



SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper discusses the role and importance of “Out-of-school time” programs, as well as the current provision of these programs in Somerville. We review the potential gap in current OST offerings in Somerville and distill from the available literature the characteristics of quality OST programs and challenges of expanding access. We present three case studies of successful OST programs in Los Angeles, Singapore, and Grand Rapids, and identify useful takeaways from these case studies for Somerville Public Schools. To conclude, we propose a series of recommendations to enhance the quality of and access to OST programming in Somerville. For the purpose of this paper, OST programs encompass both summer and after-school programs, however, we will be focusing primarily on after-school programs.

2 INTRODUCTION

“Out-of-school time” (OST) programs, or “after-school hours” programs, serve children and families during the critical times when children are not in school. While many OST programs focus on the time immediately after school hours, many also serve students before the beginning of school hours. Some may also serve students into the evening for parents who are working evening hours, thus the term “out-of-school time” programs.

While the income gap between high and low-income families widened in the past 50 years, the achievement gap between children from high and low-income families also widened (Reardon 2013). One important way to bridge this gap is to help low-income students access quality out-of-school-time programs. Researchers have found that low-income children are more in need of after-school opportunities and are more likely to benefit from them (Miller, 2003; Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias, 2001). For instance, low-income children’s neighborhoods tend to be less

safe than those of middle-income children, and so there is a greater need for their OST to be structured by adults. In addition, there is less likely to be an after-school caregiver in the homes of low-income children. Furthermore, Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was created in part because of data indicating that low-income children are at risk of academic failure and therefore need additional time in education activities to supplement what they experience during regular school hours (Cooper et al., 2000; Borman & D'Agostino, 1996). Research has shown that depending on the type of the programming and its duration, OST programs can produce a) Academic gains, b) Enriching experiences, and c) Safety and homework help (McCombs et al., 2017).

It is worth noting that in 2016, working families in the United States headed by racial/ethnic minorities were twice as likely to be poor or low-income (44 percent) compared with non-Hispanic whites (21 percent) (Jarosz et al., 2018). Thus, Somerville's diverse demographic where almost 30% residents are non-white and almost 43% of the low-income families are racial/ethnic minorities presents a huge challenge and an immediate attention (Data USA, Somerville, 2017).

3 CURRENT STATE OF OST PROGRAMS IN SOMERVILLE

Somerville Public Schools (SPS) has a mix of school-based and community-based OST programs, serving around 3,700 pre-K through 8th-grade students, with around 1,200 students participating in six main school-based programs and 100 to 150 students participating in community-based programs. Major school-based programs include Community Schools which serve around 700 students, and Citizen Schools which serve around 200 students (SPS OST Team, Feb 5 2020). SPS currently provides tuition assistance for select programs and families, with a sliding scale for families in need, and vouchers or subsidies from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) for qualifying families.

Further, Somerville is currently expanding its citywide OST options with a vision of equitable access to high quality OST programming. Specifically, this is a cross-sector, collective impact initiative that includes multiple stakeholders. The OST Coordinator along with the leaders who fund and lead the collective impact could work with the City's Department of Health and Human Services, Somerville Public Schools, and Somerville families to advocate for an increase in funding from private foundations.

4 GAP ANALYSIS

Currently, Massachusetts has 274,176 children and youth who are unsupervised in their after-school and out-of-school time (ASOST) hours (The Power of After-School, n.d.). The need for access to high quality after-school and summer learning programs has been growing for the past 20 years. Currently, 41% (16,389) of the 40,180 children on EEC's waitlist are school age children (The Power of After-School, n.d.). The unmet demand for these programs has risen steadily over the last decade. In 2014, approximately 19.4 million children (41 %) not currently in an after-school program would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them, according to their parents (The Power of After-School, n.d.). Further, beyond Massachusetts, participation in after-school programs has increased by two million per year for the past 5 years. In 2014, nearly 25% of all children relied on after-school programs for a safe and supportive environment (EdSource, n.d.). Beginning in 1998, government funding for after-school programs has grown exponentially. Yet, this funding has not been able to support the growing numbers of students who are in need of supervised ASOST hours (The Power of After-School, n.d.).

Applying the above benchmark (demand from ~41% of students not currently enrolled in OST programs) to Somerville, we roughly estimate that the unmet OST demand may come up to about 1,000 students. Meeting this unmet demand would entail expanding the existing OST

capacity in Somerville by more than 75%. Such a sizable increase would require the cooperation of city and district officials as well as community partners, along with public support and funding to ensure accessibility. However, for a more accurate estimate, this demand should be verified through SPS student surveys.

5 CHALLENGES AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Not all students are currently served by the existing SPS OST programs, which differ in their quality and outreach. Students need access to high-quality OST programs to better meet their academic, social and emotional needs. Financial budgets, staff-youth ratio, staff expertise and retention are some of the biggest challenges faced by SPS OST programs (SPS OST Team, March 24 and April 13, 2020). Our problem statement for this paper thus is:

How might we clarify the definition of quality OST programs and expand the high-quality SPS programs to more underserved¹ students?

6 QUALITY

6.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY OST PROGRAMS

Given the above considerations, we first need to explore common characteristics shared by quality OST programs before expanding these programs to more students. Fig. 1 highlights some common categories that these characteristics fall under. Several successful OST programs (such as the Grand Rapids ELO Network, refer section 7.2.1) leverage the strengths of the existing community and some also partner with families (Lauer and Smith, n.d.). Additionally, a focus on hiring qualified and well-trained staff can be crucial in sustaining and developing strong after-school

¹ Somerville's Equity Policy defines serving all students irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, language acquisition status, and socio-economic status

programs. Such programs also benefit from updating their staff's skills through pre-implementation and ongoing training opportunities. These practices can also lead to lower staff attrition rates which makes after-school programs more effective (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Under content, aligning out-of-school learning with in-school learning, and reinforcing connections between new and old knowledge can result in a robust after-school program. Academic, cultural or recreational programs all seem to benefit from active community involvement and responsiveness to participants' needs (Fashola, 2001). Furthermore, smaller sizes or lower student-to-staff ratios allow staff members to focus on individual learners' needs and contribute towards stronger bonds with them. Stronger interactions between students and staff can improve such programs (Granger, 2008). Finally, quality OST programs usually have a structured and predictable schedule (Strawhun, Hoff, Kane, Parnell, & Peterson, 2014).

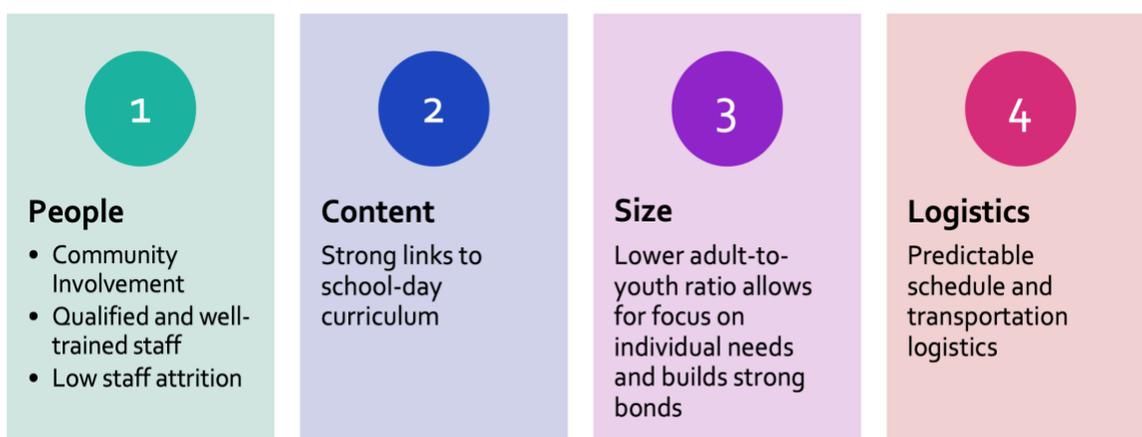


Fig. 1: Common Characteristics of Quality OST Programs

6.2 CASE STUDIES

The following two case studies provide a glimpse into quality after-school programs and shed some light on what the characteristics from the literature review in section 6.1 look like in the real world. While one of them is from Los Angeles, the other, is from a high-achieving education system halfway around the world, in Singapore.

6.2.1 LOS ANGELES

While the United States is vast and each state is unique in its own, several sources highlight that California has one of the country's best after-school programs. One of them is a report titled “America After 3PM” and specifically calls out Los Angeles (LA) as one of the city-level initiatives that ensures greater access to quality after-school programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2014). The City of Angels also features in the list of America’s Most Diverse Cities not just for its racial and ethnic diversity, but also for education and income levels (WalletHub, 2019).

The Case of LA’s BEST

True to its name, LA’s BEST is one of Los Angeles’s best after-school programs. It was formed as a unique partnership between the Mayor’s Office (Tom Bradley), the Los Angeles Unified School District, and the private sector to address the alarming rise in the lack of adequate adult supervision of elementary school children during the critical hours between 3pm and 6pm (LA’s BEST website, n.d.). Since 1988, the program has expanded from 10 schools and 1,000 students, to 200 schools serving 25,000 children every school day across Los Angeles. These children come from neighborhoods with the fewest resources and the greatest needs (Fig. 2) and are offered programming at no cost to their families. A strong 2,000+ staff forms the backbone of LA’s BEST and an expense² of \$1,800 supports one child per year (Annual Report, 2017).

In addition to the fundamentals of receiving a nutritious meal and help with homework, these programs provide a wide array of **activities** ranging from enrichment and academics to character and citizenship (LA’s BEST website, n.d.). These comprehensive programs help students explore enriching activities in arts and sports; often via camps and field trips. They not only

² In 2015 dollars, the daily per-slot cost of high-quality after-school programming for elementary and middle-school children in a typical U.S. city ranged from \$14 to \$31. (Source: <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/the-cost-of-quality-of-out-of-school-time-programs.aspx>)

provide academic support via hands-on-learning activities in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and literacy, but also have a focus on career readiness and financial literacy. In terms of character and citizenship, they have programs for leadership development, clubs like the Model United Nations, or a focus on gang prevention and substance abuse. Social and emotional learning — helping students build confidence, empathy and positive relationships — is at the heart of each activity.

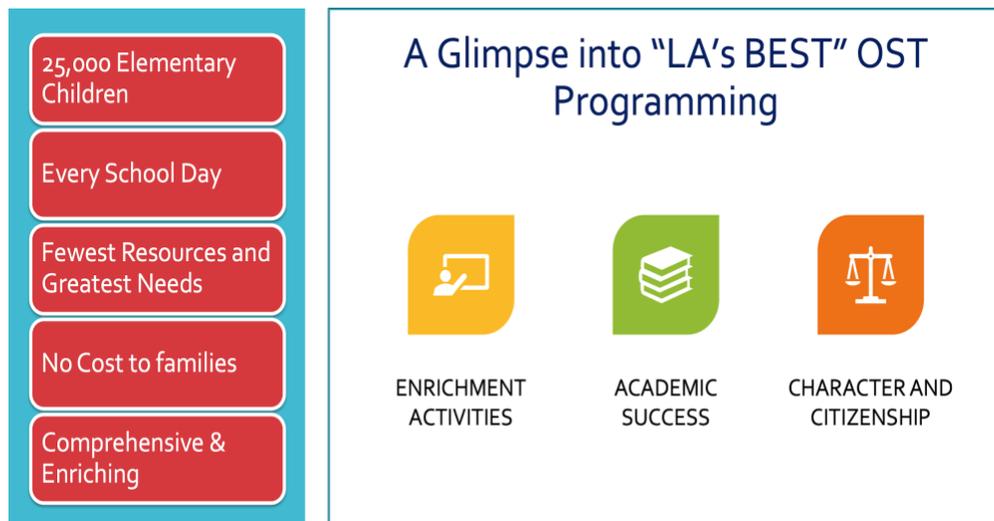


Fig 2. LA's BEST OST Programming

While the majority of LA's BEST [funding](#) comes from the state budget, it does have a diverse portfolio of funding sources. For the 2017-18 Financial Year, 85.7% of its funding came from the state budget, 5.6% from city budget, 2.7% from federal and the remaining 6% from private sources, which includes foundations, corporations, individuals, and others (Annual Report, 2018). Almost half of this 6% comes from foundations. 21st Century Community Learning Centers and The After School Education and Safety (ASES) are two key sources.

LA's BEST designs and implements [formative research](#) for program improvement and internal evaluations to monitor program fidelity and works with external stakeholders to monitor

program effects. While we could not gather sufficient information³ on the former, UCLA's Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) has performed several external evaluations over the last two decades and these have consistently shown positive short- and long-term outcomes (Huang et al., 2011; Goldschmidt et al., 2007; Huang et al., 2005). Better attendance, higher grades in middle school, bigger gains in STEM, reduced high school dropouts, and reduction in juvenile crime are some of the highlighted gains.

While this is just one program, numerous such common threads emerge from other after-school programs in LA. While SPS already has a similar comprehensive and enriching portfolio of after-school programs, we believe that these driving forces of LA's after-school programs provide some **key insights** into means to further strengthen the quality of SPS OST programming (Fig 3.). First, these after-school programs in LA let students explore their own interests and talents, with the staff developing activities in collaboration with students. Second, they tap on staff expertise and community involvement. Several studies highlight that staff qualifications and instructor-child relations are key ingredients of program quality, while stability in staffing is related to positive student experience (McCombs et al., 2017). The success of an after-school program also depends on both family and community involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). A third key driving force is partnerships; not just with the city, district, and federal levels but also with the private sector. For example, LA's BEST has NASA as one of its many partners and this creates opportunities far beyond the usual offerings of an after-school program. Lastly, the content of the program is not just relevant to student needs but also has a good combination of social-emotional and academic learning, and ties back to school-time learning. While the first

³ Two key components are a dedicated evaluation team and the reliance on logic models
(Source:https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolsnack/Evaluating-afterschool-The-evaluation-basics-part-I_07-01-2019.cfm)

driving force on student agency is a new theme, all others largely fall under the people and content quality characteristics that emerged from our literature review described in section 6.1.



Fig 3. Key Drivers of Quality for LA OST Programs

6.2.2 SINGAPORE

After-school programs are conducted in Singapore primarily through Student Care Centers (SCCs) which provide care arrangements for students from grades 1 to 8, including meals, activities, and homework supervision. All primary schools in Singapore (grades 1 to 6) have an on-site SCC which are run by voluntary welfare organizations or commercial operators. Meanwhile, community-run SCCs also exist outside schools, and can offer after-school care arrangements to both primary and secondary school students.

Singapore’s method of ensuring a **baseline quality** within the SCCs is through mandatory registration with the Ministry of Social and Family Development (Early Childhood Development Agency, 2013). As part of the registration process, SCCs are required to meet mandatory standards in terms of physical environment and supervision, operating hours, as well as safety, health and hygiene. SCCs are also required to provide a daily structured program for the center’s activities, while allowing variation within part of the program to cater to rotating activities.

Accredited [certification](#) is also available at local institutions of higher education for SCC staff, where they learn how to provide a positive, developmentally appropriate, and safe environment for students with a focus on their holistic development across physical, socio-emotional and language domains (Ngee Ann Polytechnic, n.d.). They also learn how to respond to illness, accidents and emergencies. To encourage SCC staff to enroll in this certification course, government subsidy is available to defray training costs. The National Council of Social Services (n.d.), a membership organization for social service agencies in Singapore, has also developed a [career ladder](#) for SCC staff which financially rewards them for completing the certification. Schools also often work with school-based SCCs to better support the after-school arrangements for their own students. Some school teachers pass information on student behavior and academic gaps to SCC staff to better support students during the after-school program. Staff from school-based SCCs can also join in for professional development opportunities with their host schools.

While SCCs are free to choose their curriculum, over 30 SCCs catering to 3,000 students have opted for a [common values-based curriculum](#) named *Learning is Fun & Exciting* (Fig 4.), which was developed by non-profit sector (Temasek Foundation Nurtures, n.d.). Through activities such as games, craft work, movement and mindful breathing, the curriculum aims to inculcate values such as respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care and harmony in SCC students.



Learning mindful breathing as a calming technique



Students learning resilience and patience through tangram challenge



"Squeeze into a rectangle" inculcating teamwork

Fig 4. Singapore Student Care Centers: *Learning is Fun & Exciting* curriculum

Further, while [government checks](#) are in place to ensure baseline standards are met within the SCCs, along with subsidies to support staff training and the availability of a common curriculum, we are unaware of attempts to systematically evaluate the quality of each SCC (Early Childhood Development Agency, 2013). To some extent, school-based SCCs are viewed as an extension of the schools at which they are based, and the host schools have been known to work closely with SCC providers to best cater to their students which also attend the SCC. The current structure of having one SCC per school also allows closer [coordination and supervision](#) by the school, with school teachers having clear and open lines of communication to SCC staff should students need specific support after school.

Recognizing the importance of after-school care, the Singapore government has actually ramped up its support of this sector over the past decade and expanded access significantly (Yang, 2016). Over a decade ago, there were barely a handful of SCCs, with little formal presence within schools. However, with the government prioritizing their development with policy and funding support, there is now a SCC in every primary school in Singapore, with capacity increased over the years to largely meet the demand at each school. Government subsidies for fees have also been increased such that eligible students can pay as little as \$5 per month of fees which would otherwise cost between \$260 and \$290. The easy availability and access to after-school have also facilitated work arrangements for low-income parents, allowing them to earn extra income to support their families.

This case study from Singapore [suggests](#) that the government plays an integral role in coordinating the relevant processes and resources to ensure quality and accessibility of after-school services. Moreover, a close relationship between schools and after-school care providers can help strengthen the quality of support provided to students.

7 ACCESS

As seen in section 4, there are likely significant unmet needs for OST programs in the Somerville community. Although not all students are able to benefit from the existing OST programs, it is essential to especially reach out to the underserved student population to meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of all students.

7.1 CHALLENGES OF EXPANSION

While providing every child with access to high quality after-school programs is essential, the challenges to expansion remain significant. By and large, **funding** opportunities are never sufficient and inexperienced **staff** merely adds to the problem. There is no single funding source for after-school programs, with few funds set aside for after-school programs such as 21st Century Community Learning grants (Afterschool Funding, n.d.). Most others, such as the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) grant, are assigned for other needs but can be utilized for OST programming. However, this diminishes the amount of funding OST programs have access to, and the demand for these programs far outstrips the supply which is dependent on consistent funding.

Furthermore, different grants are administered by different organizations with different goals and assessment criteria. Some grants focus on STEM, while others focus on health and wellness (Afterschool Funding, n.d.). Since different organizations have different expectations, aligning outcomes across all programs for OST providers is a challenge. Smaller organizations pose a greater risk of budget cuts and stagnant government funding plagues OST providers. In some cases, grants are not renewed year after year, while in others inflation can lead to a net decrease in funding.

Another big challenge is high staff turnovers partly due to low incomes and partly due to the nature of the job as quite a few are part-time opportunities (Fleming, 2019). Limited staff expertise, professional development, and growth opportunities aggravates this further. As highlighted in section 5, our discussions with the SPS OST team highlighted similar dual challenges of funding and staffing (SPS OST Team, March 24 and April 13, 2020).

7.2 CASE STUDIES

7.2.1 GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

Grand Rapids is the second-largest city in Michigan with an economically diverse population of over 195,000 (Jones, 2020). The community in Grand Rapids has come a long way since conceiving a strong after-school initiative through the organization the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Network in 2001. According to Jones, ELO currently serves 21,000 students and includes 120 community partners. The Office of Children, Youth and Families established by the city commission and the board of education, now called Our Community's Children, was central to connecting the city, schools, and after-school service providers (Jones, 2020). Prior to this, after-school programs were fragmented and competed for resources.

To remedy this, a team comprising the Mayor, president of the school board, and community stakeholders created a Leadership Council to make policy, promote community support, and oversee the project, and an Action Team to develop standards, identify gaps in services, and evaluate outcome measures for programs. The aim of the Leadership Council was centered around one task - to provide access to high-quality after-school programs to every child in Grand Rapids. A [three-pronged strategy](#) was created to achieve this goal: undertaking a gap analysis; creating unified standards; and a focus on investments (Ouellette, Hutchinson, & Frant, 2005).

To conduct the [gap analysis](#), the city collaborated with Grand Valley State University to integrate data with GIS maps to create a visual display of students' residences and locations of after-school programs. Once a database had been collected, the team ensured that families had access to this information through a variety of outreach strategies such as online and print guides, a helpline, and local television and radio networks.

The subcommittee focusing on creation of [unified standards](#) ensured that they had complete support from the providers and the community and reviewed nationwide standards. This was supplemented by focus groups with after-school providers, and working with them to create self-assessment tools and also with Michigan officials to ensure consistency with state standards. Before implementing the self-assessment tool citywide, it was piloted in 18 agencies (Ouellette, Hutchinson, & Frant, 2005).

A [partnership](#) between Grand Rapids Public Schools and after-school providers including the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids, Camp Fire USA West Michigan Council, and Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation-Recreation Reaps Rewards Program called LOOP offers daily comprehensive services of up to 3 hours to students free of charge in nearly 20 elementary and middle schools (Ouellette, Hutchinson, & Frant, 2005). They are also required to involve parents in the program. Additionally, with the help of the National League of Cities, the city is working with the Finance Project to create a plan of [fiscal sustainability](#) and is streamlining funds to ensure that federal, state, and local resources are spent in the best way possible.

These strategies have helped strengthen after-school programs in Grand Rapids. Through a strong emphasis on community collaboration, ELO overlooks after-school programs that are based in over 30 of the city's schools. They use 21st Century Community Learning grants to operate after-school programs that serve over 4,000 students (Expanded Learning, Expanded Opportunity, 2014). Additionally, teachers in school-based after-school programs can also oversee academic

components. In 2012, they received a \$765,000 grant from the Wallace Foundation which enabled the city to assess the effectiveness of after-school programs by the creation of a Youth Community Data Center and with the help of the Grand Valley State University. The same grant also allowed Our Community's Children to focus on after-school activities for teens and to grant them more agency in designing these programs. Student advisory teams were piloted in three schools, and of these, two schools saw an increase in participation in their after-school programs (Expanded Learning, Expanded Opportunity, 2014).

Despite their success, after-school programs in Grand Rapids are still affected by budget cuts that prevent them from reaching their goals. However, by leveraging community partnerships, strong support from political leadership, use of data to measure effectiveness, and improved outcomes Grand Rapids provides consistent value. Furthermore, Our Community's Children has played a significant role in the success of Grand Rapids' after-school initiative and its strong relationship with schools and the mayor's office has enabled it to attract investments from other organizations (Expanded Learning, Expanded Opportunity, 2014).

As with SPS, Grand Rapids Public Schools are home to a diverse student population, committed to developing the whole child, and place an emphasis on cross-sector collaboration for their OST programs. The **strength** in the ELO Network lies in their unification of standards for after-school programs which has been instrumental in creating outcome-focused after-school programs. Additionally, Grand Rapids has used data driven methods to measure impact down to the individual level and to show providers how they rate. These measures also allow them to measure the effectiveness of different programs. SPS can similarly benefit from unified standards and from a robust data-driven approach (Expanded Learning, Expanded Opportunity, 2014). SPS can also look to the model of Our Community's Children and similarly garner support from political leadership and attract investments from foundations.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

While there is always this constant tension between quality and access, we hope our recommendations will help SPS navigate this better. We have based these on the theoretical literature review and the practical case studies discussed thus far, but more importantly have tried to incorporate the needs and context of SPS. The first three recommendations aim to improve the quality of OST programs in Somerville while the last three strive to enhance access.

Recommendation #1: Develop Clear Goals and Vision

While SPS is offering a diverse portfolio of programs, it is also essential to have a program goal and a north star to guide the way forward. Developing a clear vision will help the team to achieve stronger results, stay focused, and choose providers and partnerships that are aligned to the set goal. Having a Logic Model⁴ and a clear underlying Theory of Changes⁵ will help in this regard. In the long run, once the program has a stable goal, it might also help to build a collaborative that binds all providers together in terms of funding, accountability, services etc.

Recommendation #2: Introduce a Quality Matrix for SPS OST Programs

We have developed a quality matrix to help evaluate the quality of SPS after-school programming (Appendix A). The quality parameters of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, and accessibility have been adapted from the Health Quality Network, an HQCA collaborative, whereas the areas of need are based on research and benchmark practices highlighted throughout the report (Health Quality Network, 2005). In order to be responsive to the diversified⁶ student

⁴ A logic model is a visual representation of the assumptions and theory of action that underlie the structure of a program. Included in most logic models are four components: resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes (Source: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oss/technicalassistance/easnlogicmodelstoolmonitoring.pdf>)

⁵ Theory of Change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions. (Source: <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>)

⁶ Somerville's Equity Policy defines these identities as race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, language acquisition status, and socio-economic status

population in Somerville, we have also taken into account the lens of equity, which we believe lies at the core of all areas of need. For example, whether the content is culturally relevant, or whether the community engagement truly considers all voices, or whether the program reaches all students irrespective of their identities. Together these areas of need form the acronym - **SPS PACES**.

Each area of need can be measured in quality across these pre-defined parameters. A few of these need-and-parameter pairs, however, do not map to each other and have been marked as xx to signify “Not Valid” in the sample matrix in Appendix A. Given that these can be hard to measure, we have come up with a three-point scale of 0, 1, and 2 that corresponds with “No”, “Maybe/To Some Extent”, and “Yes”. The final score will be a sum of all the scores as a percent of maximum achievable score⁷. The idea is to have a number and a simple two-layered matrix that gives a full overview rather than having to go through multiple checklists and not know where one stands. The three-point scale also reduces the level of judgement unlike in a regular Likert scales.

To keep it flexible, the matrix can be used for either SPS after-school programs as a whole, or for a specific program or provider. Further, the cut-off for the final score and the weights for the areas of needs can be set by SPS based on the goals and vision, or its yearly focus. The team can also decide which of these pairs actually make sense to be rated and which are “Not Valid”. This is a step to help the SPS after-school program team get started on thinking about measuring quality, and we believe, this coupled with #1 above, is a crucial step in deciding what to expand.

Recommendation #3: Enhance expertise across OST providers

Limited expertise is a significant barrier to enhancing after-school programs. As such, training in the form of pre-implementation and continuous training for after-school time staff can prove

⁷ Maximum achievable score is the number of unique and valid need-and-parameter pairs that can be scored (or are not marked as xx in the sample matrix, Appendix A) multiplied by the maximum rating of 2 on the three-point scale

⁸ Likert scale is a five (or seven) point scale which is used to allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement.

helpful. One such method can be to send staff to earn credentials such as those offered by the National Afterschool Association Professional Credentialing System that recognizes staff based on competencies leading to development of quality OST programming. This training can be supplemented by informal ventures such as [nurturing](#) a community of practice through which OST staff can share practices, strategies, and innovative ways of addressing common challenges and needs with their peers in other districts. A valid example of this in action is the California Afterschool Network which has piloted the Community of Practice (Site Coordinator Community of Practice, 2011) .

In addition to [training](#) staff and encouraging exchanging strategies, programs can be [expanded](#) to involve parents in after-school programs. Increased parental involvement in schools can have positive outcomes on children’s grades, peer relationships and can even lower rates of depression (Afterschool: A Key to Successful Parent Engagement, 2012). After-school programs are uniquely placed to take advantage of this and offer flexible time. Currently, after-school staff usually comprises part-time paid positions, thus, qualified staff members do not stay for long. This can be remedied by [rewarding](#) them by improving pay structures, providing fringe benefits, and promising opportunities for growth in OST programs (Appendix B).

Recommendation #4: Increase funding sources for SPS OST Programs

In the [short run](#), SPS can reinforce its current practices to expand access to quality OST programs by advocating for an increase in funding through the current collective impact initiative. School and district could work together as part of the Somerville Promise Alliance (SomerPromise, n.d.) to strengthen this community-wide effort without reinventing the wheel. Furthermore, another way to increase access is through the Massachusetts [Department of Early Education and Care](#) (EEC). Many are not aware that it provides families with assistance when finding childcare through

vouchers, and licensed after-school programs can accept these vouchers and receive a daily subsidy for that child in the program.

In the [medium and long run](#), SPS could work with state education department officials to increase the [After-School and Out-of-School Time Quality Grant](#) (ASOST-Q), which serves thousands of kids throughout Massachusetts and is the only dedicated statewide funding stream for after-school and summer learning. According to the historical budget of this line item, we see an increase for the past 3 years (After-School and Out-of-School Grants: Summary FY20 Budget, n.d.), with most of the spending increase in Grants and Subsidies for after-school and out-of-school programs (Table 1, Appendix C). This line item could be further increased to support after-school programs to be expanded to and within SPS in the next 5 to 10 years (Graph 1, Appendix C). Beyond the Quality Enhancements in ASOST-Q Grant Program that is funded through state line item 7061-9611, SPS could also look into the [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.) This grant is designed to support the implementation of additional learning time through OST programming and/or through an expanded day referred to as Expanded Learning Time (ELT). Furthermore, many are not aware that [Title IVA](#) funds can be used for after-school (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). For instance, the Title IV Part A of the federal ESEA provides districts with funds to build capacity and ensure that all students have access to a high quality educational experience.

Recommendation #5: [Strengthen advocacy efforts](#)

Beyond advocating for increased funding, in the long run, SPS district leaders, teachers, parents, and students could join the special advocacy campaign of Massachusetts after-school partnership with the United Way of Mass Bay and Merrimack Valley and SEL4MA (United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack, n.d.). With a joint effort, multiple stakeholders could elevate

the discussion of importance of social and emotional learning in young people and include language in the budget that provides more resources for training on the subject (Massachusetts After School, n.d.) This could be a grassroots effort to engage important stakeholders in conversations that would benefit students in the long-run, given the important role of socio-emotional learning, especially in the after-school context.

Recommendation #6: Think beyond in-person OST Programs

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has upended traditional models of education and led to school closures around the nation and the world. Somerville OST programs have similarly been affected by the closure of SPS and shift to remote learning, along with Governor Baker's stay-at-home order requiring in-person OST programs be suspended. These point to the need to enhance the resilience of existing OST programs, so as to better provide for students' continued academic and socio-emotional development.

As of the time of writing, Somerville Community Schools after-school Program has mostly switched to virtual platforms to offer enrichment opportunities, including Google meetings, off-screen activities, and links to engaging YouTube channels. Academic support with assignments is also available, while teachers continue to check in with families through phone calls and messages. To further enhance the quality of learning, SPS OST programs can explore available resources online - a quick search yielded resources available from established sources including NASA, California Academy of Sciences and the Exploratorium in San Francisco, while e-books are also available. OST staff may need to **identify** and **curate** the resources to offer some guidance to students as to which resources to refer to.

SPS can also explore introducing **offline activities** that allow students to explore and discover their areas of interest at their own pace. For example, Singapore has the Young Scientist Badge Scheme which guides students to carry out self-directed science activities to achieve badges

in chemistry, ecology, genetics, etc. (Singapore Science Centre, n.d.). This could be adjusted to Somerville's context to offer students another avenue beyond online platforms to engage in meaningful learning, and to develop initiative and creativity. All these efforts can be [sustained](#) by building a community or a platform for students to come together and share their learnings with each other (Appendix D).

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10 APPENDIX A: SAMPLE QUALITY MATRIX

Sample Quality Matrix for SPS OST Programs

Quality parameters adopted in May 2020 by the Harvard Graduate School of Education students for the Somerville Public Schools' OST programs

Areas of Need	Quality Parameters	Weights <i>Scoring weights for areas of need</i>	Appropriateness <i>Relevant to academic, cultural, and linguistic student needs and is based on evidence</i>	Effectiveness <i>Degree of success in producing desired results</i>	Efficiency <i>Resources are optimally utilized in achieving desired outcomes</i>	Accessibility <i>Financially, spatially, and timely accessible to all students irrespective of racial, ethical, cultural, & linguistic barriers</i>	Score for the area of need
S	Staff Qualifications and Trainings	2	0	2	1	xx	3
P	Partnerships	1	1	1	0	xx	2
S	Student Agency and Choice	1	1	1	xx	xx	2
P	Program Accessibility	1	xx	xx	xx	1	1
A	Academic + SEL balance	1	1	1	0	xx	2
C	Content and Materials	2	2	1	1	1	5
E	Engagement of Community	2	1	2	1	xx	4
S	Staff-to-Youth Ratio	1	2	2	1	xx	5
						Program Quality Score	82%
						Cutoff	75%
						Difference	7%

Scale: Yes (2); Maybe to some extent(1); No(0); xx stands for Not Valid

Source: Adapted from the Health Quality Network, an HQCA collaborative

Note: 1. Cut-off and Weights based on significance to be decided by SPS

2. Yellow-cells are an input and formulae have been applied to calculate the scores and the difference

Fig 5. Sample Quality Matrix for SPS OST Programs

Quality parameters adopted in May 2020 by the Harvard Graduate School of Education students for the Somerville Public Schools' OST programs

Scale: Yes (2); Maybe to some extent(1); No(0); xx stands for Not Valid

Source: Adapted from the Health Quality Network, an HQCA collaborative

Note: 1. Cut-off and Weights based on significance to be decided by SPS

2. Yellow-cells are an input and formulae have been applied to calculate the scores and the difference

3. An editable version has been shared along with this report for review

11 APPENDIX B: EXPANDING EXPERTISE

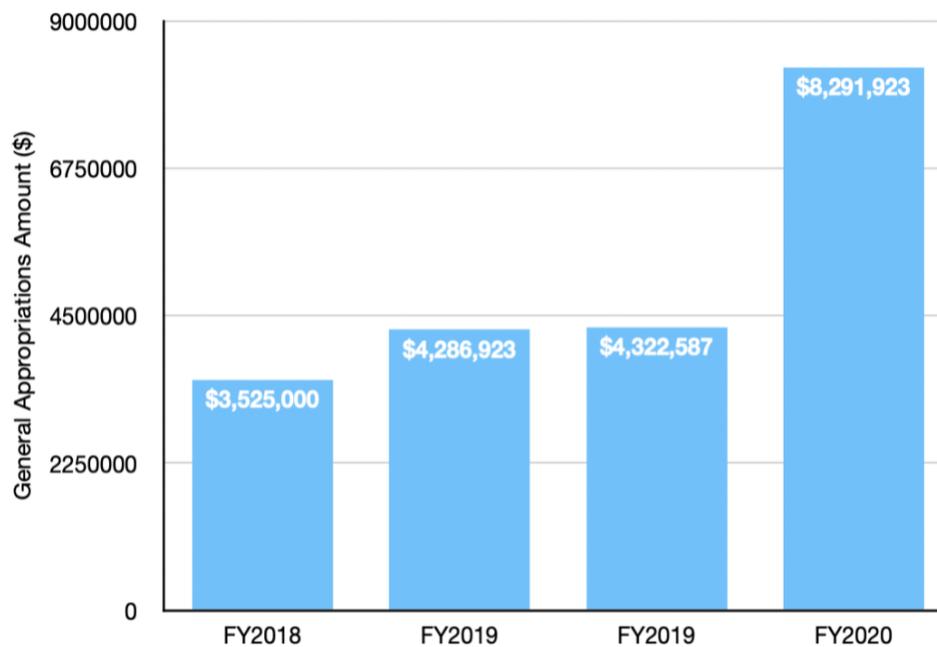


Fig 6. Framework for expanding expertise across OST Providers

12 APPENDIX C: GRANT SPENDING CATEGORIES AND HISTORICAL BUDGET

Spending Category	FY2016 Expended	FY2017 Expended	FY2018 Expended	FY2019 Projected	FY2020 GAA
Wages & Salaries	\$28,136	\$41,145	\$40,734	\$77,341	\$148,360
Employee Benefits	\$464	\$683	\$814	\$1,338	\$2,568
Grants & Subsidies	\$2,054,334	\$2,264,069	\$2,715,476	\$4,243,908	\$8,140,995
Total	\$2,082,934	\$2,305,897	\$2,757,024	\$4,322,587	\$8,291,923

Table 1: After-School and Out-of-School Grants Spending Categories



Graph 1: Historical Budget of After-School and Out-of-School Grants (Line Item 7061-9611)

13 APPENDIX D: FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING BEYOND IN-PERSON OST PROGRAMS

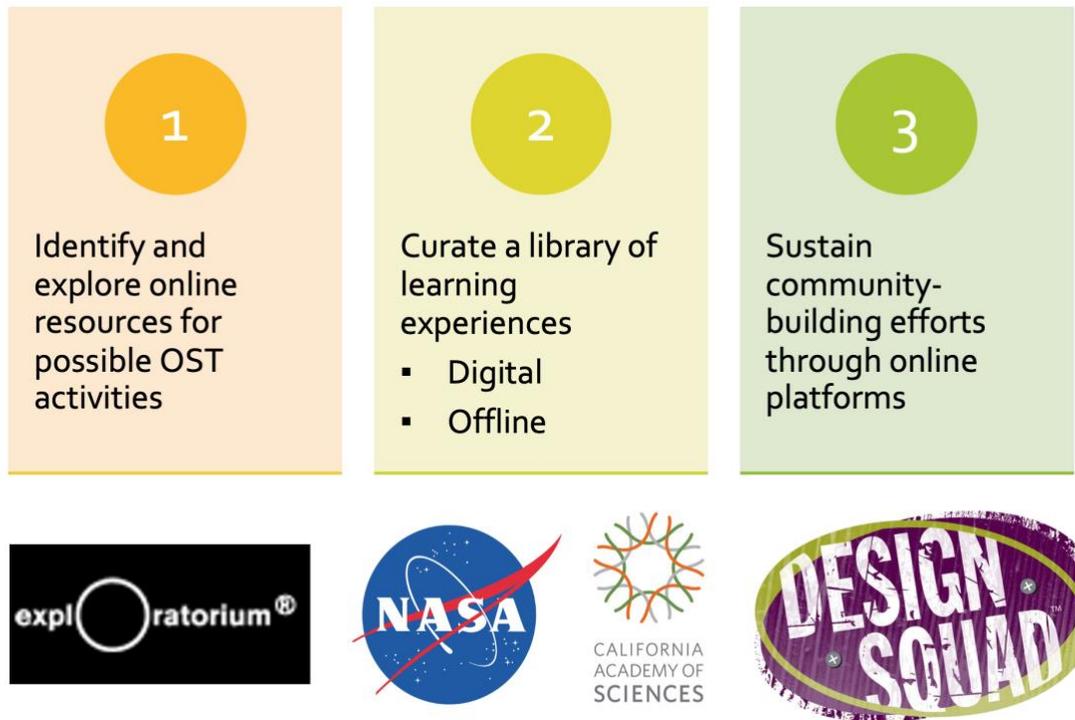


Fig 7. Framework for thinking beyond In-Person OST Programs