instructor and did their best to mimic her movements. Similarly, in the Science activity, participants seemed very excited at the idea of making homemade ice cream and/or slime. It was clear that the summer program activities chosen for participants on the day of this visit held their attention well.

Observer Comments: Instructional Support

The Instructional Support quality domain includes items that measure how much youth contribute their opinions and ideas during the activity, the extent to which staff members support youth positively and without taking control, how much staff members encourage youth to share their ideas, and how much staff members recognize their accomplishments. Below we offer highlights and suggestions for further strengthening the quality of the instructional supports offered at the program.

The quality of the instructional strategies observed at the program varied depending on the activity. The instructional strategies observed in the Dance activity on 5/3/17 were especially strong. During this observation period, the instructor used varied strategies to help participants learn the routine. For example, she modeled the dance routine for them while calling out verbal instructions of what to do. She also carefully observed participants while they were dancing so that she could give them detailed feedback on their progress. The Science instructor observed on 7/18/16 also employed strong instructional strategies. In particular, he did a good job of communicating the goals of the activity period with participants. He first had them play a warm-up game and then carefully divided up participants into three different groups, with each group working on a different task for the activity period. This was not as evident in the other activities observed during the summer program. For example, the Movement instructor led participants through a series of stretches; however, she did not give them the activity period's agenda in advance.

Overall, throughout all observations made at the program over the year, the staff members did a great job of verbally praising participants for their efforts during activities. For example, in the Costume Design and Choir activities observed on 1/6/17, the instructors frequently offered participants positive words of encouragement while performing tasks. Similarly, in the Science activity observed on 7/18/16, the instructor told a participant "good job!" after he raised his hand and offered an answer to a staff question. The Movement instructor similarly praised participants while they practiced their stretching exercises. The S.T.E.A.M. instructor also gave participants verbal praise after walking around the room and checking their work. We encourage staff members to continue offering participants verbal praise for their efforts as it helps to keep them motivated while engaging in activities.

One major suggestion for even further strengthening the quality of the instructional strategies offered at the program would be to have staff members engage participants in meaningful discussions. This might be accomplished in the Costume Design activity, for example, if participants were able to share their ideas on how they think their costumes should look. Offering participants opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions oftentimes helps them to reflect on what they are learning and concretize their thoughts.

Observer Comments: Activity Content and Structure

This quality domain measures the extent to which activities are planned and well organized, the level of challenge they offer to participants, and whether there are opportunities for students to engage in problem solving. Highly rated activities are well-organized, appropriately challenging to the age and level of students, and involve the practice or progression of a skill.

Throughout all the observations made at the program, the activities seemed to be very well organized. For example, in the costume design activity observed on 5/3/17, necessary materials seemed to be prepared ahead of time which allowed participants to complete the tasks at hand. In the dance activity also observed on 5/3/17, the instructor seemed to have a clear plan for the day that allowed the activity period to go smoothly.

Another suggestion to improve the quality of the content and structure of activities would be to increase the challenge-level of the activities offered. The S.T.E.A.M. activity observed during the summer program in particular seemed to be quite easy for participants to work on as it

was a coloring/drawing activity. Perhaps the instructor could have added another component to the activity (e.g., writing, reading, or math exercise) or had participants use different or non-traditional materials aside from paper and markers to achieve the task (e.g., paints, clay, etc.).

Furthermore, another suggestion to improve the quality of the content and structure of activities would be to offer participants more opportunities to practice or develop different skills during activities. For example, the Visual Art instructor might consider teaching participants different artistic techniques or strategies to paint or draw different types of landscapes (e.g., perspective, different brushstrokes, etc.). Incorporating skill development or practice during activities will also likely help boost the challenge level of tasks and create higher engagement among participants.