



Supporting Literacy in Out-of-School Time:

An Examination of OST Early Literacy Practices in Philadelphia

Prepared by *Research for Action* • October 2017

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About Research for Action

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization. We seek to use research as the basis for the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes for traditionally underserved students. Our work is designed to strengthen public schools and postsecondary institutions; provide research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners, and the public at the local, state, and national levels; and enrich the civic and community dialogue about public education. For more information, please visit our website at www.researchforaction.org.

Acknowledgements

RFA would like to thank the William Penn Foundation for funding this project. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Foundation.

For their ongoing guidance and insights, we also thank Christine Piven, Chief of Staff for Community and Culture in the Managing Director's Office at the City of Philadelphia; Waleska Maldonado, Deputy Commissioner at the City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services; and Gulal Nakati, Knowledge Manager and Engineer Project leader for PhillyBOOST. In particular, we appreciated their useful feedback on the survey and invaluable support in distributing and collecting the survey. We also want to thank Read by 4th and the POSTLI initiative who assisted with the survey distribution. As importantly, we also want to thank the OST providers who provided feedback on the survey, participated in interviews, and completed the survey.

The authors would also like to thank our colleagues at RFA: Kate Shaw, Executive Director, and Kate Callahan, Director of Quantitative Research, provided research guidance and feedback on analysis and writing. Kasey Meehan and other members of the quantitative team provided constructive feedback on the provider survey. Katie Carter, Communications and Social Media Coordinator, ensured the quality of this report's writing. Megan Morris, RFA's Graphic Designer, made the report visually appealing and more readable. Alison Murawski, RFA's COO and Director of Communications, coordinated all aspects of the production of this report. We also want to acknowledge the support of our intern, Hsing-Chuan Hsieh (Katie), in quantitative and qualitative analysis.

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Executive Summary

October 2017

Introduction

Philadelphia's Out-of-School Time (OST) system has identified K-3rd grade literacy support as the focus of the first phase of its strategic plan, launched in 2017. Research shows that OST programs can have an impact on early literacy skills,¹ and this plan views OST programs as an important "delivery system" for addressing critical needs of youth throughout the city, and aims to better coordinate and leverage resources for OST programs to address these needs.² Over the next few years, Philadelphia's OST system will undertake a focused effort to improve reading outcomes for K-3rd grade participants.

To inform its early literacy work, the City OST system asked Research for Action (RFA) to conduct two pieces of research: 1) a literature review of evidence-based programs for delivering effective OST literacy support; and 2) a scan of Philadelphia's OST literacy programs and practices as compared to these evidence-based programs. The literature review is summarized in the report [*Supporting Literacy in Out-of-School Time: A Review of the Literature*](#), released in July 2017.³ The report identified evidence-based programs and the Key Ingredients of high-quality OST literacy programs. The report also includes a tool which enables OST providers to assess whether they have these Key Ingredients in place.

This report assesses the degree to which Philadelphia's OST literacy programs have the Key Ingredients necessary for high-quality literacy programming. It also identifies areas that require more support. Findings are based on interviews with two leaders in Philadelphia's early literacy landscape, staff from six OST literacy programs, and a survey completed by staff from 48 OST programs.

¹ Yael Kidron and Jim Lindsay. "The Effects of Increased Learning Time on Student Academic and Nonacademic Outcomes: Findings from a Meta-Analytic Review. REL 2014-015." *Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia*. (2014).; Zakia Redd, Christopher Boccanfuso, Karen Walker, Daniel Princiotta, Dylan Knewstubb and Kristin Moore. "Expanding time for learning both inside and outside the classroom: A review of the evidence base." *Child Trends*. (2012).; Stanley T. Crawford. "Meta-analysis of the impact of after-school programs on students reading and mathematics performance." *Doctoral dissertation, University of North Texas*. (2011).; Patricia A. Lauer, Motoko Akiba, Stephanie B. Wilkerson, Helen S. Apthorp, David Snow and Mya L. Martin-Glenn. "Out-of-school-time programs: A meta-analysis of effects for at-risk students." *Review of Educational Research*. (2006).

² City of Philadelphia, "Philadelphia OST Operational Plan" (2017).

³ <https://8rri53pmQcs22jk3vvqna1ub-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/RFA-Supporting-Literacy-in-OST-Summary-of-Evidence-June-2017.pdf>

Key Findings

Description of OST Literacy Programs in our Sample

- **The vast majority of OST literacy programs in our sample provided year-round literacy support in multiple ways.** Providers reported offering both afterschool and summer literacy-focused enrichment programs and also reported infusing literacy into other program activities. About one-third of survey respondents also provided tutoring and about half offered computer-based literacy support.
- **OST literacy programs in our sample targeted a range of literacy outcomes,** but some interviewees expressed uncertainty regarding the appropriate literacy outcomes for OST.
- **OST literacy programs in our sample reported serving large proportions of struggling readers and English Language Learners (ELLs).** Providers also reported that a lack of information about students' special education status and/or their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) made it difficult to ascertain the specific needs of some students.

Presence of Key Ingredients for High-Quality OST Literacy Programs

- **High-quality program content: The vast majority of providers in our sample had many of the ingredients for high-quality program content in place.** However, providers could improve in providing content designed by literacy experts, using school data for diagnostic and progress monitoring purposes, and having books available in languages other than English.
 - **Structured Content:** Do OST programs intentionally structure content through utilizing a daily protocol, curriculum, or lesson plans?
 - Strength: Most OST literacy programs were structured, primarily through the use of daily protocols that guide the way time is allocated during literacy programming.
 - Gap: Fewer programs, particularly tutoring programs, structured content through lesson plans developed by a literacy expert or with a packaged curriculum. These strategies would provide robust literacy content that is informed by early literacy expertise.
 - **Aligned Content:** Do OST programs align content with the school day to enhance in-school learning?
 - Strength: More than half of all types of OST literacy programs in our study are aligning their program content to the Pennsylvania common core. The Pennsylvania common core standards are available online by grade level. In addition, they provide broad guidelines that may be easier for providers to address than school-specific information.
 - Gap: Less than half (20-47%) of OST literacy programs align content to the school curricula or foci as communicated by the school. These school specific strategies for alignment may be more difficult for providers to adopt because they require greater coordination with schools.
 - Gap: Some programs (20-31%) had no alignment strategies. Alignment was a greater challenge for enrichment programs compared to tutoring programs.
 - **Access to Content:** Do OST programs provide participants access to engaging and relevant books?
 - Strength: All OST programs provided access to books at appropriate reading levels.

- Strength: OST programs provide access to books that reflect different cultural and ethnic groups, are perceived by providers to be high interest and available for children to take home.
 - Gap: Fewer programs provide access to books in different languages.
 - Informed Content: Do OST programs inform their program content with data about student needs?
 - Strength: A majority of providers have access to some source of diagnostic and progress monitoring data, primarily their own assessments and conversations with teachers.
 - Gap: About half of providers report not having access to school data, the source that may be the most reliable indicator of a child’s reading ability.
- **Highly-qualified staff: Far fewer providers had the ingredients for high-quality staffing.** Particular gaps were noted with regard to use of certified teachers and/or providing sufficient pre-service training for paraprofessional staff. However, close to half were accessing literacy expertise through POSTLI which may have filled these gaps for some providers.
 - Credentialed Staff: Do certified teachers provide literacy instruction?
 - Gap: OST providers reported challenges with hiring certified teachers.
 - Potential strength: A majority of frontline literacy staff have some college education.
 - Prepared Staff: Pre-Service Training: In lieu of certified teachers, do staff and volunteers receive sufficient training?
 - Strength: The vast majority of tutoring programs (92%) were on track for providing an adequate amount of pre-service training.
 - Gap: Less than half of enrichment programs were on track for providing an adequate amount of pre-service training.
 - Prepared Staff: Ongoing Support: In lieu of certified teachers, do staff and volunteers receive sufficient support?
 - Strength: The majority of providers offered monthly observation and feedback.
 - Gap: While coaching was offered, few providers had an internal or external (POSTLI) literacy expert providing coaching.
 - Literacy Expertise: Do OST programs have a literacy expert—a reading specialist or someone certified to teach early literacy—delivering or overseeing programming and staff training?
 - Strength: More than two-thirds of providers responding to our survey had access to literacy expertise, either through staff with literacy expertise or through an external support (i.e., POSTLI).
 - Gap: One-third of providers did not have access to literacy expertise (i.e., a reading specialist or someone certified in early literacy).
- **Sufficient literacy instruction and varied program activities: Varied activities to support engagement were common, but finding time for literacy activities was a challenge.** Most afterschool programs offered sufficient hours of literacy instruction while most summer programs did not.
 - Hours of Literacy Programming: Do OST programs provide weekly and yearly hours of programming sufficient to have an impact?
 - Strength: More than two-thirds of afterschool enrichment programs met both weekly and yearly thresholds for hours of literacy instruction.

- Gap: Less than one-third of summer enrichment programs met the weekly targets for hours of instruction but slightly more (36%) met the yearly targets.
- Gap: Nearly half of providers (44%), including both afterschool and summer, reported that finding time for literacy activities was at least a slight challenge.
- *Varied Program Activities:* Do OST programs provide fun and engaging activities that differentiate the program from the regular school day?
 - Strength: Most OST providers reported strategies to differentiate the program from the regular school day.
- **ELL gaps: Philadelphia OST literacy programs struggled to meet the needs of ELLs.** Most providers did not have access to books in other languages or provide training on how to support ELL students. Providers also reported language barriers in engaging ELL parents.

Conditions to Support Literacy Programming

- **Providers reported that obtaining adequate funding, access to school data, and sufficient parent involvement were challenges faced by their literacy programs.** Research suggests these conditions support high-quality programming.
- **Providers identified other key local resources for supporting their programs** including volunteers from colleges and universities and partnerships with other community organizations to support engaging activities and provide literacy expertise.

Recommendations

This research points to the following recommendations to build on the strengths and close the gaps in OST literacy efforts in Philadelphia:

Recommendations for the OST System

Facilitate a system-wide discussion about how OST can support early literacy.

- Encourage the use of high-quality, evidence-based programs.
- Encourage tutoring.
- Allow for variation in programs and practices adopted.
- Foster other practices to support literacy that draw on the strengths of OST programs.

Encourage collection and use of data.

- Support OST providers with data collection and outcomes assessment.
- Provide guidance for OST providers regarding the early literacy skills that most need targeting for different grade levels and subgroups of students.

Fill gaps in training and literacy expertise.

- Expand literacy-focused training opportunities.
- Provide training and other supports for OST providers with regard to ELL students.
- Provide access to literacy expertise for program development, training, and coaching.

Engage key partners: universities and funders.

- Engage colleges and universities as sources of literacy expertise, as well as volunteers.
- Engage funders in considering system-wide strategies for supporting OST literacy programs.

Recommendations for Future Research

This scan of OST literacy practices, along with RFA's July 2017 literature review, illuminated some aspects of OST literacy programming, but this research has limitations and points to important gaps that should be addressed by future research. These include:

- The efficacy of non-traditional programs for OST literacy support;
- The role of drop-in programs in supporting early literacy;
- The most effective strategies for supporting early literacy of ELL students in OST settings;
- The relationship between Key Ingredients and outcomes;
- The evidence base for afterschool enrichment programs and programs using paraprofessional staff; and
- The role of external literacy experts, particularly POSTLI, in boosting the quality of OST literacy programs.

In addition, as new early literacy efforts are launched, research should examine the following:

- The quality of implementation; and
- The role of the OST system in supporting early literacy efforts.



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I. Introduction: The Importance of Fostering Early Literacy in Out of School Time Programs in Philadelphia

In 2017, about three-quarters of Philadelphia’s third and fourth grade students did not read at grade level.⁴ Yet failure to achieve grade-level reading proficiency by fourth grade is a precursor to significant educational challenges, including drop out.⁵ While teaching children to read and supporting their literacy development is a task that falls largely to schools and parents, segments of the broader community can also play a role. In particular, research shows that Out-of-School Time (OST) programs can have an impact on early literacy skills.⁶

Philadelphia’s OST system has identified K-3rd grade literacy support as the focus of the first phase of its strategic plan, launched in 2017. This plan views OST programs as an important “delivery system” for addressing critical needs of children and youth throughout the city and aims to better coordinate and leverage resources for OST programs to address these needs.⁷ Over the next few years, Philadelphia’s OST system will undertake a focused effort, the parameters of which are still being determined, to improve reading outcomes for K-3rd grade participants.

The City’s OST literacy efforts will build on work done by Philadelphia’s Read by 4th Campaign, which seeks to engage the broader community in supporting all Philadelphia schools with their early literacy goals. Read By 4th leadership has already engaged OST providers as partners, and has invited them to serve on committees to identify strategies and priorities for boosting literacy. The OST literacy efforts will also build on work begun by the Philadelphia Out-of-School Time Literacy Initiative (POSTLI) in 2000. POSTLI serves as a technical assistance provider for OST literacy programs and sponsors an intensive literacy program, Youth Education for Tomorrow (YET), which is being implemented by fourteen OST providers in Philadelphia.

⁴ 79% of third grade students and 72% of fourth grade students, School District of Philadelphia website.

⁵ Donald J. Hernandez. “Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation.” *Annie E. Casey Foundation* (2011).

⁶ Yael Kidron and Jim Lindsay. “The Effects of Increased Learning Time on Student Academic and Nonacademic Outcomes: Findings from a Meta-Analytic Review. REL 2014-015.” *Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia*. (2014).; Zakia Redd, Christopher Boccanfuso, Karen Walker, Daniel Princiotta, Dylan Knewstub and Kristin Moore. “Expanding time for learning both inside and outside the classroom: A review of the evidence base.” *Child Trends*. (2012).; Stanley T. Crawford. “Meta-analysis of the impact of after-school programs on students reading and mathematics performance.” *Doctoral dissertation, University of North Texas*. (2011).; Patricia A. Lauer, Motoko Akiba, Stephanie B. Wilkerson, Helen S. Apthorp, David Snow and Mya L. Martin-Glenn. “Out-of-school-time programs: A meta-analysis of effects for at-risk students.” *Review of Educational Research*. (2006).

⁷ City of Philadelphia, “Philadelphia OST Operational Plan” (2017).

To inform its early literacy work, the City OST system asked Research for Action (RFA) to conduct two pieces of research: 1) a literature review of evidence-based programs for delivering effective OST literacy support; and 2) a scan of Philadelphia’s OST literacy programs and practices as compared to these evidence-based programs. The literature review is summarized in the report [Supporting Literacy in Out-of-School Time: A Review of the Literature](#), released in July 2017.⁸ The report identified evidence-based programs and also the Key Ingredients of high-quality OST literacy programs. The report also includes a tool which enables OST providers to assess whether they have these Key Ingredients in place.

This report assesses the degree to which Philadelphia’s OST literacy programs have the Key Ingredients necessary for high-quality literacy programming. It also identifies areas that require more support. Findings and definitions from RFA’s literature review inform this report and are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Findings from the Literature Review of OST Literacy Programming

18 High-Quality OST Literacy Programs: Programs with strong or moderate evidence of impact, or based on strong theory but needing more research	Key Ingredients of High-Quality OST Literacy Programming: Common practices observed across evidence-based programs	Conditions for High-Quality OST Literacy Programming: External supports that enable program success
<p>Four types of programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one tutoring • Afterschool enrichment • Summer enrichment • Non-traditional including computer-based and literacy-infused, i.e., programs that do not have a specific focus on literacy but infuse literacy into other activities such as arts or sports 	<p>High-quality program content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured: Program intentionally structures content by utilizing a curriculum, daily protocol, or lesson plans. • Aligned: Program content aligns with school day to enhance in-school learning. • Access: Participants have access to engaging and relevant books. • Informed: Content is informed by data about student needs. <p>Highly-qualified staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credentialed: Certified teachers provide literacy instruction. • Prepared: When not hiring certified teachers, staff and volunteers are given sufficient training and support. • Literacy expertise: Programs have a literacy expert delivering or overseeing programming and staff training. A literacy expert is a reading specialist or someone certified to teach early literacy. <p>Sufficient literacy programming and varied program activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours of literacy programming: Sufficient weekly and yearly hours of programming to have an impact • Varied program activities: Fun and engaging activities that differentiate the program from the regular school day 	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate funding • School partnerships • Parental involvement • Infrastructure to support the use of volunteers

⁸ <https://8rri53pmOcs22jk3vvqna1ub-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/RFA-Supporting-Literacy-in-OST-Summary-of-Evidence-June-2017.pdf>

Guiding Research Questions

Building on the results of our literature review of high-quality OST literacy practices, this report addresses the following research questions:

- What are the primary OST programs for K-3rd grade literacy support in Philadelphia, who do they serve, and what outcomes do they assess?
- How do Philadelphia's OST literacy programs vary in their alignment to the Key Ingredients of evidence-based programs identified in the literature review and what are the gaps and limitations?
- What conditions exist to support OST literacy programming and what barriers or challenges do providers encounter?
- What more is needed to address challenges or fill gaps in OST literacy programming in Philadelphia?

Methodology and Sample

To address the research questions, RFA conducted interviews with and a survey of Philadelphia’s OST providers. In both, we explored the practices of local OST literacy programming as well as the conditions supporting or impeding these programs. Table 2 describes the group of providers that participated in each of these activities.

Table 2. Survey and Interview Sample

	Survey	Interviews
Total	<p>48 providers of K-3rd grade literacy responded to the survey.⁹ This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 respondents from a list of 81 identified literacy providers¹⁰ • 19 additional providers from a broader list of 266 OST providers¹¹ <p>42 providers reported offering more than one type of literacy programming including after-school and summer programming. (See Table 3 on pg. 7 for more details.)</p>	<p>Six providers identified by the City OST system as providing K-3rd grade OST literacy programming; two leaders in Philadelphia’s early literacy landscape.</p>
Affiliation with Read by 4th or POSTLI	<p>69% of respondents (29 respondents¹²) reported affiliation with either Read by 4th or POSTLI.</p>	<p>Five of six providers were affiliated with Read by 4th and/or POSTLI.</p>
Organization	<p>77% (37 respondents) were non-profit organizations.</p> <p>The remainder includes schools/universities, City departments, religious institutions and other organizations.</p>	<p>Five providers were non-profit organizations and one was a City department.</p>
DHS Funding¹³	<p>52% of afterschool enrichment programs (22 respondents) were funded by DHS</p> <p>44% of summer enrichment programs (18 respondents) were funded by DHS</p>	<p>Four of six interviewed providers received some funding from DHS for afterschool or summer programs.</p>

⁹ 63 providers opened the survey but only 48 answered at least one question and provide K-3 literacy programming.

¹⁰ A list of 81 OST literacy providers in Philadelphia was developed by PhillyBOOST, Read by 4th and POSTLI. We had a 35% response rate from this list. OST providers on this list received an invitation followed by four reminder emails over the two week period of survey administration (June 14th- June 30th). Read by 4 and POSTLI also issued reminders to their networks to complete the survey.

¹¹ PhillyBoost also distributed the survey to their broader list of OST programs including arts, sports and general youth development programs. The invitation for this group and the first page of the survey emphasized that this survey was meant only for programs with a significant literacy component to their programming, in order to screen out programs without those components. From this broader group we had a 7% response rate. Two reminder emails were sent to this group in addition to the initial request to complete the survey.

¹² Respondents were not required to answer every question on the survey. Therefore, sample sizes vary by question asked. Throughout this report, we provide the number of respondents that selected each individual survey item.

¹³ RFA only queried providers about DHS funding because it is the top funding source for OST programs in the City and because RFA’s previous report found that providers receiving this funding reported more quality assurance practices.

Generalizability of Sample

Little data exists on the larger population of OST providers in Philadelphia. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the extent to which this survey sample is representative and generalizable to the larger population. However, the variety of providers that answered the survey suggests that we captured a broad range of OST literacy programs operating in Philadelphia. As shown above, the survey sample differs along two key dimensions –involvement in formal partnerships about OST literacy through Read by 4th and POSTLI (two-thirds were involved in these partnerships while one-third were not); and receipt of funding from Philadelphia’s Department of Human Services, the largest funding stream for OST programs in Philadelphia (about half receive this funding while about half do not). RFA’s report *Scanning the System*, released in July 2017, found that programs receiving DHS funding were more frequently engaged in quality improvement practices and had more stable staffing than other groups of programs. Therefore, the survey sample includes providers that are more likely to have strong OST literacy programs as well as those that are less likely to have strong programs. While this variation is important, we were not able to examine outcomes for these subgroups due to the small sample sizes.

Key Findings

Description of OST Literacy Programs in our Sample

- **The vast majority of OST literacy programs in our sample provided year-round literacy support in multiple ways.** Providers reported offering both afterschool and summer literacy-focused enrichment programs and also reported infusing literacy into other program activities. About one-third of survey respondents also provided tutoring and about half offered computer-based literacy support.
- **OST literacy programs in our sample targeted a range of literacy outcomes,** but some interviewees expressed uncertainty regarding the appropriate literacy outcomes for OST.
- **OST literacy programs in our sample reported serving large proportions of struggling readers and English Language Learners (ELLs).** Providers also reported that a lack of information about students’ special education status or their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) made it difficult to ascertain the specific needs of some students.

Presence of Key Ingredients for High-Quality OST Literacy Programs

- **High-quality program content:** The vast majority of providers in our sample had many of the ingredients for high-quality program content in place. However, providers could improve in providing content designed by literacy experts, using school data for diagnostic and progress monitoring purposes, and providing books in languages other than English.
- **Highly-qualified staff:** Far fewer providers had the ingredients for high-quality staffing. Particular gaps were noted with regard to use of certified teachers and/or providing sufficient pre-service training for paraprofessional staff. However, close to half were accessing literacy expertise through POSTLI which may have filled these gaps for some providers.
- **Sufficient literacy instruction and varied program activities:** Varied activities to support engagement were common, but finding time for literacy activities was a challenge. Most afterschool programs offered sufficient hours of literacy instruction while most summer programs did not.

- **ELL gaps: Philadelphia OST literacy programs struggled to meet the needs of ELLs.** Most providers did not have access to books in other languages or provide training on how to support ELL students. Providers also reported language barriers in engaging ELL parents.

Conditions to Support Literacy Programming

- **Providers reported that obtaining adequate funding, access to school data, and sufficient parent involvement were challenges faced by their literacy programs.** Research suggests these conditions support high-quality programming.
- **Providers identified other key local resources for supporting their programs** including volunteers from colleges and universities and partnerships with other community organizations to provide literacy expertise.

Report Overview

This report is organized in the following sections:

1. **Description of OST Literacy Programs in our Sample:** In this section, we describe OST programs responding to our survey by type, outcomes targeted and assessed, and literacy needs addressed.
2. **Presence of Key Ingredients of High-Quality OST Literacy Programs:** In this section, we assess whether and how characteristics of Philadelphia’s OST literacy programs align with the Key Ingredients of high-quality OST programs.
3. **Conditions to Support High-Quality OST Literacy Programming:** In this section, we compare how important conditions in Philadelphia’s local environment compare to the conditions present in the environment of high-quality programs.
4. **Conclusions and Recommendations:** Finally, we offer recommendations based on this research for Philadelphia’s OST system and OST providers.

II. Description of OST Literacy Programs in our Sample

This section describes the OST literacy support that was provided by programs in our sample. We report on the prevalence of each program type (tutoring, afterschool enrichment, summer enrichment, and non-traditional), the outcomes they targeted and assessed, and the literacy needs of participants served.

A. Type of OST Literacy Support

Almost all of the surveyed providers (88%) offered multiple types of OST literacy support. The vast majority (83%) reported offering afterschool and summer enrichment programs, and three-quarters (77%) also offered literacy-infused activities, i.e., activities that integrate literacy into arts, sports or other recreational activities. Table 3 summarizes these results.

Table 3. Percentage and Number of Providers that Offer Each Type of Literacy Programming

	Percentage of providers (%)	Number of providers (#)
One-on-one literacy tutoring	35%	17
Afterschool literacy enrichment¹⁴	88%	42
Summer literacy enrichment	85%	41
Both afterschool and summer enrichment	83%	40
Non-traditional		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer-based:¹⁵ Programs offering literacy-focused computer programs. • Literacy-infused: Programs integrating literacy practices into other activities (e.g., sports, drama)- either after school or in the summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% • 77% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 • 37
Offer more than one type of literacy programming	88%	42

Because there was insufficient evidence about non-traditional programs (computer-based and literacy-infused activities) in the literature review, we do not have quality indicators for these type of programs. Therefore, we do not assess the alignment of Philadelphia’s non-traditional literacy programs to Key Ingredients of high-quality programs.

B. Outcomes Targeted and Assessed

OST providers reported targeting multiple literacy outcomes. Nearly all (97%) focused on at least one of the five skill areas identified by the National Reading Panel (NRP)¹⁶ and 54% targeted more than one. Table 4 below displays the percent of providers targeting each of these outcomes in their programs.

Table 4: Outcomes Targeted by Providers

		NRP skill areas					Other literacy outcomes		
		Phonics	Phonemic Awareness	Fluency	Vocab	Reading Comprehension	General Reading achievement	Reading Attitudes	Writing
Afterschool programs	%	47%	53%	74%	87%	90%	50%	76%	71%
	#	18	20	28	33	34	19	29	27
Summer programs	%	54%	62%	81%	81%	95%	32%	81%	76%
	#	20	23	30	30	35	12	30	28

¹⁴ Seven of the afterschool enrichment programs were YET centers, one of the 18 evidence-based programs identified in RFA’s July 2017 literature review. YET originated in Philadelphia and is based on a balanced literacy program. This program was identified in the literature review as having strong theory but limited evidence with more research required. It is implemented with support from the Philadelphia Out-of-School Time Literacy Initiative.

¹⁵ Only a handful of computer-based programs used one of the three evidence-based computer programs identified in the literature review: Fast ForWord, DaisyQuest, and Earobics. Other programs being used by providers include: Lexia, Reading Eggs, and iReady.

¹⁶ The National Reading Panel recommends reading instruction built on five main, interconnected components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Table 4 shows:

- **Fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension were the most commonly targeted NRP skill areas.** Almost all afterschool and summer programs targeted reading comprehension while three-quarters or more targeted vocabulary and fluency.
- **About three-quarters of all programs reported targeting reading attitudes and writing.** This may have been in addition to or instead of the five skill areas. Two providers expressed more confidence in OST’s ability to influence reading attitudes as compared to specific literacy skills. One provider explained:

I think what afterschool can do on its own to actually increase reading levels is not small, but it’s not test scores either. We only have them for a short period of time. I think where we can best support kids is making them want to learn how to read, making them interested in reading.

Similarly, a leader in the Philadelphia early literacy landscape asserted that OST providers should focus on supporting enjoyment and positive attitudes towards reading and writing rather than on building specific literacy skills. Studies have shown a strong relationship between positive reading attitudes and reading achievement.¹⁷ Much of the discussion and research about supporting literacy development in OST programs focuses on reading, but targeting writing skills can help to support broad literacy learning, including reading.

OST providers reported using measures of general reading achievement to assess student progress.

These measures include grades in classes and reading levels on report cards, which do not provide feedback on the specific skill areas that providers reported targeting in their programming.

Table 5 below displays the assessments used by providers to measure these outcomes.

Table 5: Assessments Used by Providers¹⁸

		Formal Literacy Assessments				General Reading Achievement			No Assessment Used
		DIBELS	AIMSweb	PSSA	DRA	Grades	Reading level on report card	Informal reading inventory	
Afterschool programs	%	3%	3%	12%	24%	59%	50%	26%	3%
	#	1	1	4	8	20	17	9	1
Summer programs	%	0%	3%	6%	18%	47%	41%	41%	3%
	#	0	1	2	6	16	14	14	1

Table 5 shows:

- **The most commonly used assessments were grades, reading levels on student report cards, and an informal reading inventory,** all of which assess general reading achievement. Overall, 85 - 88% of providers assess general reading achievement though only one-third to half targeted general reading achievement. This suggests providers were assessing a broader outcome than they were actually targeting with their programs.
- **Few providers used other forms of standardized or diagnostic assessments** such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Academic Improvement Measurement System

¹⁷ De Naeghel, Jessie, Hilde Van Keer, Maarten Vansteenkiste, and Yves Rosseel. "The relation between elementary students' recreational and academic reading motivation, reading frequency, engagement, and comprehension: A self-determination theory perspective." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 104, no. 4 (2012): 1006.; Martinez, Rebecca S., O. Tolga Aricak, and Jeremy Jewell. "Influence of reading attitude on reading achievement: A test of the temporal-interaction model." *Psychology in the Schools* 45, no. 10 (2008): 1010-1023.

¹⁸ These questions were not asked of tutoring providers.

(AIMSweb), Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), or Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA).¹⁹

C. Literacy Needs of Philadelphia OST Program Participants

Providers reported serving a large proportion of struggling readers and ELL students. More than three-quarters of providers perceived half or more of their participants to be struggling readers. Almost 50% of providers reported their populations to be at least half ELL students. This percentage is high considering that about 10% of students in the School District of Philadelphia are ELL students.²⁰ Providers serving ELL students may be overrepresented in our survey sample or providers maybe unaware of the formal ELL classification of their participants. (See Appendix A the proportions of struggling readers and ELLs by program type.)

In spite of the prominence of struggling readers, not all OST providers have access to information about students' special education status or their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). As a result, they may not be aware of the specific needs of their students or school personnel with whom they should partner (i.e., reading specialists or special education teachers). As one provider explained:

IEPs are not something that the school shares with us. We ask parents. Parents don't always share. Sometimes they do, but it's something that we're working on with the City to get better inclusion into that process. Because if we're working with the kids afterschool, we want to do it to the best of our ability. That includes knowing what's in their IEP.

Consistent with the literature review, tutoring programs were most likely to report targeting literacy supports to only struggling readers. In contrast, most of the afterschool and summer enrichment OST programs offered literacy supports to every participating student. (See Appendix A for percentages of programs by type that target their literacy supports.)

III. Presence of Key Ingredients of High-Quality OST Literacy Programs

This section of the report examines the extent to which providers responding to our survey have incorporated the Key Ingredients of high-quality OST literacy programs into their OST efforts (see Table 1). Key Ingredients fall into three categories: (1) high-quality program content, (2) highly-qualified staff, and (3) sufficient literacy programming and varied program activities. The degree to which each Key Ingredient is present in a particular program varies. If providers reported that a Key Ingredient was at least minimally present, it was considered "on track." If a Key Ingredient was not present at all, it was considered "off track." Below, we begin with an overall assessment of the degree to which Key Ingredients were present in our sample, and follow with a more detailed analysis of provider strengths and gaps.

A. Overall Assessment of Key Ingredients

Table 6 displays the eleven Key Ingredients of high-quality OST literacy programs, and presents the percent and number of providers which reported having these elements in place.

¹⁹ Reading levels on report cards may come from DRAs administered by school staff. Both report card reading levels and DRA's were given as assessment options in the survey, in order to differentiate between DRAs administered by OST staff as opposed to teachers.

²⁰ Lin, J., Hughes, R., Long, D., Kim, D. (2016). Characteristics of English Language Learners in the School District of Philadelphia. Philadelphia Education Research Consortium, Philadelphia, PA. http://3f59p62inu0t2sj11u1hh23l-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/PERC-ELL-16-06-28-Student-Characteristics-Brief_Final.pdf

Table 6. Percentage and Number of OST Literacy Providers On Track with Key Ingredients of High-Quality OST Literacy Programming by Program Type²¹

Key: Red text = Less than half of providers were on track

Ingredients for high-quality OST literacy programming	Tutoring programs on track with Key Ingredient		Afterschool enrichment programs on track with Key Ingredient		Summer enrichment programs on track with Key Ingredient	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Program Content						
Structured: Have a curriculum or structured program	67%	10	69%	24	75%	27
Aligned: Have content aligned to school day (e.g., curriculum / standards)	80%	12	71%	25	69%	24
Access: Have access to books	100%	16	85%	33	92%	36
Informed: Have access to diagnostic data	73%	11	81%	30	74%	26
Informed: Have access to progress monitoring data	92%	12	95%	35	100%	30
Staffing Practices						
Credentialed: Staffing – at least half certified teachers	15% ²²	2	9%	3	9%	3
Prepared: Staff receive adequate pre-service training	92% ²³	11	48%	14	39%	13
Prepared: Staff receive ongoing (at least monthly) support	73%	11	77%	27	83%	30
Literacy Expertise: Staff has access to literacy expertise (internally or externally ²⁴)	69%	9	68%	25	67%	24
Sufficient Literacy Instruction and Varied Program Activities						
Hours of Literacy Instruction: Program has sufficient hours of literacy instruction	27% (Summer tutoring) ²⁵	3	68%	21	26%	8
	56% (Afterschool tutoring)	5				
Varied Program Activities: Program offers activities to differentiate from the school day	100% ²⁶	15	91%	38	90%	37

Table 6 reveals the following notable findings:

Across program types, more providers are on track for providing high-quality program content than highly-qualified staffing or hours of instruction.

²¹ Each provider was asked about these ingredients for each type of program that they conduct. Because many providers have more than one type of program and their practices might vary among their programs, we were not able to compute an ‘overall’ column in this table.

²² Evidence-based tutoring programs did not use certified teachers therefore, this is not a quality indicator for tutoring programs. However, we include the percentage of tutoring programs hiring certified teachers for comparison.

²³ The pre-service target for tutoring programs was much lower (at least 1 hour) than other program types (10 or more hours).

²⁴ This includes all providers who reported receiving some services from POSTLI, including YET centers and providers receiving coaching and professional development. Overall, 18 survey respondents reported receiving supports from POSTLI.

²⁵ Tutoring practices were the same in the summer and the school year across all areas except potential dosage where the number of hours offered differed. Therefore, we report both summer and school year tutoring programs in this cell.

²⁶ Tutoring programs have an inherent non-academic component—positive adult youth relationships. However, research has not explored the ways in which the quality of tutor-tutee relationships impact the success of tutoring.

- The majority of providers (67-100%) are meeting the minimum threshold for providing high-quality program content. More details about these standards and provider program content practices are provided in Section B.1 below.
- Fewer than half of providers are on track with most of the highly-qualified staffing ingredients. More details about these standards and provider staffing practices are described in Section B.2 below.
- Almost all providers offered activities distinct from the school day. Yet less than one-third of summer programs and one half to two-thirds of afterschool programs met the minimum threshold for hours of literacy instruction. More details about hours of instruction and varied activities are provided in Section B.3 below.

B. Taking a Closer Look at Key Ingredients of High-Quality OST Literacy Programming

This section provides more details about provider practices with regard to the three high-quality programming practices: program content, staffing, and sufficient literacy instruction and varied program activities. We examine the strengths and gaps in each of these Key Ingredient areas.

1. High-Quality Program Content

Key Ingredients of High-Quality Program Content

- Structured:** The program intentionally structures content through utilizing a curriculum, daily protocol, or lesson plans.
- Aligned:** Program content aligns with school day to enhance in-school learning.
- Access:** Participants have access to engaging and relevant books.
- Informed:** Content is informed by data about student needs.

A. Structured Content

Overall assessment: *More than 65% of providers offered structured program content. (See Table 6).*

We asked providers what strategies they used to plan and structure literacy programming. At minimum, providers needed to have either a curriculum, structured protocol, or lesson plans developed by a literacy expert to be considered on track. While all these strategies provide structure, they vary in the extent to which they provide robust literacy content. Table 7 displays

the percentages of survey respondents who report using an array of approaches to structuring the content of their programs. Respondents were able to select multiple options to these survey questions, so the values in Table 7 do not total to 100%.

Table 7. Approach to Instructional Planning Used by Survey Respondents

	<i>On Track instructional planning strategies</i>					
	Use structured protocols		Use lesson plans from internally developed or packaged curriculum		Develop own lesson plans (by literacy expert)	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Tutoring programs	53%	8	13%	2	20%	2
Afterschool enrichment programs	57%	20	31%	11	18%	6
Summer enrichment programs	61%	22	39%	14	19%	6

Table 7 identifies the following strengths and areas for improvement in structuring program content.

Strength: Most OST literacy programs were structured, primarily through the use of protocols that guide the way time is allocated during literacy programming.

Gap: Fewer programs, particularly tutoring programs, structured content through lesson plans developed by a literacy expert or with a packaged curriculum. These strategies would provide robust literacy content that is informed by early literacy expertise. Among providers using a packaged curriculum, only a handful reported using one of the curricula found in high-quality programs: KidzLit, Read for Success, Reading Coaches, YET, and Book Buddies. See Appendix B for additional information on the curricula providers used.

Interviews revealed that some providers based decisions about curricula on their suitability given the staffing and time constraints of the OST setting. One provider reported concerns about using an existing literacy curriculum because they perceived these curricula to be as too prescriptive and difficult to adapt to the OST environment. However, another provider chose to use a packaged curriculum because staff lacked literacy expertise. Specifically, this provider chose KidzLit because it is built for an afterschool time frame, is accessible to OST staff, provides activities and instructions, and has socioemotional components.

B. Aligned Content

Overall assessment: *More than 65% of providers aligned program content with in-school content (see Table 6).*

Providers were asked if the content of their literacy programs aligned to school day content. Alignment could be achieved via aligning to the school curriculum or to the common core state standards, or providers could receive other information from the school (e.g., daily lessons or assignments) to align OST programming. In order to be considered on track in this area, providers had to indicate using at least one of these approaches. Table 8 below displays providers’ school alignment strategies.

Table 8. Providers that Use Strategies for Aligning Program Content to Enhance In-School Learning

	Align with school curricula		Align with PA common core		School provides information to align ²⁷		None of the above	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Tutoring programs	47%	7	67%	10	20%	3	20%	3
Afterschool enrichment programs	31%	11	57%	20	37%	13	29%	10
Summer enrichment programs	20%	7	51%	18	34%	12	31%	11

Table 8 suggests both strengths and gaps in alignment of OST program content to enhance in-school learning.

Strength: More than half of all types of OST literacy programs are aligning their program content to the Pennsylvania common core. The Pennsylvania common core standards are available online by grade level. In addition, they provide broad guidelines that may be easier for providers to address than school-specific information. While alignment to the PA Common Core is a helpful first step for program alignment, strategies that are specific to school curricula and classroom activities might be even more effective because they create a more seamless learning experience for OST participants.

Gap: Less than half (20-47%) of OST literacy programs align content to the school curricula or foci as communicated by the school. These school specific strategies for alignment may be more difficult for providers to adopt because they require greater coordination with schools. To align to a school’s curricula, OST providers need to learn from the school what curricula they use and, if not available online, obtain copies of the curricula from the schools. To align with daily classroom activities, providers would need to build relationships with classroom teachers; a difficult task since most OST staff are not in the school building during the school day.

Gap: Some programs (20-31%) had no alignment strategies. Alignment was a greater challenge for enrichment programs compared to tutoring programs. Because tutoring programs tend to serve struggling readers and can provide individualized support, these programs may seek greater alignment to the school curriculum.

C. Access to Content

Overall assessment: *More than 80% of providers reported giving participants’ access to books (see Table 6).*

Providers were asked if they used books in literacy activities, and were queried about the types of books they used. Access to books was the minimum standard needed for providers to be considered on-track in this area. However, appropriate reading levels, cultural relevance, and the ability for students to take books home were also deemed important in the literature. In addition, providing books in different languages is important for supporting ELLs. Table 9 below displays the percentage of providers reporting literature-based best practices with regard to book access.

²⁷ The survey question asked providers to indicate if the school provided information to plan programming in line with school day activities. These activities could include information on daily lesson plans, grade level themes, or school-wide initiatives.

Table 9. Percentage and Number of Providers That Report Best Practices for Book Access

Participants can access books that...	%	#
Are at an appropriate reading level	100%	33
Are about different cultural and ethnic groups	91%	30
Are engaging	91%	30
Can be taken home	70%	23
Are in different languages	42%	14

Table 9 indicates strengths and gaps with regard to this Key Ingredient.

Strength: All OST programs provided access to books at appropriate reading levels. However, one provider voiced a rationale for not emphasizing leveled books, saying “We’re still very much about freedom of choice...and not prescribing what kids should or shouldn't read—you decide what you want to learn.” An interview with a leader in the Philadelphia early literacy landscape reconciled both attitudes toward reading levels, explaining that OST providers should help children find books that are of interest to them and can be read independently, while maintaining a focus on enjoyment of reading and writing.

Strength: Most OST programs provided access to books that reflect different cultural and ethnic groups, are perceived by providers to be high interest for participants, and are available for children to take home.

Gap: Less than half of programs provide access to books in different languages.

D. Informed Content

Overall assessment: *More than 70% of providers reported having access to diagnostic and progress monitoring data (Table 6).*

Providers were asked if they had access to data for diagnostic and progress monitoring purposes and, if so, the type of data available. High-quality programs typically had access to this data which enabled them to provide targeted literacy supports. This data allowed providers to assess the skills with which their students needed most help and to adjust their supports as students progressed over the course of the year. Data types included school data, providers’ own assessments, and information from conversations with teachers. Providers had to indicate access to at least one type of data to be considered on track.²⁸ Table 10 below displays strategies for accessing diagnostic and progress monitoring data. The first column shows what percentage of providers have access to any form of diagnostic or progress monitoring data. The remaining four columns show how they access that data, and providers were allowed to select multiple options.

²⁸ The survey did not ask whether providers had this data for all students or some subset of students.

Table 10. Strategies for Accessing Diagnostic and Progress Monitoring Data

		Have access to any data		Percentage of providers that access data by...							
				Talking to teachers		Looking at school data		Administering own assessments ²⁹		Another method	
				%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Diagnostic data	Tutoring programs	73%	11	53%	8	47%	7	60%	9	13%	2
	Afterschool enrichment programs	81%	30	51%	19	46%	17	46%	17	8%	3
	Summer enrichment programs	74%	26	34%	12	40%	14	49%	17	11%	4
Progress monitoring	Tutoring programs	92%	12	46%	6	62%	8	62%	8		
	Afterschool enrichment programs	95%	35	51%	19	49%	18	62%	23		
	Summer enrichment programs	100%	30	43%	13	53%	16	63%	19		

The following strengths and gaps with regard to this Key Ingredient are suggested in the table above.

Strength: A majority of providers have access to some source of diagnostic and progress monitoring data, primarily their own assessments and conversations with teachers. Tutoring programs were more likely than afterschool and summer programs to administer their own diagnostic assessments. All types of programs were equally likely to administer their own progress monitoring assessments during programming.

Gap: About half of providers report not having access to school data, the source that may be the most reliable indicator of a child’s reading ability. A comparable percentage of providers accessed data through conversations with teachers and administering their own assessments. However, it is unclear whether these conversations with teachers reveal the type of information providers need to adequately target literacy supports. For example, providers that lack reliable diagnostic data might have difficulty understanding whether books are at the appropriate reading level for individual children in their programs.

Summary of High-Quality Program Content Ingredients

OST providers responding to our survey were on track in many of the program content areas; however, gaps remain. Most notably, while providers had structured program content, many were not using packaged curricula or lesson plans designed by literacy experts. In addition, while providers were able to provide access to books, only a third had books in other languages for ELL students. Finally, providers were engaged in diagnostic or progress monitoring but most did not have access to school data.

²⁹ The survey did not query the type of diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments that were used when a provider specified this response. However, the assessments that providers reported using for measuring student outcomes were reported in Section II. Some of these assessments would be appropriate for and were likely used for diagnostic and progress monitoring.

2. Highly-Qualified Staff

Key Ingredients of Highly-Qualified Staff

- A. **Credentialed:** Certified teachers provide literacy instruction.
- B. **Prepared:** In lieu of certified teachers, staff and volunteers are given sufficient training and support.
- C. **Literacy expertise:** Programs have a literacy expert delivering or overseeing programming and staff training. A literacy expert is a reading specialist or someone certified to teach early literacy.

A. Credentialed Staff

Overall assessment: Across program types, less than 20% of providers reported staffing literacy programs with certified teachers (see Table 6).

Providers were asked about the qualifications of the staff who delivered literacy instruction. To be considered on track with this ingredient, afterschool and summer enrichment programs had to indicate that certified teachers delivered literacy instruction. Since many programs did not meet that target, it is informative to understand the qualifications of frontline staff who are not certified teachers. Table 11 displays the qualifications of frontline literacy staff.

Table 11. Percentage of Providers that Report Half or More of Frontline Staff Have Each Education Level

	Teaching certificate		Some college through Bachelor's degree		High school, diploma, or GED	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Tutoring programs	15%	2	62%	8	15%	2
Afterschool enrichment programs	9%	3	58%	19	24%	8
Summer enrichment programs	9%	3	65%	22	21%	7

The following strengths and gaps in frontline staffing are suggested in Table 11.

Gap: OST providers reported challenges with hiring certified teachers. Few providers hired certified teachers as frontline staff. Interviewed providers noted difficulties meeting the salary requirements of teachers, and also reported that many teachers were unwilling to commit to afterschool positions. As one afterschool provider explained, “As much as we try and get teachers, it’s hard to afford it on an afterschool budget. It’s also part-time work. Teachers work all day and then getting them to commit afterschool for an entire school year...it’s a big ask of a teacher. “

Two interviewed providers utilized certified teachers in their enrichment programs. Both recruited teachers from the schools in which they offered programs, and both noted the added cost of hiring certified teachers. One described teachers as the key driver of the program’s cost while the other provider simply described the program as expensive.

Potential strength: A majority of frontline literacy staff have some college education. Research on high-quality OST programs has found that higher levels of staff education are associated with better academic outcomes.³⁰ Therefore, it is encouraging that at least half the staff at a majority of OST literacy programs have at least some college education.

³⁰ Denise Huang and Ronald Dietel. "Making afterschool programs better (CRESST Policy Brief)." Los Angeles, CA: University of California (2011); Beth M Miller, "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005); Jenell Holstead and Mindy Hightower King. "High-quality 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Academic achievement among frequent participants and non-participants." *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)* 16, no. 4 (2011): 255-274.

Similar to the finding reported in RFA’s *Scanning the System* report, providers, in both interviews and surveys, cited “recruiting and retaining high-quality staff” as one of their top challenges. In *Scanning the System*, 60% of providers reported frontline staff with less than one year of experience in their organization, and less than 30% reported that the majority of their frontline staff had been in their role for more than 5 years. On the OST literacy survey, 32% of providers identified staff turnover as one of their top three challenges.

B. Prepared Staff: Pre-Service Training

Overall assessment: *More than 90% of tutoring programs were on track with pre-service training while less than half of academic and summer enrichment programs were on track. However, pre-service training requirements varied by type of OST program (see Table 6).*

Providers were asked about the amount and topic of preservice training provided to staff. Providers were assessed as on track if they met the standards for the amount of pre-service training offered by program type. Standards varied by type. Tutoring has the lowest standard for the amount of pre-service training (one hour), while academic and summer enrichment had higher standards (ten hours). Table 12 below displays the percentage of providers that met the pre-service training threshold for that program type.

Table 12. Amount of Pre-service Training for Frontline Staff

	Amount of pre-service training for frontline staff								On track (Meets minimum threshold for amount of training)	
	No pre-service training		Less than 5 hours		At least 5 but less than 10 hours		10 or more hours		%	#
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#		
Tutoring programs	8%	1	42%	5	25%	3	25%	3	92%	11
	(minimum threshold = 1 hour)									
Afterschool enrichment programs	3%	1	34%	10	17%	5	45%	13	45%	13
	(minimum threshold = 10 hours)									
Summer enrichment programs	3%	1	39%	13	21%	7	36%	12	36%	12
	(minimum threshold = 10 hours)									

Table 12 suggests the following strengths and gaps in pre-service training.

Strength: **The vast majority of tutoring programs (92%) provided at least one hour of training³¹ the minimum threshold for tutoring programs to be on-track in this area.** In four of five evidence-based tutoring programs, tutoring also received ongoing support from literacy content experts or certified teachers after tutoring began. More information about training topics covered by providers is included in Appendix C.

Gap: **Less than half of enrichment programs were providing 10 or more hours of pre-service training, the minimum threshold for enrichment programs to be on-track in this area.** To understand the barriers that might prevent providers from conducting enough training, respondents were asked to identify the aspects of training that present a challenge. Table 13 displays their responses and shows that providers listed cost and time as the most common barriers to providing enough training for their staff.

³¹ If providers reported that they offered training for less than five hours, we assumed they provided training for at least an hour. The smallest category on the survey was less than 5 hours.

Table 13. What Factors Make Staff Training Challenging?

	Major/moderate factor	
	%	#
Cost	88%	21
Time	80%	20
Capacity	33%	8
Expertise	32%	8

C. Prepared Staff: Ongoing Support

Overall assessment: *More than 70% of providers offered ongoing training and support (see Table 6).*

Providers were asked about the type of ongoing training and support they offered, and how frequently they offered it. Providers had to be offering at least one of these supports at least monthly to be considered on track. However, the value of these approaches could vary based on the expertise of the staff member conducting them. Table 14 displays the percentage of providers that reported offering these different types of supports.

Table 14. Percentage and Number of OST Literacy Providers That Offer Ongoing Supports

	Internal support offered at least monthly						External support (frequency unknown)	
	Observation and feedback ³²		Non-expert provides coaching		Internal expert provides coaching		POSTLI provides coaching	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Tutoring programs	50%	7	46%	6	30%	4	15%	2
Afterschool enrichment programs	71%	25	42%	14	32%	11	25%	9
Summer enrichment programs	78%	28	48%	15	32%	10	29%	10

The table above identifies strengths and gaps in ongoing support.

Strength: The majority of providers offered monthly observation and feedback. A higher percentage of afterschool and summer enrichment programs than tutoring programs conducted program observations and provided feedback to frontline staff at least once per month.

Gap: While coaching was offered, few providers had an internal or external (POSTLI) literacy expert providing coaching. Only one-third of providers had literacy experts provide coaching at least monthly. At the same time, around one-quarter of providers reported receiving external literacy coaching supports from POSTLI. Our data do not allow us to determine how frequently POSTLI literacy coaching occurred.

D. Literacy Expertise

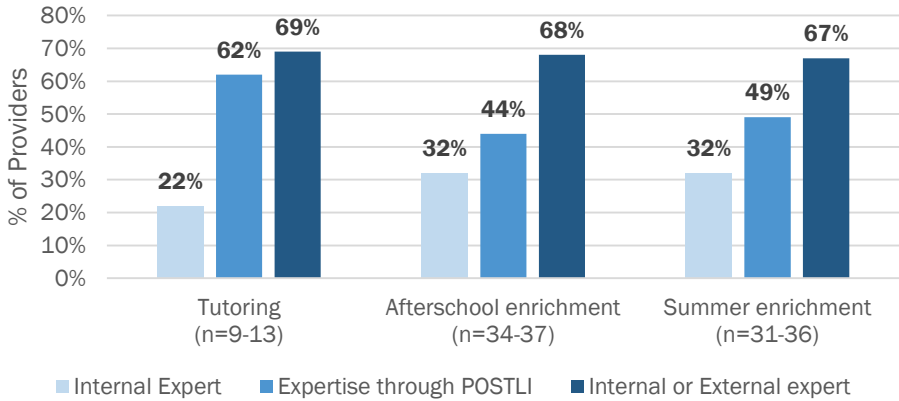
Overall assessment: *Two-thirds of providers have access to a literacy expert, either on staff or from an external source (see Table 6).*

Providers were deemed to have the Key Ingredient of literacy expertise if a staff member was either a reading specialist or a teacher certified in early literacy. Providers could also meet this standard if they

³² The survey did not ask who provided the observation and feedback.

worked with POSTLI, which could be considered an external source of literacy expertise. Figure 1 displays the percentage of survey respondents that had access to internal or external literacy experts.

Figure 1. Percentage of OST Literacy Providers with Access to Literacy Experts



The figure above reveals the following strengths and gaps in literacy expertise among OST providers.

Strength: More than two-thirds of providers responding to our survey had access to literacy expertise, either through staff with literacy expertise or through an external support (i.e., POSTLI).

While most high-quality programs had literacy expertise on staff, a few accessed expertise from the organization that created their literacy model. In Philadelphia, literacy expertise is available through POSTLI. Around half of providers (44-62%) reported receiving POSTLI services; however, we lack information about the frequency and duration of these supports. Some interviewed providers purchased literacy models and/or curricula developed by external organizations. They had access to these developers to obtain pre-service and ongoing training and occasional monitoring of programs.

Gap: One-third of providers did not have access to literacy expertise (i.e., a reading specialist or someone certified in early literacy).

More than two-thirds of providers reported having staff they *considered* literacy experts but who *did not meet this definition*. Importantly, staff with strong literacy expertise were more likely to be deeply engaged in coaching, training and supervision than those who did not meet our literacy expert criteria. Similarly, the two of six supervisors we interviewed with literacy expertise focused on coaching and training staff, while the remaining four supervisors focused on logistics. Survey respondents reported that about half of literacy experts, including those meeting our definition and those not meeting it, were involved in developing the curriculum and lesson plans.

Summary of Highly-Qualified Staff Ingredients

The Key Ingredient of Highly Qualified Staff was not consistently present in programs participating in our study. Providers needed support in hiring and retaining qualified staff for frontline literacy work including certified teachers as well as staff with some higher education. In addition, they needed support in providing more hours of pre-service training. While a majority were providing some form of ongoing training and support, particularly observation and feedback, almost half did not have ongoing support from a literacy coach. In addition, one-third of respondents did not have access to either internal or external literacy expertise.

3. Sufficient Literacy Programming and Varied Program Activities

Key Ingredients of Sufficient Literacy Programming and Varied Program Activities:

A. Hours of literacy programming: Sufficient weekly and yearly hours of programming to have an impact. Below is the minimum time required by program type:

- *Tutoring:* 1-2.5 hours per week; 30-60 hours per year
- *Afterschool enrichment:* 2 hours per week; 44 hours per year
- *Summer enrichment:* 6 hours per week; 44 hours per year

B. Varied program activities: Fun and engaging activities that differentiate the program from the regular school day

A. Hours of Literacy Programming

Overall assessment: *More afterschool programs than summer programs met the threshold for hours of literacy instruction (Table 6).*

Providers were asked how much time students spent on literacy activities in their enrichment or tutoring programs per week and per year. Thresholds for minimum levels of weekly and yearly hours of literacy programming varied by program type. To be assessed as on track, providers had to meet both the weekly and yearly thresholds. Figure 2 below shows the percentage of providers that met the weekly or yearly thresholds for hours of instruction.

Figure 2. Percent of Providers that Met Weekly and Yearly Threshold for Hours of Literacy Instruction

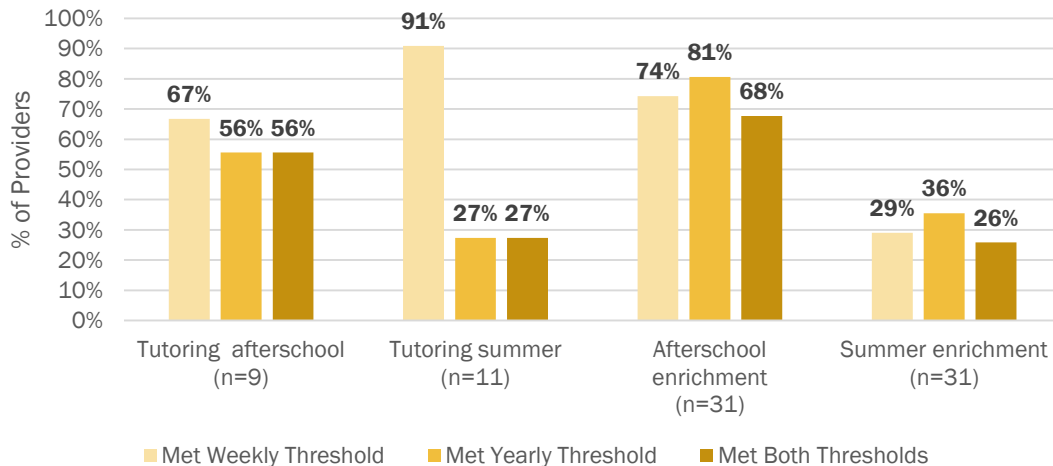


Figure 2 suggests both strengths and gaps in hours of literacy instruction.

Strength: **More than two-thirds of afterschool enrichment programs met both weekly and yearly thresholds for hours of literacy instruction.** Two-thirds of afterschool tutoring programs met the threshold for weekly hours of instruction, but fewer (56%) met the yearly threshold.

Gap: **Less than one-third of summer enrichment programs met the weekly targets for hours of instruction but slightly more (36%) met the yearly targets.** Almost all summer tutoring programs were meeting weekly targets for hours of instruction, but only 27% were offered for enough weeks to meet the yearly target for summer program hours of instruction.

On the survey, providers were asked if finding time for literacy activities was a slight, moderate, or significant challenge.

Gap: Nearly half of providers (44%), including both afterschool and summer, reported that finding time for literacy activities was at least a slight challenge. About a quarter reported that it was a moderate or significant challenge.

B. Varied Program Activities

Overall assessment: *90-100% of providers reported that they offered varied program activities to engage participants (Table 6).*

Providers were asked whether program activities were varied and engaging. To be considered on track, providers only needed to offer one non-instructional activity. They reported a range of such activities, as noted below.

Strength: Most OST providers reported strategies to differentiate the program from the regular school day. Three-quarters of respondents offered activities that fostered positive adult-youth relationships. Three-quarters also reported offering games (e.g., Scrabble). All surveyed afterschool and summer enrichment programs reported goals that went beyond literacy, such as fostering math and science skills, extracurricular skills, school engagement, or social emotional growth and development.

In interviews, providers emphasized the importance of this non-academic element of programming, expressing a desire to not make OST feel “too much like school”. As one provider explained, “I think if you make afterschool [programs] just [resemble] the school day [but] longer, you lose a lot of the benefits.” Another provider explained that they seek to ensure that their program “is creative and engaging, so that we won’t lose [students’] focus or attention in those afterschool hours.” One early literacy leader identified these non-academic components of OST as a strength that should be encouraged to ensure that literacy-rich OST environments are enjoyable and engaging.

Summary of Sufficient Literacy Programming and Varied Program Activities Ingredients

Summer programs had the most difficulty meeting standards for weekly and yearly hours of literacy instruction. Afterschool tutoring programs frequently met weekly but not yearly thresholds, while afterschool enrichment providers most often met both thresholds. Providers of all types reported a range of other program goals and activities that differentiate them from the school day. However, this variation made it difficult to provide sufficient time for literacy programming.

In addition to the Key Ingredients discussed above, programs serving English Language Learners must consider additional promising practices in order to best serve ELL students. Below we highlight how OST literacy programs are addressing the needs of this population.

Spotlight: Are OST Programs Meeting the Literacy Needs of English Language Learners?

The majority of OST programs responding to our survey served a high percentage of ELL students. Yet most did not have the supports in place to effectively serve this group.

While research specifically focused on this topic is rare and provides little guidance on how to define high-quality programming, RFA included several questions in its survey addressing promising practices of quality OST literacy programming which were applicable to serving ELLs. Results are as follows:

- a. *Connection and collaboration between home and program:* About half of survey respondents (46%) reported language barriers as a major challenge for engaging parents. One provider also reported that translation for parent events is a significant added cost for programs that are already financially stretched.
- b. *An inclusive environment respectful of home language and culture:* Of the 39 OST programs that reported serving at least a few ELLs, 64% reported having books about different cultural/ethnic groups. Yet only 28% had books in languages other than English.
- c. *Staff training:* Less than one-third of survey respondents reported providing staff training on supporting ELL students.

Other promising practices identified in the literature include the use of small groups, clear and explicit literacy instruction, and opportunities to practice speaking in low-risk, inclusive environments.

IV. Conditions to Support High-Quality Literacy Programming

High-quality OST literacy programming requires adequate funding, school partnerships, parent involvement, and infrastructure to support volunteer recruitment and retention. RFA asked providers about the presence of these supports in Philadelphia, and where they experienced barriers. In addition, we explored other conditions or supports that Philadelphia providers relied on to implement their programs. In this section, we report on providers' experiences with each of the supporting conditions.

A. Adequate Funding

Surveyed providers were not asked about costs of their program, but they were asked the extent to which overall funding and adequate literacy materials were a challenge.

The lack of adequate funding, including resources to purchase literacy materials, was among the top three barriers providers experienced. More than three-quarters of surveyed providers (82%) reported financial concerns to be a significant challenge. Interviewed providers described staffing as the biggest driver of cost, regardless of whether they used certified teachers or part-time staff. However, there was strong consensus that staffing is the most essential component of high-quality programming. Almost three-quarters of providers (72%) also reported that the cost of materials for literacy programming was a significant challenge. Costs were even higher for those programs supporting ELL students, who required materials in multiple languages and translators for parent events.

B. School Partnerships

School partnerships are critically important to ensure that providers can align programs to the school day curriculum or core standards. Strong partnerships also help providers identify students who need extra support, obtain space in the school building for programming, and gain access to data on student learning needs and progress that could help OST providers deliver more targeted supports.

Few surveyed providers (13%) reported school partnerships as a top challenge compared to other challenges they were facing. Yet more than a third (37%) reported that access to student data was one of their top three challenges. Providers reported difficulty in finding time to develop the partnership, finding the right school person to work with, and gaining the attention of school staff.

Five of six interviewed providers--all large organizations serving students in multiple locations---described having positive relationships with schools. They may have had more capacity to cultivate relationships with schools/district staff than did smaller OST organizations. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations may make obtaining individual student data directly from schools/districts difficult or impossible for many providers. One Philadelphia early literacy leader suggested that providers could ask parents to share students' report cards, which contain reading levels and other information. Such requests could also provide a basis for sustained conversations with parents about their child's reading level.

C. Parent Involvement

High-quality OST literacy programs cultivate parental support and involvement. Interviewed providers described their strategies for parent engagement, while surveyed providers were asked to report the extent to which parent engagement was a challenge for their programs.

Only one provider described robust parent engagement strategies which placed parents at the center of their program, but their approach is instructive. This provider explained: "The only reason we're able to generate dramatically different outcomes with the very same teachers and children that underperformed during the school year is by unlocking a world of one-on-one instructional time [with parents]."

Strategies described by this provider included engaging parents in weekly workshops, during which they are trained to teach reading at home. In addition, all families participating in the program receive one home visit, which this provider explains "is a big part of the reason why we consistently get over 90% of families that attend the weekly training workshop." An early literacy leader in Philadelphia reinforced the importance of parent engagement as a key support for early literacy efforts, and one which OST providers may be uniquely positioned to provide.

While parental support is important, **two-thirds of programs (68%) reported that engaging parents was somewhat or very challenging.** Providers were asked to identify the factors that made parent engagement challenging. Results are displayed in Table 15.

Table 15. What Is Challenging about Engaging Parents?

	Major /moderate factor	
	%	#
Lack of staff time	91%	30
Parents non-responsive	88%	29
Language barrier	45%	15
Not a priority of our program	13%	4

Table 15 shows:

- **Similar to school partnerships, engaging parents was made more challenging by lack of staff time and lack of parental response to outreach.** Almost all reported these to be major or moderate factors in engaging parents.
- **Language barriers also created a challenge for almost half of providers.**
- **However, few providers reported that parental engagement was not a priority for their program.**

D. Volunteer Infrastructure

High-quality OST literacy programs that use volunteers have infrastructure in place to recruit, train and support these volunteers. Philadelphia's OST providers were asked about the extent to which they used volunteers, and to describe their infrastructure for recruiting and supporting volunteers.

About half of surveyed providers reported using volunteers in their programming. Between 46-53% of providers of all types of OST literacy programs used volunteers, alone or in addition to paid staff, to deliver literacy instruction to children. However, few programs relied solely on volunteers as frontline staff.

Interviewed providers reported recruiting volunteers from colleges and universities. Two interviewed providers reported using volunteers but neither recruited them from any of the national service programs, a practice reported by high-quality programs. However, both recruited volunteers and work-study students from local colleges and universities, and these volunteers typically provided one-on-one reading support. One provider explained:

They'll be helpful in just even reading with kids or listening to kids read or doing activities with students. I think one of the needs that we see the most that's not really educational is that kids just want someone to listen to them, someone to pay attention to them. They're just always so thrilled to do whatever as long as that adult will be one-on-one and focused on them.

The other provider noted, "We have volunteers who are college students... and, if we want to do something like independent reading, we might pair them off with children to help with something like that." RFA's recent *Scanning the System* report also found that colleges and universities, in addition to word of mouth, were the most common source of volunteers for OST programs.

Both interviewed providers that used volunteers were large organizations; one had extensive infrastructure to support volunteers and consequently had capacity to attract and support a large number of them. A staff member at one of these organizations described their infrastructure for supporting volunteers in this way:

We're really lucky to have a volunteer services department here, and so we have a whole host of organizations that will come in and volunteer with us... We do have a website. I think they're using volunteer spots now to post needed activities and the volunteer coordinators will send up a job description for a volunteer. Then they'll search through and post it places and talk to their more regular volunteers and say, hey, do you know anyone that might—so it's sort of a social media, word of mouth, website kind of a thing.

This provider also paid for volunteers' clearances.³³

The literacy survey did not ask providers about the amount of training provided for volunteers. However, RFA's *Scanning the System* report found that 62% of OST providers who responded to a survey of quality assurance and staffing practices provided volunteer training. These providers averaged 2 training activities for volunteers per year for an average of 7 hours of yearly training.

E. Other Community Partnerships

While not identified as a key support in the literature review, all six of **the OST providers interviewed described multiple partnerships with other organizations in the City that supported their OST literacy efforts.** Partnerships were utilized for a variety of reasons including expanding program activities and literacy expertise. Two providers described activity partners such as museums or OST support organizations like the After School Activities Partnership (ASAP) that provided resources and ideas to help to make OST literacy activities more fun. These organizations provided games and other less traditional literacy activities such as Scrabble Clubs. One explained, "I think it's definitely hard, but finding the partners to work with you is what makes a strong program. The best things that we do are bringing in the strong partners."

Three providers described partnerships which helped them access literacy expertise. These included partnerships with POSTLI, Read by 4th, and other national organizations providing evidence-based programs and training to support these programs. As one provider stated, "I think, again, the partnerships we have bring in expertise that we'll never get in a staff that we can only pay from 3:00 to 6:00. Our staff are great, but bringing in partnerships lets us diversify the knowledge base that our staff has." POSTLI is a unique strength of Philadelphia's OST literacy environment. High-quality programs in our literature review did not have access to similar local resources for literacy expertise.

Partnerships also supported parents' literacy activities at home with children and for themselves. Two providers described partnerships that helped them with data collection and evaluation. One of these partnerships was with POSTLI, which offered tools for measuring outcomes and shared outcomes reports. The other was with PhillyBOOST, the City's OST system, which has a database available to OST providers.

All six providers were associated with Read by 4th and one became more focused on offering traditional literacy activities as a result. That provider explained, "We really more purposefully decided...that we needed to be more focused on helping kids learn to read in a more traditional way because for whatever reason, they weren't getting it at school or they missed it or something happened."

Summary of Supporting Conditions

Providers reported several key conditions in place to support successful literacy programming. These included supportive school partnerships, the prevalence of colleges and universities through which to recruit volunteers or work-study students, and other community partnerships, including a unique resource for literacy expertise—POSTLI.

³³ Clearances are background checks legally required to work with children. In Pennsylvania, those who work with children are required to obtain a child abuse clearance, state criminal history record, and FBI criminal background check.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

This report examined the extent to which the characteristics of OST literacy programs represented in our research aligned to high-quality programs and Key Ingredients identified in RFA's literature review. Providers reported offering year-round literacy supports using multiple strategies. They also reported the presence of Key Ingredients in a number of areas –particularly with regard to high-quality program content. Fewer programs reported the Key Ingredients of highly-qualified staffing and adequate hours of literacy programming.

Providers served a diverse population of students but reported that the majority were struggling readers and almost all served at least a few ELL students. However, they lacked adequate information about the needs of special education students, and they lacked strategies and supports to address the needs of ELL students. As a group, providers described some divergence between the literacy outcomes they target and those they assess, i.e., targeting one or more of the NRP's five skill areas, but most often assessing the broader outcome of general reading achievement.

Gaps in OST literacy support were driven to some extent by limited resources for staffing, training, and materials; limited access to data for more targeted programming; and perhaps limited information about evidence-based programs and Key Ingredients for high-quality literacy programming in the OST setting. On the other hand, providers identified some key supports for literacy work in the City. These included support from the existing local literacy partners– Read by 4th and POSTLI– as well as national partners. With the exception of providing data, providers reported their school partners are generally supportive of their efforts. Finally, two providers identified colleges and universities as key resources for identifying volunteers or even part-time staff.

As the City of Philadelphia develops strategies for the first phase of the OST strategic plan, this research points to the following recommendations to build on the strengths and close the gaps in OST literacy efforts in Philadelphia.

A. Recommendations for the OST System

1. Facilitate a system-wide discussion about how OST can support early literacy.
 - **Encourage the use of high-quality, evidence-based programs.** OST providers expressed some ambivalence about their ability to impact literacy skills. However, RFA's literature review identified 18 high-quality OST literacy programs that had strong or moderate evidence of effectiveness or a strong theory coupled with promising evidence of effectiveness. Few OST providers responding to our survey were using one of these programs. For example, while half of providers offered some form of computer-based literacy support, only four used an evidence-based program. The City could convene providers to discuss these different programs and encourage providers to consider which might be appropriate for their settings.
 - **Encourage tutoring.** Among effective programs, tutoring has the greatest evidence of effectiveness and should be particularly encouraged. Philadelphia's Read by 4th campaign has identified increases in tutoring options as a priority. Tutoring programs can be staffed by volunteers with adequate support, supervision, and training. In addition, the dosage required to be effective is much lower than for group-based programs. However, tutoring programs using volunteers need an infrastructure for recruitment, screening, training, and supporting volunteers, and also need access

to data for diagnostic and progress monitoring.

- **Allow for variation in programs and practices adopted.** As the City considers strategies for the first phase of the OST strategic plan, it should allow for variation in programs and practices that fit varied OST settings. Interviewed OST providers were clear that a “one size fits all” program would not work. In addition, providers want to retain the best of OST and not be forced to give up other valuable aspects of their program. Among the evidence-based programs were a range of approaches, some of which would require less adaptation for OST settings than others. For example, computer-based programs or an afterschool enrichment program like KidzLit are among the most affordable and do not require certified staff. While they address a limited range of outcomes (phonics for computer-based programs and reading attitudes for afterschool enrichment), they may offer a “first tier” of OST literacy programming for providers that don’t have the resources to offer other types of OST literacy programming.
- **Foster other practices to support literacy which draw on strengths of OST programs.** Providers that are not able to offer evidence-based programs may be able to support early literacy in other ways. For example, even though OST programs reported that it was challenging to find time for parent engagement, OST programs are well positioned to engage families, a critical support for early literacy. OST providers may interact more frequently with parents than schools because they interact with parents when they are dropping off or picking up their children. In addition, they are often staffed by community members who may already have relationships with parents.³⁴ If OST providers prioritize parent engagement and receive support for it, they can help parents understand the importance of supporting early literacy and suggest strategies to bolster it. One early literacy leader suggested that OST providers could help parents understand their child’s reading level and where to find it on report cards. In addition, OST providers are able to offer activities that are engaging and can help develop a love of reading and writing.

2. Encourage collection and use of data.

- **Support OST providers with data collection and outcomes assessment.** Access to data for diagnostic and progress monitoring purposes is key to providing targeted literacy supports. When providers had access to school data, it was primarily through report cards. While report cards are a useful start and often include a student’s reading level, it can be challenging for providers to get access to report card data for all students via requesting it from parents. Schools have access to this data as well as more granular data that an OST provider could use to better target student needs. But accessing this data was one of the top challenges reported by providers, likely complicated by confidentiality issues. The City and the school district could explore whether it would be possible to create an agreement to allow schools to share student data with OST programs under certain conditions. In addition, Read by 4th and POSTLI could support providers to learn how to use reading levels in their planning and in conversations with parents to engage them in OST and other literacy efforts.
- **Provide guidance for OST providers regarding the early literacy skills that most need targeting for different grade levels and subgroups of students.** Different evidence-based

³⁴ RFA’s *Scanning the System* report found that Philadelphia’s OST providers consider it somewhat or very important to hire staff who reside in the community of the program.

programs were shown to be impactful for different age groups and skill areas. As providers choose programs that best fit their context, they need guidance from the School District and other early literacy experts in Philadelphia regarding the skill areas they should target. While balanced literacy instruction is recommended during the school day, OST providers may be more able to target specific components of literacy that are a need for the students they serve (e.g., data might show that a particular student or group of students have strengths in phonics but need more support in reading comprehension).

3. Fill gaps in training and literacy expertise.

- **Expand literacy-focused training opportunities.** A majority of OST providers offered pre-service training to frontline literacy staff but they did not offer enough of it. In addition, while providers offered ongoing support and coaching, this was not often formalized or offered by someone with literacy expertise. Providers reported barriers to training including the cost and the availability of part-time staff. The OST system could address this gap, as well as the gaps created by staff turnover, by offering additional training resources at key times during the year –particularly prior to the start of the school year and summer programming. These should be offered in a variety of formats to accommodate the schedules of part-time staff. In addition, interviewed providers reported wanting more opportunities to share promising practices with each other. The City OST system could organize events that bring providers together to share promising practices with each other.
- **Provide training and other supports for OST providers with regard to ELL students.** The vast majority of OST providers reported serving at least a few ELL students. At the same time, only about one-third of providers offered training focused on serving ELL students and had books available in other languages and about other cultures. One provider recommended that the City convene providers by regions of the City to share promising practices around working with ELL students. The OST system could also sponsor centralized trainings on this topic and identify recommended materials and resources to work with ELL students. Providers also reported that engaging parents for whom English was not their first language could be challenging. One provider hired translators for parent events but, again, described this as a potentially costly endeavor. The City should consider ways in which it could support providers in engaging ELL parents. In addition, the OST system could consider additional per child funding for programs according to the percentage of participants or parents who are ELLs in order to finance appropriate materials and translation.
- **Provide access to literacy expertise for program development, training, and coaching.** Few providers had literacy expertise on staff. More providers accessed this expertise through POSTLI. At the same time, half of providers did not have access to literacy expertise at all (on staff or through external partnerships). The City could look for more ways to increase access to this expertise through existing institutions and programs which have in-house literacy expertise such as POSTLI or Read by 4th, the School District, the Free Library, or local colleges and universities. In addition, OST providers should connect with the reading coaches at students' elementary schools to explore how best to enhance the literacy supports available in their schools.

4. Engage Key Partners: Universities and Funders

- **Engage colleges and universities as sources of literacy expertise as well as volunteers.** Almost half of providers reported using volunteers to deliver literacy instruction. Two interviewed providers reported that many of these volunteers came from colleges and universities. This

parallels a finding from RFA's *Scanning the System* report, which showed that a large percentage of OST programs utilize volunteers, particularly from colleges and universities, which abound in the Philadelphia region. Such volunteers could be an asset to the OST system's early literacy efforts, especially serving as tutors, given the effectiveness of volunteer-staffed one-on-one tutoring programs. While there are documented challenges in working with college volunteers –they are often “episodic and occasional volunteers”³⁵– formal partnerships with colleges and universities could help to establish and support more stable volunteer pipelines. For example, undergraduate or graduate students who are studying education or early literacy may have an inherent interest in longer-term involvement with an OST literacy program, and may be able to receive credit for course-related volunteer work. In addition, education majors may already have training or such training could be incorporated into their classes. Formal partnerships to engage student volunteers could also facilitate engagement of faculty who could support trainings and provide other guidance at system- or program-levels. One provider also highlighted the use of work-study students which could also be explored at a system-level. Many local colleges and universities already have programs placing work study students as tutors in school-day and OST programs; often these students work in placements for a full year. OST programs could seek to get on the approved work-study list. One role for the City could be to develop a directory of college and university contacts and programs, particularly in education, that could provide connections to volunteers.

- **Engage funders in considering system-wide strategies for supporting OST literacy programs.** OST programs require adequate funding to operate impactful literacy programs, particularly for the staffing and material needs of these programs. At the same time, OST programs operate in a resource-constrained environment with funding sources that are fragmented, focused on differing goals, and are often non-renewable. In addition, the availability of OST funding often fluctuates with changing economic and political realities such as new local, state, or federal administrations whose support for OST programming may vary.³⁶ Funders could consider engaging in advocacy to increase and/or stabilize public funding for these programs.

It is also important to identify cost savings to help OST providers offer high-quality literacy programming within their budgets. Providers reported the biggest driver of cost to be staffing, particularly if programs use certified teachers. But, programs using paraprofessionals also have additional costs related to the need for a literacy expert who can prepare lessons, train, and provide ongoing support for staff. One strategy for cost savings may be to create or expand system-wide resources to support paraprofessional staff through POSTLI, Read by 4th, or other entities that can provide literacy expertise.

B. Recommendations for Future Research

This scan of OST literacy practices, along with RFA's July literature review, illuminated some aspects of OST literacy programming, but this research has limitations and important gaps that should be addressed by future research. These include:

- **The efficacy of non-traditional programs for OST literacy support:** The review revealed a lack of research on less traditional types of literacy programming such as “infusing literacy” in other groups of activities (e.g., drama, arts, sports, board games). Almost all of surveyed OST providers

³⁵ Cindy Kowal, “Using College Students as Mentors and Tutors,” (2007).

³⁶ Cheryl Hayes, Christianne Lind, Jean Baldwin Grossman, Nichole Stewart, Sharon Deich, Andrew Gersick, Jennifer McMaken, and Margo Campbell. “Investments in building citywide out-of-school-time systems: A six-city study.” *Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures & The Finance Project* (2009).

reported offering “literacy-infused” as well as literacy-focused activities. Future research could focus on these literacy-infused programs, which are well-suited to OST programs, to determine if and when they are effective in supporting young children’s literacy development and examine best practices for this approach. In addition, while some computer-based programs were found to be effective, little research was available regarding their implementation. Research should examine the use of these computer-based programs in Philadelphia to identify promising practices for effective implementation.

- **The role of drop-in programs in supporting early literacy:** Evidence-based programs all require regular participation that reaches particular dosage thresholds. These thresholds are difficult for drop-in programs such as libraries, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and recreation programs that have not typically required youth to commit to programming after school. Yet, these types of programs are a key component of Philadelphia’s OST system. Research should examine the role that they can play and the types of literacy practices and targeted outcomes that would be both appropriate and effective if offered in a drop-in setting.
- **The most effective strategies for supporting early literacy of ELL students in OST settings:** Little research exists on promising practices for supporting ELL students in OST. However, most OST providers responding to our survey were serving ELL students. More research is needed on programs and practices OST providers use to identify those that are effective.
- **The relationship between Key Ingredients and outcomes:** The literature review extracted common practices from the evidence-based OST literacy programs. However, there is limited research that directly ties particular practices to outcomes. Future research should examine the relationship between these Key Ingredients of OST literacy interventions and outcomes.
- **The evidence base for afterschool enrichment programs and programs using paraprofessional staff:** In RFA’s literature review, the evidence base for afterschool enrichment programs was the weakest of all program types. Therefore, it’s important to further study programs that show promise in this setting. YET is a local afterschool enrichment program currently implemented by 14 providers in Philadelphia. It was rated in RFA’s literature review as in need of more research because rigorous research comparing YET student outcomes to a comparison group had not been conducted. YET deserves further research because it is a balanced literacy program, i.e., addresses all five skills areas identified by the NRP, and few evidence-based OST programs adopted a balanced literacy approach. A second program that deserves further research is KidzLit. KidzLit is a curriculum utilized by three providers in Philadelphia. One program, Mercy Housing KidzLit, which centered on the KidzLit curriculum, had moderate evidence of its effectiveness for impacting reading attitudes. However, this was based on one study which should be replicated in other settings. In addition, KidzLit is tailored to paraprofessional staff and is an affordable program which could be particularly applicable to OST. Further research on both YET and KidzLit could be helpful in identifying more cost effective approaches and strategies for OST literacy supports in the afterschool setting.
- **The role of external literacy experts, particularly POSTLI, in boosting the quality of OST literacy programs:** The Philadelphia Out of School Time Literacy Initiative (POSTLI) plays a central and unique role in Philadelphia’s OST literacy landscape, providing literacy expertise to OST

programs who do not have such expertise on staff. POSTLI, in existence since 2000, is staffed by literacy experts including reading specialists and certified teachers, and provides technical assistance, coaching, and training for OST programs seeking to offer literacy support. The evidence-based programs in our literature review did not report local partnerships for literacy expertise like POSTLI and it is unclear whether an external literacy expert such as POSTLI can play the same role or have the same results as internal literacy experts. At the same time, POSTLI could be a cost-effective vehicle through which to channel literacy expertise to more OST providers. Research should examine the use of POSTLI and other external literacy supports as compared to internal staff literacy experts and their outcomes of programs using both types of literacy expertise.

- **The quality of implementation:** The adoption of effective programs and practices does not ensure that these are implemented with fidelity or with all the supports that are needed to be high quality. As the OST system moves forward with particular programs and types over the next three years, research should assess the quality of implementation. For example, a majority of providers reported that their program content aligned to school curriculum or standards. What does this mean? How do they make this assessment and what difference does this alignment make for programming?
- **The role of the OST system in boosting early literacy:** As Philadelphia's OST system undertakes a focused effort to engage OST programs to address early literacy, future research should follow these efforts and document the extent to which providers engage in the effort, the strategies they adopt, the quality of their implementation, and ultimately the outcomes of these efforts. Such research could add to the field's understanding of the role an OST system can play in impacting critical needs of children and barriers and supports to these efforts.

Appendix A. Students Served by Surveyed Providers

Surveyed providers were asked to approximate how many of their students were ELL students and what proportion were struggling readers. Figures A1 and A2 show the percentage of providers who reported that they served “none”, “a few”, or “about half” or more of each type of student.

Figure A1: Proportion of Participants that are ELL Students

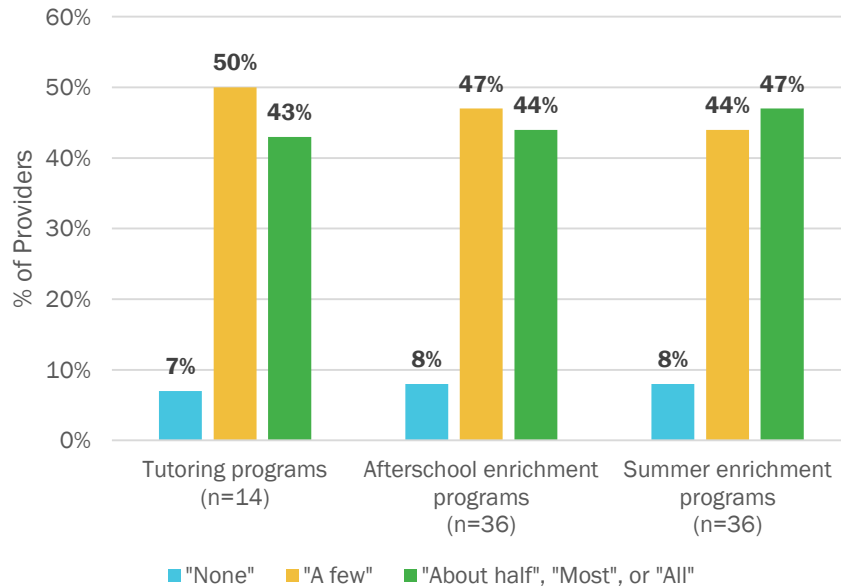


Figure A2: Proportion of Participants that are Struggling Readers

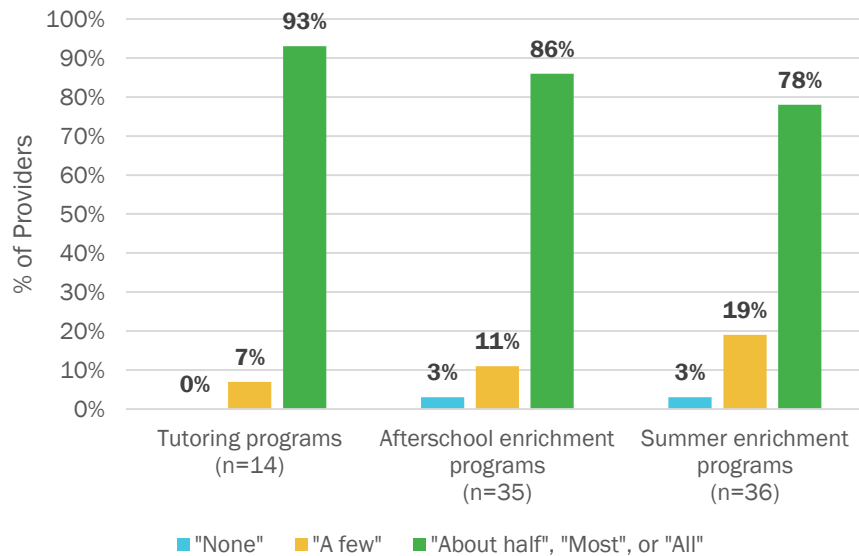
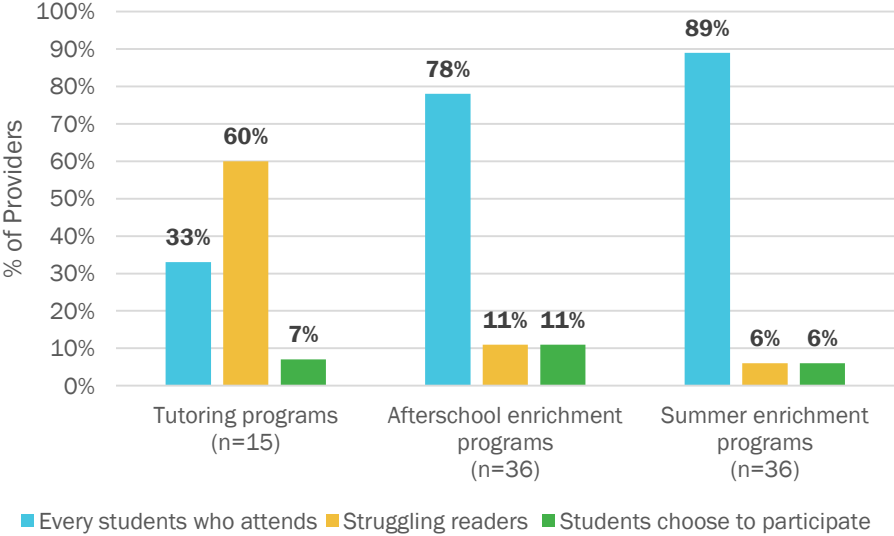


Figure A3 below displays variation across program types in the extent to which literacy supports were provided for all students, for only those who were identified as needing it, or if students could choose to participate.

Figure A3: Which Students Receive Literacy Supports in OST Programming?



Appendix B. Curriculum Use

Surveyed providers were asked whether their program uses a literacy curriculum. Table B1 shows the percentage of providers who reported that use a packaged curriculum (either an evidenced based on studied in the *Scanning the System* report or another curriculum), a curriculum designed by their own organization, or those that do not use a curriculum.

Table B1: Curriculum Used by Providers

	% of providers using a packaged curriculum				% using an internally designed curriculum		% not using a curriculum	
	Evidenced-based curriculum		Other packaged curriculum		%	#	%	#
	%	#	%	#				
Tutoring programs	20%	3	0%	0	40%	6	40%	6
Afterschool enrichment programs	17%	6	5%	2	78%	28	0%	0
Summer enrichment programs	17%	6	8%	3	75%	27	0%	0

The table above shows:

- **Few providers used a packaged curriculum; the rest designed their own curriculum.** Among surveyed providers who designed their own curriculum, few had literacy expertise on staff, despite the fact that such expertise would be important for designing an early literacy curriculum.
- **One-quarter or fewer providers used a packaged curriculum.** However, most of the providers using a packaged curriculum were using one of the evidenced-based curricula.³⁷ Other curricula used by providers included Slingerland, iReady, and the Basic Five for Life Program.

³⁷ The evidence-based curricula were: Read for Success, Reading Coaches, Youth Education for Tomorrow (YET), Book Buddies, Houghton Mifflin’s Summer Success, KidzLit, and Open Court

Appendix C. Staff Training Topics Offered

Providers were also asked about the topics of training they offered.

Table C1: Training Topics Offered

	Provide any literacy-specific training (e.g., building a library, supporting ELLs, read alouds, guided reading/writing, vocabulary, phonics, comprehension, fluency, literacy games)		Provide any general training (e.g., child development, behavior management, family engagement, student background)		Provide training to support ELLs		Provide training about literacy games ³⁸	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Tutoring programs	100%	15	93%	14	27%	4	87%	13
Afterschool enrichment programs	94%	33	91%	32	37%	13	80%	28
Summer enrichment programs	97%	33	91%	31	29%	10	88%	30

The table above shows:

- The vast majority of respondents (91-100%) reported that the training they offered included both literacy-specific and general youth development topics. Most providers also offered specific training in literacy games. Interviewees provided examples of these literacy games, such as sight word Bingo or Go Fish for word families.
- Only one-third or fewer OST providers reported offering training for staff on supporting literacy for ELL students. One interviewed provider highlighted this as an area in which they would like more training from the City OST system and the School District.

³⁸ The training topic of “literacy games” is included in the column for “literacy-specific training” and also pulled out into its own column since these activities are particularly of interest for OST programs.