

Moira DeNike Consulting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

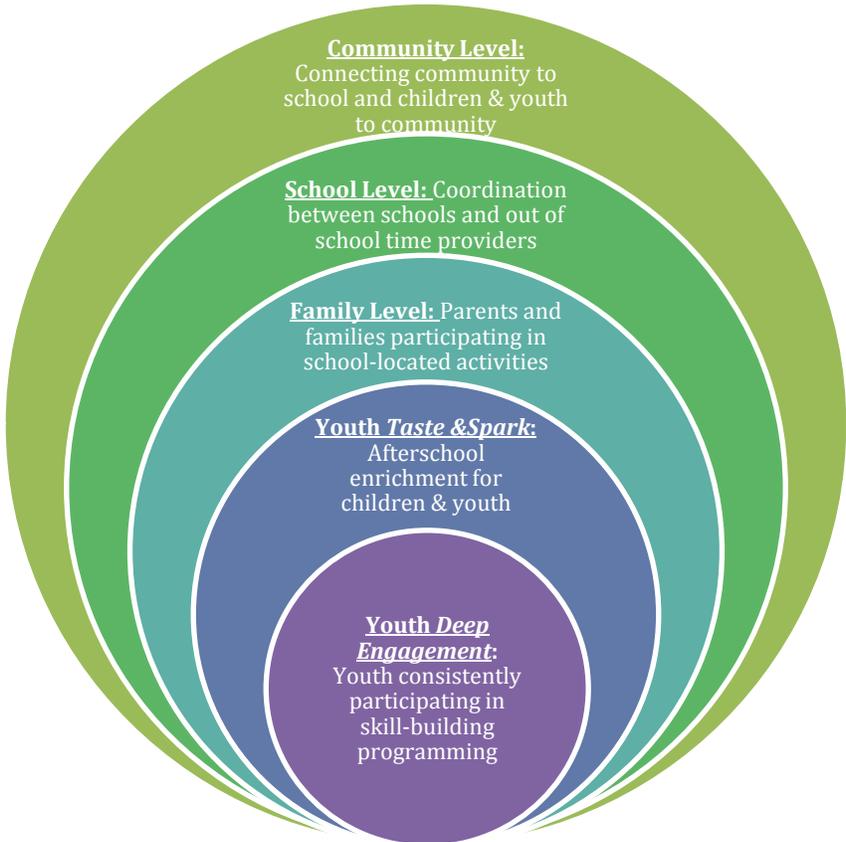
SAN FRANCISCO BEACON INITIATIVE EVALUATION 2011-12



San Francisco Beacon Initiative Evaluation Executive Summary

Program Model

The Beacon model rests on the assumption that by transforming public schools into safe spaces where children, youth, parents and community members can engage in positive, educational, enriching and healthy activities during extended hours, youth in the community will benefit. This assumption is reinforced by the well-established social ecological model of child development, which posits that there are multiple spheres of influence, often depicted as concentric circles. These spheres emanate out from micro-level influences like family, to larger, more structural or macro-influences like school, neighborhood, and cultural or economic context (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2007; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2010). The job of the Beacons, is therefore, seen as not only providing youth development and academic learning supports to youth, but also supporting parents in skill development, helping families navigate schools, coordinating school-day and out-of-school-time efforts, deepening participating youths’ connection to their communities, and ensuring the neighborhood is a healthy place in which to grow up.



Children sit at the center of concentric circles of influence. Along these circles the Beacons work to effect a positive impact, aiming its efforts toward five essential goals:

- Goal 1: Through consistent participation in Beacon programs youth will gain skills, develop supportive relationships, and show growth on youth development and academic measures
- Goal 2: All youth, including those who only drop in to Beacon Centers, will experience a safe space that offers quality programs
- Goal 3: Beacon programs will help family members navigate schools more effectively, gain skills and connect with the community
- Goal 4: Host hub schools and Beacon Centers will be more coordinated and aligned
- Goal 5: Community programs will improve the health of communities and increase community investment in youth, families and the school

Findings

Goal 1: Through consistent participation in Beacon programs youth will gain skills, develop supportive relationships, and show growth on youth development and academic measures

Out of School Time (OST) programs have been shown to increase youth safety during the riskiest time of day (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Simpkins, 2003) and to improve school day attendance (Arbreton et al., 2009; Kauh, 2011). Youth development programs have been shown to increase community investment, goal-setting and leadership skills (Benson et al., 2006; Philliber Research, 2005). This evaluation is designed to measure: 1) how well Beacon OST programs are engaging youth during those high risk hours, 2) whether participation correlates to improved school attendance and achievement, and 3) program quality from the youth participant perspective.

Engagement

For the 2011-12 year Beacon Centers, at both hub and satellite sites, served 11,989 unduplicated individuals in total. Among these 9,470 were children and youth and 2,519 were adults. In 2010-11 the Initiative served 10,146 children, youth, and adults. Beacon youth participation is fairly proportionate to the ethnic composition of the district, especially given the school sites. Ethnic distribution was similar among youth who participated in programming for 35 or more days (high level participants), indicating no perceptible attrition problem with most ethnic groups, including African American and Latino students.

Ethnic Category	District	Beacon Schools	Beacon Youth	High Level Participants
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.5%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	40%	51%	40%	47%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%	1%	5%	2%
Filipino	5%	8%	6%	6%
Hispanic/Latino	24%	18%	19%	19%
Black or African American	11%	9%	13%	13%
White	11%	7%	4%	4%
Two or More Races	3%	1%	5%	5%
Other/None Reported	4%	4%	8%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

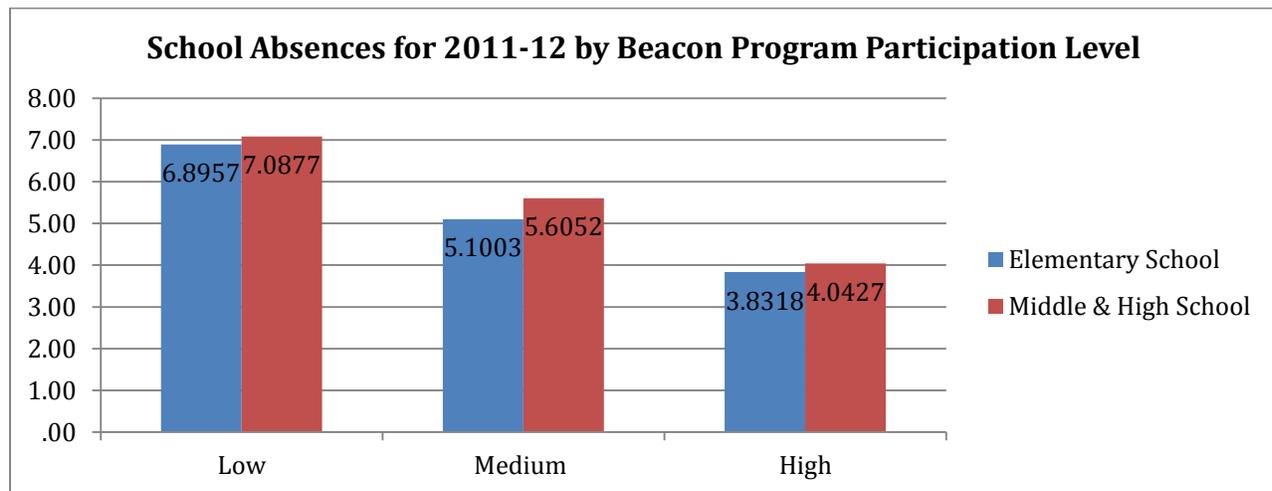
Among the 9,470 youth served, SFUSD could provide data pertaining to socioeconomic status on 5,143. These data showed that approximately 70% of all youth served Initiative-wide, and 69.3% of

high-level participants are designated socioeconomically disadvantaged.¹ Initiative-wide Average Daily Attendance (ADA) was 2,049, though there was a good deal of variation among individual Beacon Center's ADA.

Beacon Center	Unduplicated Adult	Unduplicated Youth	ADA
Bayview Beacon	102	708	112
Mission Beacon Center	106	611	127
North Beach-Chinatown Beacon Center	223	899	107
OMI/Excelsior Beacon Center	566	1270	210
Richmond Village Beacon	979	1875	428
Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center	329	2067	698
Visitacion Valley Beacon	105	1022	167
Western Addition Beacon	109	1018	200
Grand Total Initiative Wide	2519	9470	2049

School Day Attendance

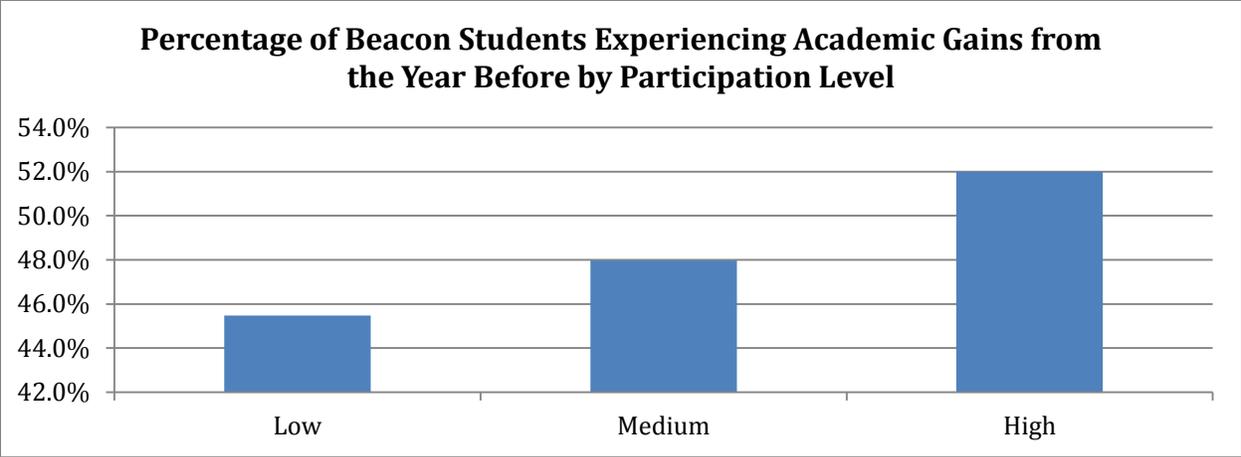
The data showed that consistent participation in Beacon programs has a positive and statistically significant impact on school day attendance. This relationship was stronger for middle and high school youth, those in Special Education, and those designated Socioeconomically Disadvantaged.



School Achievement

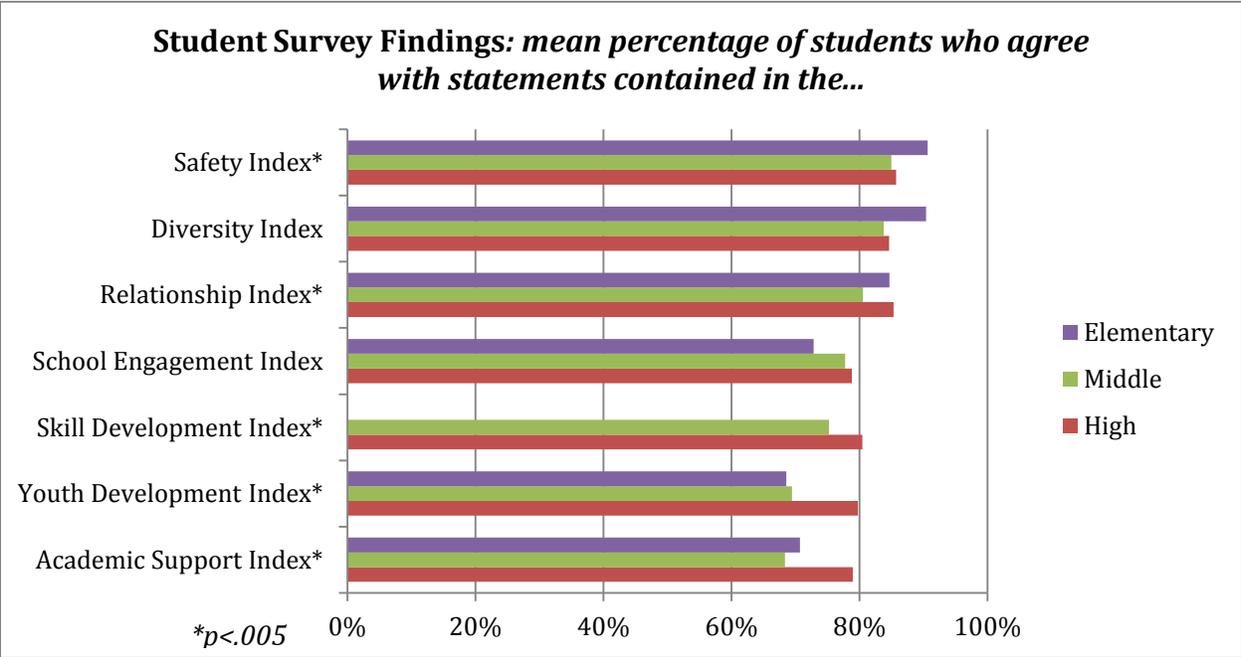
The data also showed an overall positive and statistically significant relationship between program participation and academic gains – high participating youth were significantly more likely to experience academic gains in 2011-12 from 2010-11 than were youth participating at lower levels. These findings were stronger for elementary school and less disadvantaged students.

¹ Defined by CDE as students eligible for FRMP or whose parents have less than a high school education.



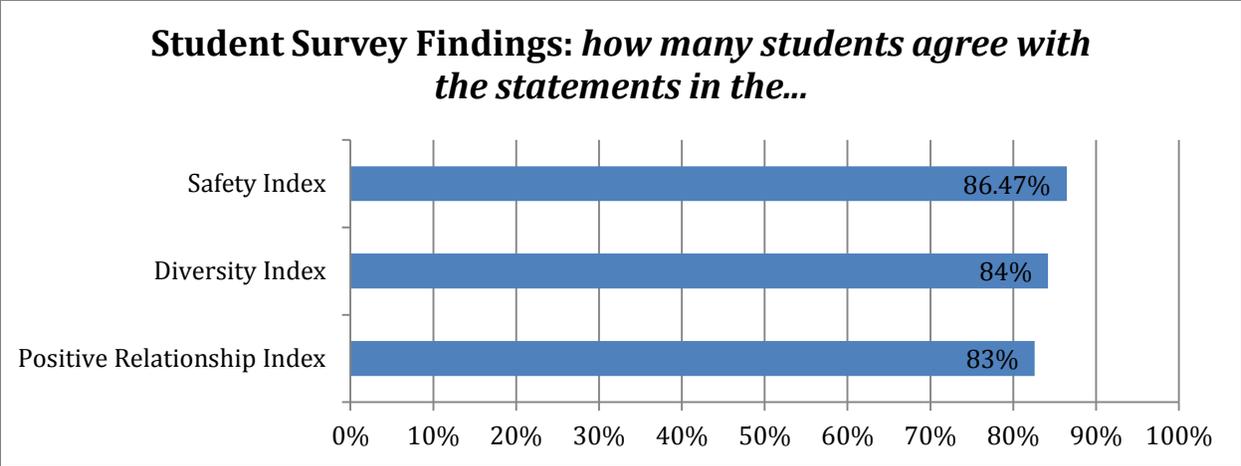
Program Quality/Youth Development

Student survey findings indicated that students developed supportive relationships, gained academic and personal expression skills, and grew on youth development measures, as well. High school youth and African American students were significantly more likely to affirm that the program provided academic support and fostered youth development.



Goal 2: All youth, including those who only drop in to Beacon Centers, will experience a safe space that offers quality programs

Student survey findings showed that very large majorities of students, including those who may not participate consistently, experience the Beacon Centers as safe places. Respondents of all ages tended to report that they felt safe at the Beacon Centers – this was significant because 9th graders indicated on the same survey that they felt substantially less safe than other students in their neighborhoods and while going home. Vast majorities also indicated that the Beacon Centers are places where diversity is promoted and positive relationships are nurtured.



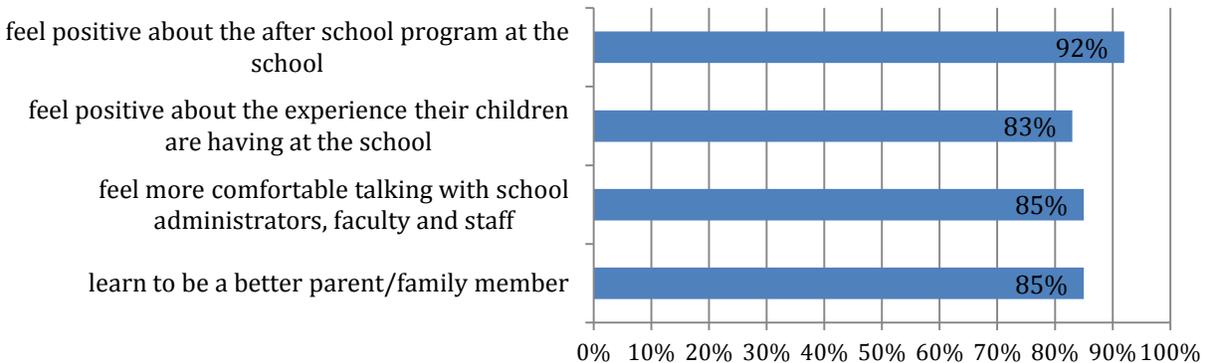
Goal 3: Beacon programs will help family members navigate schools more effectively, gain skills and connect with the community

Research has long supported the idea that family engagement is a critical predictor of students’ academic success (Dearing et al., 2004; Houtenville & Conway, 2008). Engaging families, particularly in lower-income areas, however, can be a challenge, especially if those parents feel intimidated by school bureaucracy or cannot find an entry point into the school community (Bouffard, 2008; Crew, 2007). The Harvard Family Research Project has identified a number of best practices for engaging family members.² Among these practices is offering adult classes at the school that are based on the needs and interests of parents and the community (Westmoreland et al., 2009).

A survey of family members participating in Beacon programs revealed that Beacon programs help families feel more at ease talking with school administrators, faculty and staff. It also showed that family members perceive that participating in the Beacon programs equips them to be better family members. In interviews, school principals affirmed that the work of the Beacons increases the schools’ ability to conduct outreach and engage families.

² See Harvard Family Research Project’s Family Involvement Makes a Difference series at <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/family-involvement-makes-a-difference>

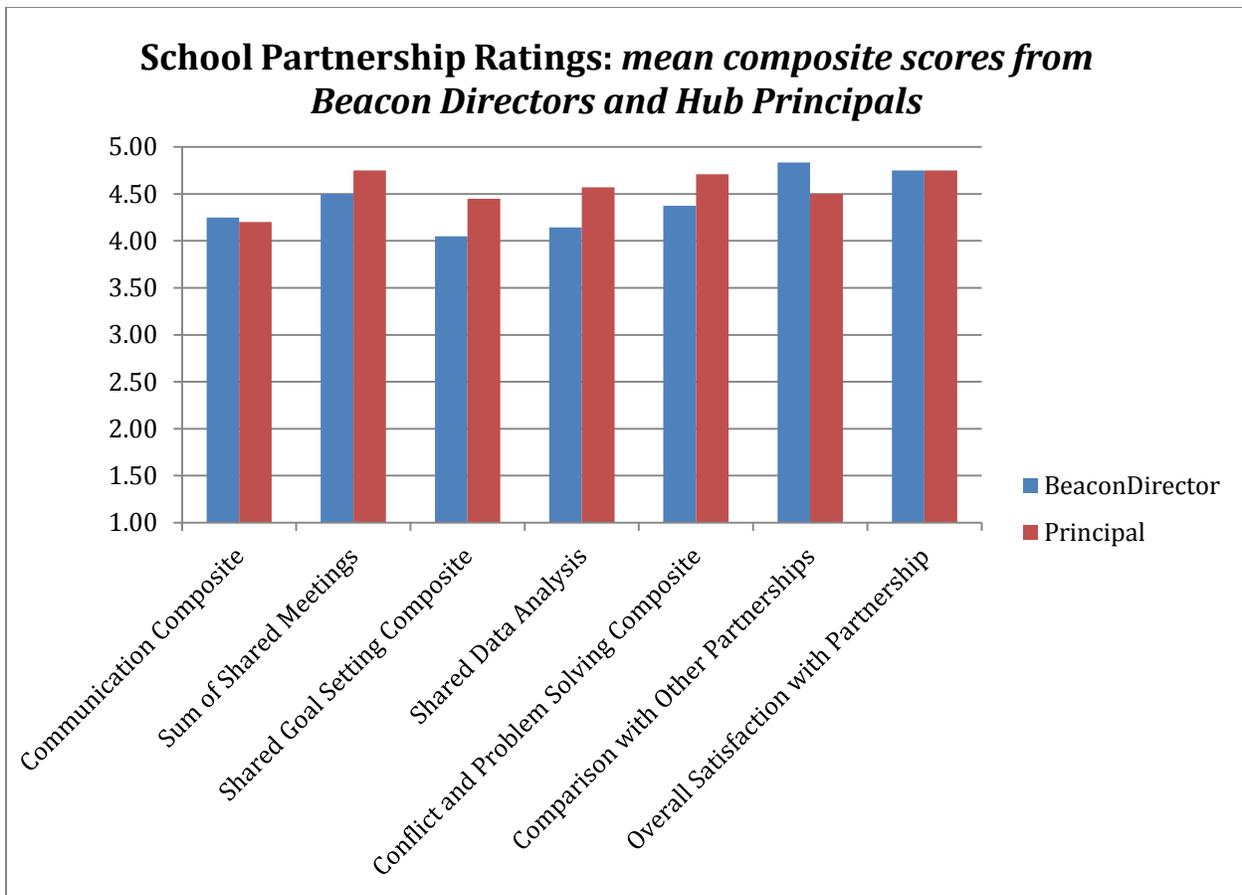
Family Connection to the School: *because of the Beacon parents and family members...*



Goal 4: Host hub schools and Beacon lead agencies will be more coordinated and aligned

Based on a thorough investigation of research and expert opinion, the Harvard Family Research Project has concluded that in order for partnerships in education to be successful, a number of factors must be in place, including a shared vision, good relationships among partners, blended staffing, regular data sharing and strong connections with families and other community resources (Harvard Family Research Center, 2010). The Coalition for Community Schools concurs that these factors are key for successful collaborations between schools and community-based partners. The Coalition’s Rationale and Results Framework suggests that assessing school-community partnerships should include looking closely at how leadership, data use, relationship-building, planning and decision making and parent engagement are coordinated between schools and their community partners (Coalition for Community Schools, 2012).

Interviews with Beacon Directors and Principals revealed high levels of agreement on criteria for healthy school-CBO partnerships, including strong two-way communication, shared visioning, and inclusion of CBO partners in regular school meetings. This evaluation has helped to establish a model for school-CBO partnership. However, to be truly persuasive that the partnerships at Beacon hub schools are objectively robust, future evaluations should include a comparison group of school-CBO partnerships that are not supported by the structure that SFBI offers.

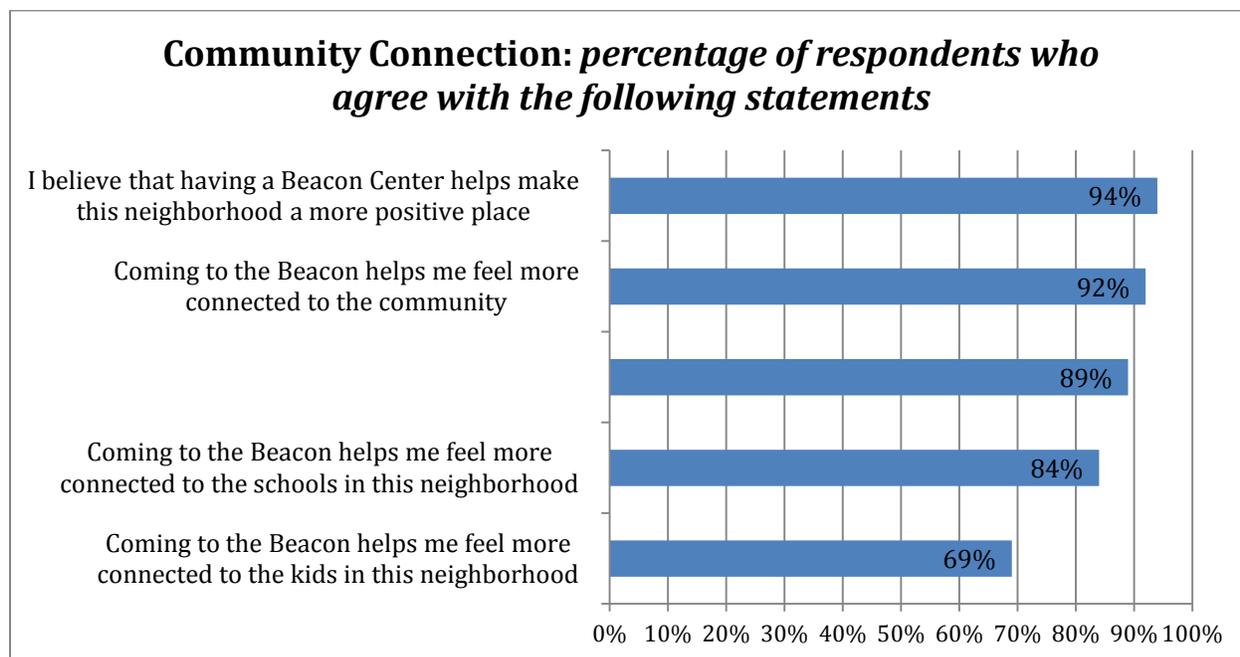


Goal 5: Community programs will improve the health of communities and increase community investment in youth, families and the school

Community programs at Beacon hubs include evening and weekend classes open to members of the community. Beacon Centers served a total of 2,519 unduplicated adults, among whom it is estimated 73% were community members with no direct family link to the students enrolled at the school or the Beacon Center. Reaching these community members is part of the Beacon (and broader Community Schools) design. This design follows a body of research that points to a strong correlation between the strength of social networks and a population’s physical and mental health, academic achievement, and local economic development, as well as lower rates of homicide, suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse (Buka, 1999; Kawachi & Berkman, 2000; Wandersman, 1998). Research has shown that children tend to be mentally and physically healthier in neighborhoods where adults talk to one another (Wilkerson, 1999), and in Latino communities, high levels of social support are linked to a number of positive health benefits (Policy Link, 2002). Closer social networks are associated with community members’ willingness to participate in community-building activities, help supervise community children, and maintain public order (Putnam 2001; Putnam et al 1997). Participation in social networks also promotes the enforcement of social sanctions by community members to diminish negative behavior and reduce the incidence of crime, juvenile delinquency, and access to firearms within communities (Putnam 1995; Veenstra, 2002).

A survey of 240 adult participants showed that adults who participate in Beacon programs make more neighborhood connections and feel more affinity to the community, the school, and the kids in

the neighborhood. Findings from this evaluation support the long-held Beacon philosophy that school-based community programming is ultimately valuable to the school community and to students.



Areas for Growth

While the overall findings from this evaluation are very positive, room for growth did appear in some areas.

Promoting Academic Achievement with Vulnerable Sub-Groups

Beacon participation was found to have a measurable positive relationship with school-day attendance. This finding was supported by student survey results and Principal interviews, and the relationship was found to be strongest among African American youth and students designated Special Education or Socioeconomically Disadvantaged. These findings are generally very encouraging, but the data showed that for these same sub-groups greater Beacon participation did not translate to academic gains as much as it did for youth not in these categories. Why Beacon participation would be associated with better attendance but not improved academic achievement for youth in these categories may have more to do with the multiplicity of challenges facing some of these students rather than with a specific shortfall of the programs. Nevertheless, the finding provides a valuable opportunity for Beacon Directors and the Initiative as a whole to consider ways they might more effectively reach all youth, particularly those in these important subgroups.

Extending School Partnership into the Classrooms

Interviews with Beacon Directors and Principals revealed a very strong set of relationships and working collaborations at the hub schools. But both Principals and Beacon Directors indicated that they perceive classroom teachers to be less convinced of the value Beacons add to the school. Both sets of interviewees acknowledged that there are some teachers at the school who are Beacon advocates, and that Beacon participation in regular school meetings and teacher involvement in

Beacon staffing promote more trust among classroom teachers. But there was also an acknowledgement that other teachers either did not know much about Beacon programs or did not recognize that what happens in the Beacon can support their work in the classroom. Given that the evaluation found positive correlations between program participation and school attendance and achievement, this also seems to be an area for reflection moving forward.

Looking More Closely at the Meaning of Quality School Partnerships

Finally, this evaluation revealed that while the relationships between Beacon lead agencies and their host schools are strong, without the ability to compare the strength of those relationships with other, non-Beacon school-CBO partnerships, the apparent quality is less meaningful. Future evaluation efforts should include interviews with program directors and school principals from a comparable list of non-Beacon schools for a meaningful comparison.

[References for literature cited and greater detail on methods and findings may be found in the full report SFBI Evaluation 2011-12:

http://www.sfbeacon.org/00_Evaluations/Evaluations/2011_12_Beacon_Evaluation_MoiraDeNike.pdf]