

**PRINCIPAL PERSPECTIVES ON
DYCD OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS**

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July 2013

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Prepared for
Department of Youth and Community Development
New York, NY

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Since 2005, the Out-of-School Time (OST) initiative operated by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has supported programs for youth throughout the City, all implemented by nonprofit provider organizations, and the majority located in public schools. Research has shown that afterschool opportunities aligned to the school day can reinforce student learning and strengthen out-of-school time program quality (Afterschool Alliance, 2011; Huang & Dietel, 2011). Additionally, ongoing and consistent communication between program staff and school-day staff can support both the academic and youth development of participants. The more intentional and structured the interactions between school-day staff and program staff, the more effective the program can be in its support to youth (Noam, Biancarosa, & Dechausay, 2002). Reflecting this research, in its 2011 Request for Proposals (RFP) for OST programs for the elementary and middle grades, DYCD required provider organizations and schools to enter into partnership agreements that committed to a common vision, collaborative planning, and frequent and ongoing communication, in order to support heightened expectations for OST programs to implement high-quality Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), literacy, and project-based learning activities.

Principals play an important role in this partnership between the school day and afterschool program. Their leadership sets the tone for the alignment of vision and goals and for ongoing communication and collaboration (Sinclair, Russell, Hildreth, Miller & McCann, 2012). As part of its ongoing efforts to understand and strengthen the capacity of OST programs to support youth academic and social outcomes, DYCD asked Policy Studies Associates (PSA) to develop and administer a survey to principals of elementary and middle schools that hosted a DYCD OST program during the 2012-13 school year. The goal of the survey was to document principals' perspectives on the role and impact of the OST programs. This report summarizes findings about (1) the ways in which schools and OST programs coordinate efforts, and (2) principal perceptions of the academic and social benefits of the OST program for students.

Study Overview

Using information maintained by DYCD on its OST contracts, in March 2013 PSA administered an online survey to principals of OST host schools for whom an email address was available. PSA administered the survey to 319 principals and received 151 completed surveys, for a 47 percent response rate. (Ninety-seven percent of respondents identified themselves as principals, and three percent identified themselves as assistant principals.) Given the relatively low response rate, findings presented in this report should be interpreted with caution, as responding principals may have different levels of awareness or involvement in the OST program at their school than non-responding principals.

Exhibit 1 summarizes the characteristics of the OST schools led by survey respondents. Seventy percent of respondents were principals of schools with OST elementary-grades programs, and 30 percent were principals of schools with OST middle-grades programs, representing all five New York City boroughs. Sixty-one percent of principals reported that the DYCD OST program was the sole afterschool program serving students at the school. The remaining 39 percent reported additional afterschool opportunities, including 21st Century Community Learning Center programs, school-led academic and enrichment programs, and other

programs in partnership with community-based organizations. The OST programs in respondents' schools received funding through two city sources: 53 percent were funded through the DYCD RFP process (referred to in this report as DYCD-funded), and 47 percent were supported through discretionary funds through the City Council (referred to as Council-funded). Any notable differences found in principal survey responses by school grade level, presence of other afterschool programs, and funding mechanisms are included in this report.

Exhibit 1
Profile of schools in this report

Grade level served by OST program	<i>(n=151)</i>
Elementary	70%
Middle	30
Other afterschool programs available	<i>(n=148)</i>
Yes	39%
No	61
School borough	<i>(n=151)</i>
Bronx	15%
Brooklyn	38
Manhattan	11
Queens	27
Staten Island	10
OST funding source	<i>(n=151)</i>
DYCD	53%
City Council	47

Exhibit reads: Seventy percent of respondents were principals of schools hosting elementary-grades OST programs.

School and OST Coordination

Overall, principals responding to the survey reported a high degree of familiarity with the OST program at their school: 57 percent said that they were familiar to a great extent with the operations of the OST program, and 39 percent were to some extent. In addition, principals reported observing OST program activities occurring at their school. Forty-eight percent said they observed activities on a regular basis, and 47 percent a few times during the school year. This section of the report summarizes the roles of principals and other school staff in supporting the OST program.

Principal Engagement in the OST Program

As shown in Exhibit 2, responding principals reported playing a variety of roles to support the OST program at their school, most commonly as an advocate for the program within the school community:

- ***Serving as champions for the OST program.*** A majority of responding principals described their role as an advocate for the OST program in the school community (83 percent). However, advocacy for the program did not always translate into material support. Thirty-six percent of principals reported providing in-kind resources (other than space) for the program, and 15 percent helped to raise funds for the OST program at their school.
- ***Bridging the school and OST communities.*** Fifty-six percent of principals reported a significant role in identifying students to participate in the OST program, and 28 percent said their role included recruiting school-day teachers to coach OST program staff. Nineteen percent helped to recruit staff to work in the OST program.
- ***Contributing to OST program planning.*** About half of responding principals played a substantial role in supervising the operations of the OST program. Fifty-five percent said that to some extent or to a great extent their role included program oversight, 48 percent reviewed program content, and 43 percent planned and designed OST program content.

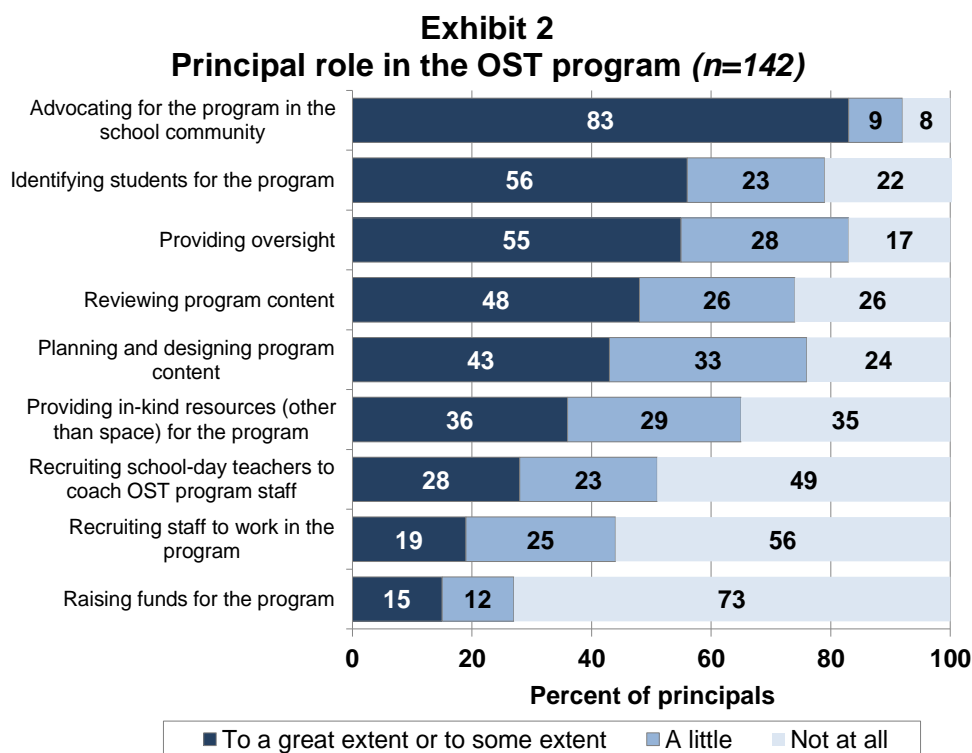


Exhibit reads: Eighty-three percent of principals reported that their role included advocating for the OST program in their school community to some extent or to a great extent. Nine percent reported serving in this role includes a little, while 8 percent reported that they did not serve this role at all.

More principals of schools hosting middle-grades OST programs reported that they played a role in recruiting OST program staff than did principals of schools hosting elementary-grades programs (59 percent compared to 37 percent). Similarly, more middle-grades principals

reported that they recruited school-day teachers to serve as coaches for OST program staff than did principals of elementary-grades programs (65 percent compared to 44 percent).

Principals varied in the extent of their involvement with the OST program. Among responding principals, more than half (59 percent) reported that they were involved with the OST program through at least 6 of the 9 roles shown in Exhibit 2, and about a third (33 percent) reported that they were involved in at least 8 of the 9 roles. In contrast, 11 percent noted involvement in two or fewer ways, including 4 principals who reported that they did not play any role in the program.

Role of School-Day Staff in OST

According to principals, school-day teachers and other school staff played a relatively limited role in the OST program, as shown in Exhibit 3, although over half of principals reported that school-day staff served as a liaison between the school and the OST program (57 percent). About a quarter to a third of principals reported that school-day staff played other roles in bridging the school-day and OST program, delivering OST program content, or otherwise supporting OST program quality through planning.

- ***Delivering OST program content.*** Thirty-five percent of principals reported that school-day teachers and/or school-day staff led enrichment or recreation activities. Thirty-three percent reported that school staff tutored students or provided homework help in the OST program, and 29 percent said that school staff led academic activities.
- ***Facilitating the school/program connection.*** Thirty-two percent of principals said that school staff played a role in updating OST staff on students' progress and challenges. A quarter of principals reported that school staff helped to engage parents in the OST program (25 percent).
- ***Supporting OST quality.*** Twenty-two percent of principals reported that school staff designed OST curriculum and activities. In addition, 19 percent said school-day staff trained OST staff, and 14 percent reported that school staff played a role in supervising OST staff.

Overall, school staff were involved in a limited number of roles in the OST program, according to principals. Eighteen percent of responding principals did not identify any of the nine roles in Exhibit 3 as responsibilities of school staff in the OST program. About half (53 percent) of principals reported that school staff members played between one and three of these roles in the OST program. On average, principals reported that school staff played a role in three of these areas.

Exhibit 3
Role of school-day teachers and/or school-day staff in OST (n=144)

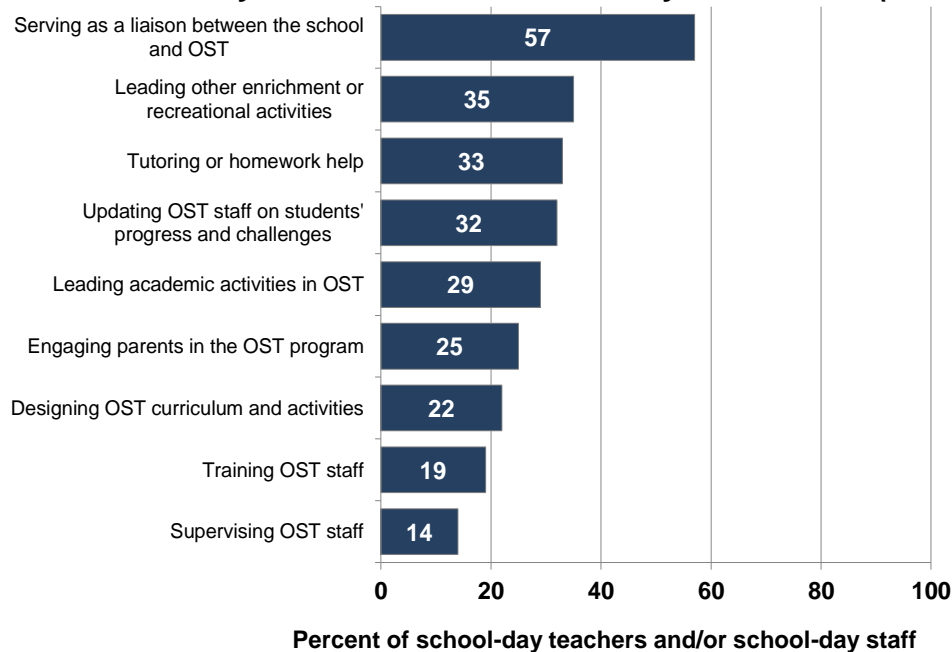


Exhibit reads: Fifty-seven percent of principals reported that school-day teachers and/or school-day staff served as a liaison between the school and the OST program.

Communication Between the School and the OST Program

Principals reported communicating regularly with the OST program director or other OST staff working at the school. As shown in Exhibit 4, nearly three-quarters of principals reported communicating with the OST staff at their school at least once a week (72 percent). An additional 19 percent of principal reported communicating a few times a month.

Exhibit 4
Frequency of principal communication with OST staff (n=148)

Frequency	Percent
At least once a week	72%
A few times a month	19
About once a month	7
1-2 times a semester	0
Less than once a semester	1
Never	1

Exhibit reads: Seventy-two percent of principals communicated with the OST program director or other OST staff at least once a week.

Principals were more likely to report communicating with OST program staff about logistics and overall program management, including issues related to student behavior, than about the content or staffing of OST program activities, as shown in Exhibit 5.

- **Communication about OST program management.** The majority (88 percent) of principals reported that their conversations with OST staff addressed use of school classrooms and resources, and 71 percent discussed program management to some extent or a great extent.
- **Communication about students.** Three-quarters of principals (75 percent) reported that they discussed student behavior with the OST staff to some extent or to a great extent. Sixty-seven percent regularly discussed student needs and progress.
- **Communication about OST program content.** Fifty-nine percent of principals discussed homework policies with OST staff, and 57 percent reported that they discuss OST activities and curriculum. Forty-nine percent communicated regularly with OST about the school-day curriculum, and 39 percent discussed OST staffing.

Exhibit 5
Principal reports of conversation topics with OST staff (n=147)

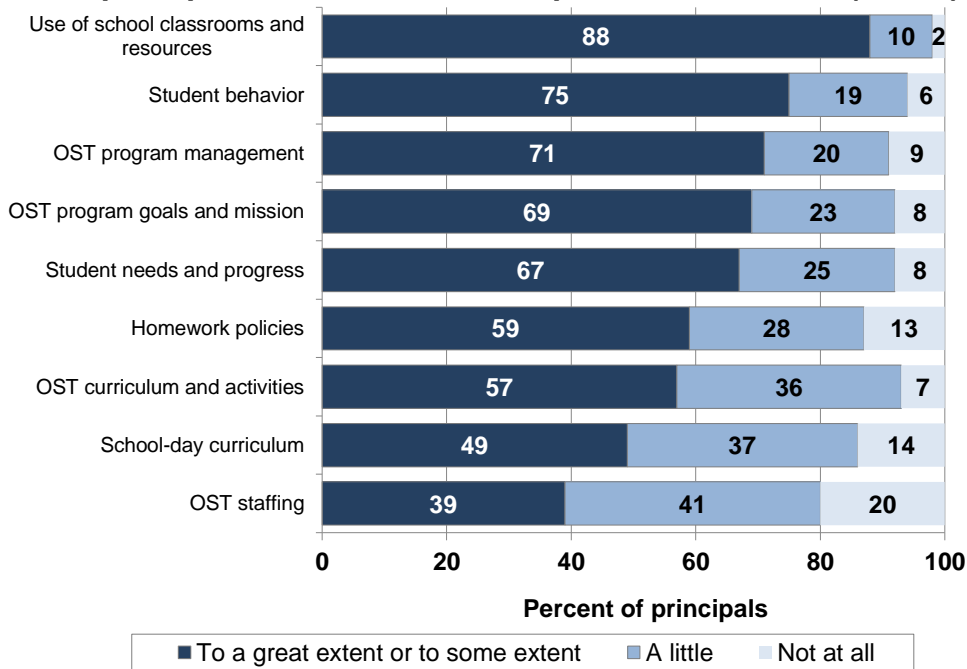


Exhibit reads: Eighty-eight percent of principals reported that their communication with OST staff addressed to some extent or to a great extent the use of school classrooms and resources. Ten percent of principals reported that their communication addressed this topic a little, while two percent reported that their communication with OST staff did not address this topic at all.

In some schools, principals also reported that OST program staff were involved in school committees: 30 percent said that OST staff were included on the School Safety Committee, and 20 percent reported that an OST representative was part of the School Leadership Team.

Principal Perceptions of the OST Program

Principals were generally satisfied with the OST program at their school, although they saw some room for improvement in its overall effectiveness. As illustrated in Exhibit 6, more than half of responding principals were very satisfied with the OST program (55 percent), and a third of principals were somewhat satisfied (33 percent). This satisfaction varied somewhat by grade level and OST funding source. Principals of schools hosting elementary-grades OST programs were more likely to be very satisfied with their OST program than principals of schools with middle-grades programs (60 percent, compared to 46 percent). Sixty-four percent of principals hosting Council-funded OST programs reported that they were very satisfied, compared to 47 percent of principals of schools with DYCD-funded OST programs.

Overall, 33 percent of principals believed the OST program helped a lot to improve the effectiveness of the school, while 53 percent said that it helped to improve school effectiveness a little. This section of the report summarizes principal views of the role that the OST program played in supporting the developmental and academic needs of students in the school.

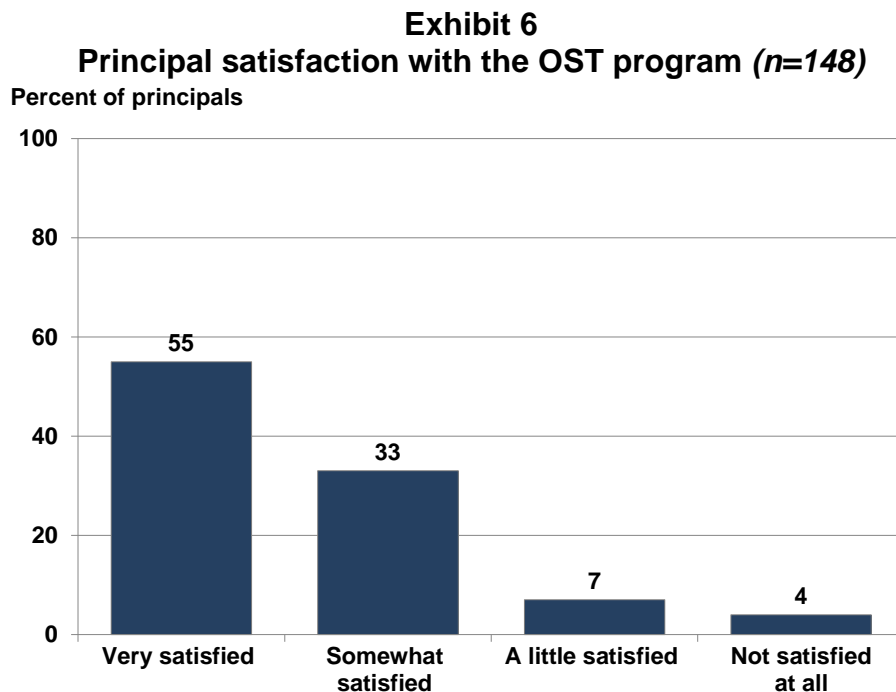


Exhibit reads: Fifty-five percent of responding principals reported that they were very satisfied with the OST program at their school.

Supporting Youth Development

Principals were asked to identify major needs of students in the school related to positive youth development. Seven-three percent identified additional support at home for school success as a major need for students. Other major needs included goal-setting skills (67 percent), having good mentors and role models (67 percent), conflict resolution (67 percent), and communication skills (64 percent), as shown in Exhibit 7.

There were some differences in the developmental needs of students identified by principals with OST programs that were DYCD-funded and principals of schools with Council-funded programs. For example, three-quarters (75 percent) of principals with Council-funded programs were more likely to report communication skills as a major need than principals of schools with DYCD-funded programs (55 percent). Additionally, 84 percent of Council-funded OST programs identified support at home for school success as a major need, compared to 63 percent of principals with DYCD-funded programs.

Exhibit 7
Principal reports of additional student needs (n=149)

Developmental needs	Major need	Minor need	Not a need
Support at home for school success	73%	26%	1%
Conflict resolution skills	67	32	1
Goal setting skills	67	32	1
Good mentors/role models	67	30	3
Communication skills	64	35	1
Strong positive peer relationships	62	36	2
Leadership skills	55	42	3
Behavior management skills	54	45	1

Exhibit reads: Seventy-three percent of principals reported that support at home for school success was a major need for their students, 26 percent reported support at home for school success as a minor need, and one percent reported that support at home for school success was not a need.

Overall, 70 percent of principals reported that the OST program helped to address these developmental needs at least to some extent (21 percent said that it did so to a great extent, and 49 percent said that it did so to some extent). Twenty-six percent of principals reported that the OST program addressed these major needs a little, and four percent said that the program did not address the major academic needs at all. (One percent said that they did not know.)

In addition, 17 percent of principals reported that the OST program helped a lot in engaging parents in school activities, and 58 percent said that the OST program improved parent participation a little.

Principals had mixed views of the impact of OST on specific developmental needs. As shown in Exhibit 8, about a third or fewer of principals said that the OST program helped to improve youth social-emotional skills a lot, while a third reported that the program helped improve skills a little in these areas.

Exhibit 8
Principal reports of OST impact on social-emotional skills (n=147)

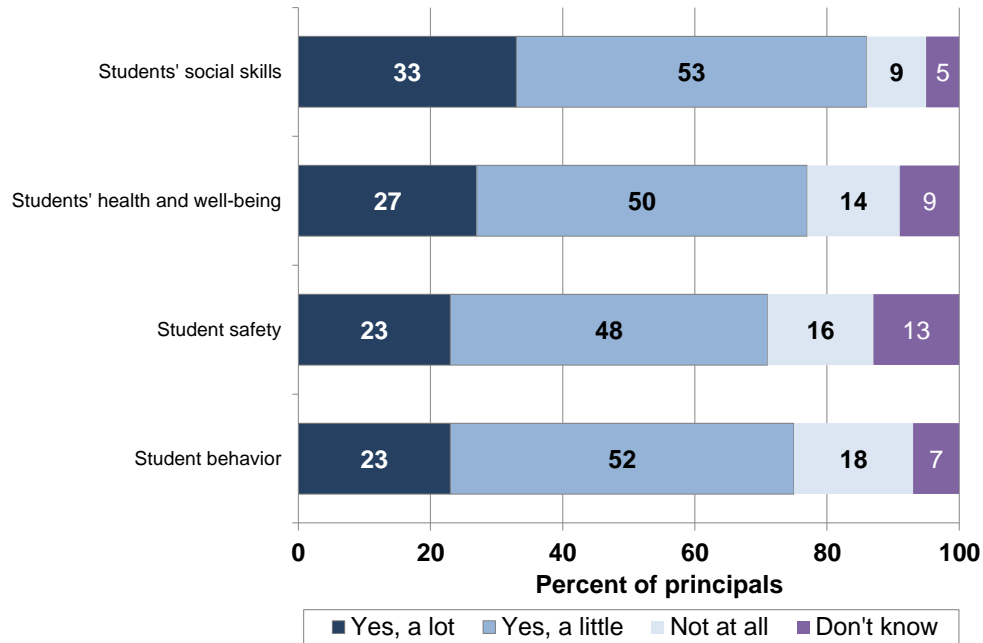


Exhibit reads: Thirty-three percent of principals reported that the OST program helped to improve students' social skills a lot, and 53 percent of principals agreed that it did so a little. Nine percent of principals reported that it did not help at all, and 5 percent of principals said they did not know.

Supporting Students Academically

Principals were also asked to identify the academic needs facing their students. As shown in Exhibit 9, 90 percent of principals reported literacy as a major need, followed by study skills (84 percent), and math (78 percent).

Exhibit 9
Principal reports of student academic needs (n=146)

Academic needs	Major need	Minor need	Not a need
Literacy	90%	10%	0%
Study skills	84	16	0
Math	78	21	1
English language learner (ELL)	66	28	6
Science	54	42	4
Technology	48	40	12

Exhibit reads: Ninety percent of principals reported that literacy was a major need for students in their school. Ten percent reported literacy as a minor need, and no principal reported that literacy was not a need.

About two-thirds of principals reported that the OST program helped to address these major academic needs: 12 percent said that it did so to a great extent and 53 percent said that it did so to some extent. Twenty-six percent of principals reported that the OST program addressed these major needs a little, and five percent said that the program did not address the major academic needs at all. Four percent said that they did not know. Overall, principals were less satisfied with the extent to which the OST program addressed these major academic needs for students than they were with the extent to which OST addressed the major developmental needs.

This mixed view of the success of the OST program in supporting students academically was echoed in principals' reactions to questions about the extent to which the OST program helps to improve specific academic skills and attitudes, as illustrated in Exhibit 10. Principals were most likely to report that the OST program helped to improve students' attitudes towards school and school-day attendance (32 percent and 27 percent reported that it did so a lot, respectively). In general, just over half of principals reported that the OST program helped students to develop on specific academic skills a little.

Exhibit 10
Principal reports of the academic impact of the OST program (n=146)

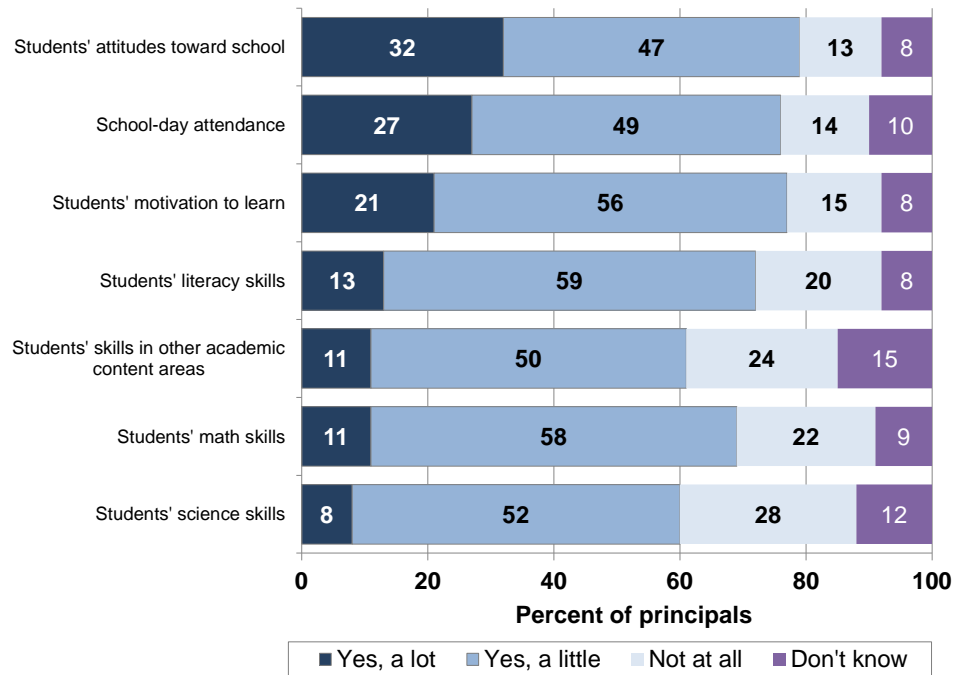


Exhibit reads: Thirty-two percent of principals reported that the OST program helped to improve students' attitudes towards school a lot, and 47 percent of principals agreed that it did so a little. Thirteen percent of principals said that the program did not help to improve students' attitudes towards school, while eight percent of principals reported that they did not know whether the program contributed in this area.

Principal Priorities for OST Programming

Principals were asked to identify what they believed should be the main priority for the OST program at their school. Thirty percent identified academic activities, other than homework, as the main priority for the OST program (Exhibit 11). Twenty-seven percent of responding principals reported that youth development activities should be the main priority for OST. In addition, 16 percent of principals identified homework help as the priority, 16 selected sports and recreational activities, and 11 percent prioritized arts and drama activities. Principals of schools in which the DYCD OST program was the only afterschool program offered were more likely to identify youth development as their main priority for the program, compared to principals of schools hosting multiple afterschool programs (36 percent compared to 14 percent).

Exhibit 11
Principal priorities for OST program activities (n=150)

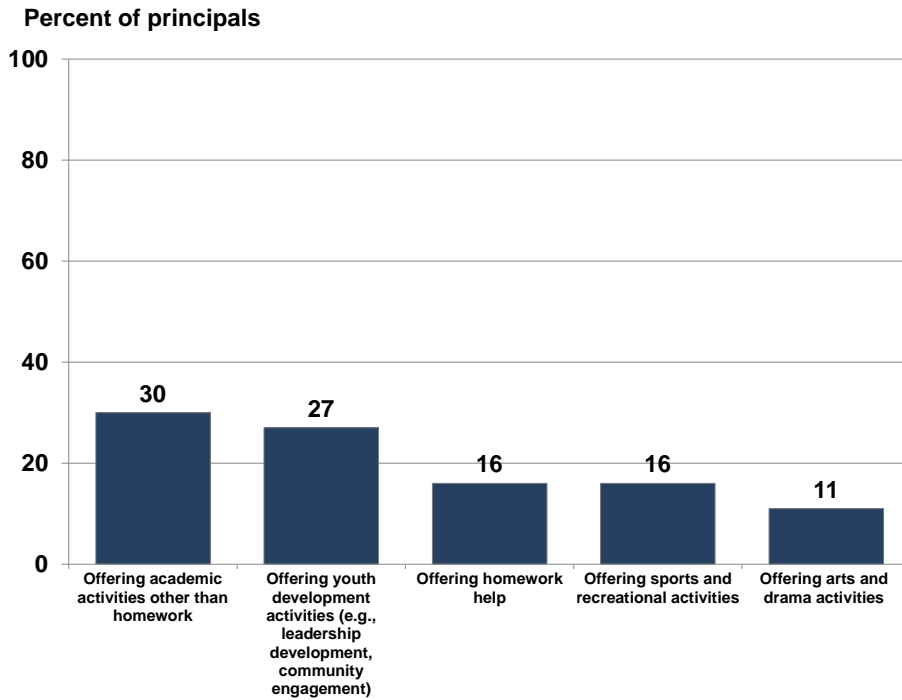


Exhibit reads: Thirty-percent of principals reported that offering academic activities other than homework should be the main priority of the OST program at their school.

Among the 42 principals who identified academic activities as the priority for OST programming, 71 percent said literacy should be the main focus (Exhibit 12). Seventeen percent identified math as the priority and 12 percent identified test preparation. No principal identified science as a priority academic area.

Exhibit 12
Principal reports of priority academic areas for OST (n=42)

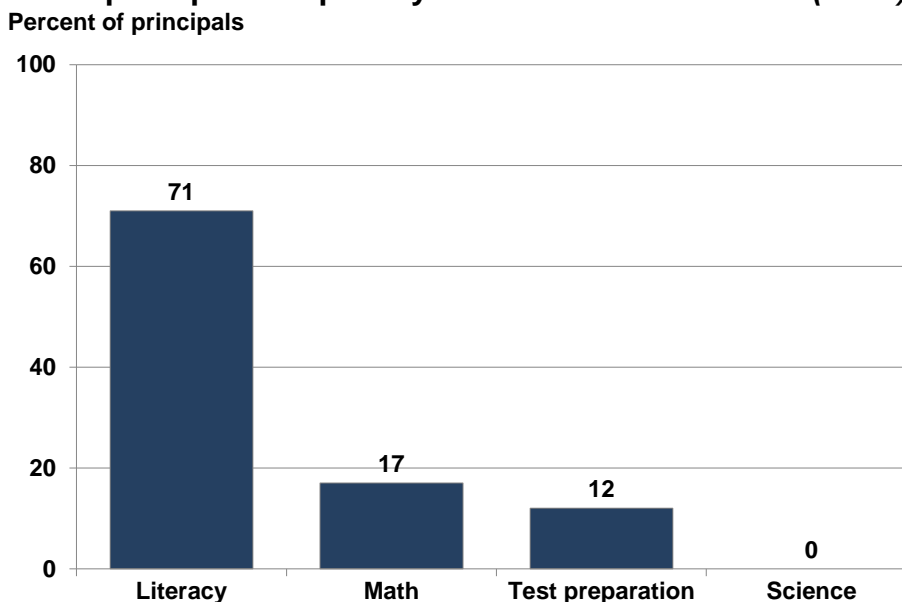


Exhibit reads: Seventy-one percent of principals reported that literacy should be the academic subject of main priority for the OST program at their school.

Conclusion

The 2011 RFP for OST programs highlighted DYCD's increased emphasis on establishing structures for high-quality OST programs, including developing collaborative partnerships with schools and engaging education specialists to help OST programs meet the developmental and academic needs of participating students. The survey administered to principals hosting DYCD OST programs in the 2012-13 school year explored principals' perspectives of the OST program at their school in light of these expectations. In general, responding principals were satisfied with the OST program and indicated that the school and OST program worked in partnership to support students in the school. The survey findings also suggested some areas in which the partnership could be further strengthened, and ways in which OST programs could contribute most effectively to the school.

- Principals most commonly offered their support to OST programs by being an advocate for in the school community, and less by engaging in decisions about activity content or program staffing.
- School-day staff served as liaisons between the school and the OST program in more than half of schools. School-day staff took on a more active role in OST implementation in about a third of schools, according to principals, which could further strengthen the alignment between the program and the school.
- Most principals communicated frequently with OST staff, but more often about program logistics (such as sharing space) than about program content.
- Overall, similar numbers of principals prioritized academic enrichment and youth development activities for their OST program (about a third each). Among those that prioritized academic enrichment, a significant majority of principals reported that literacy should be the primary focus of OST program activities.

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