

SAN FRANCISCO BEACON INITIATIVE
CAREGIVER SATISFACTION AND PARTICIPATION REPORT

Nishi Moonka, Ed.M., Project Lead

Jennifer Susskind, M.C.P

Patricia M. Bennett, Ph.D., Principal

July 2007

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....2

List of Tables.....3

Section 1: Introduction.....4

 Background4

 Best Practices4

Section 2: Purpose and Methodology.....5

 A. Purpose of Evaluation.....5

 B. Methodology6

 C. Data Limitations.....6

 D. Report Organization.....7

Section 3: Findings.....7

A. Youth Services and Programming Assessment.....7

 Youth Program—Why Children Attend.....8

 Youth Program—What Their Children Like About Beacon.....9

 Youth Program—What Their Children Don't Like About Beacon10

 What Caregivers Like About Beacon10

 What Caregivers Don't Like About Beacon12

 Caregiver Recommendations—Youth Programming13

B. The Current State of Family and Caregiver Involvement.....14

 Caregiver and Family Participation14

 Staff Identify Family Services, Activities and Resources.....16

 Communication and Family and Caregiver Involvement in Decision-Making.....17

 Level of Satisfaction with Family and Caregiver Involvement17

C. Understanding of Beacon Mission and Program Goals18

 Staff Identify Their Goals for Caregiver and Family Engagement18

 Caregivers Identify the Goals/Purpose of Beacon.....19

D. Successes, Opportunities, and Challenges in Caregiver and Family Engagement.....20

 Meeting Caregiver and Family Needs: Staff Perspective20

 Meeting Caregiver and Family Needs: Caregiver Perspective.....21

 Motivations for Participating in Beacon: Staff Perspective22

 Barriers to Participating in Beacon: Staff Perspective23

 Motivations for and Barriers to Participating in Beacon: Caregivers Perspective.....23

E. Staff and Caregiver Recommendations.....25

 Staff Recommendations25

 What Staff Want to Know About Family and Caregiver Needs26

 Caregiver Recommendations—Caregiver and Family Programming.....27

 Caregiver Recommendations for Increasing Parent Participation.....29

Section 4: Recommendations.....29

Appendix.....33

List of Figures

Figure 1: Caregiver Overall Satisfaction Rating for Beacon8

Figure 2: Caregiver Reasons for Why Children Attend Beacon9

Figure 3: Caregiver Reasons for What Children Like About Beacon.....10

Figure 4: What Caregivers Like About Beacon12

Figure 5: Beacon Staff Overall Satisfaction Rating for Caregiver Involvement.....18

Figure 6: The Purpose of Beacon, According to Caregivers20

Figure 7: Why Caregivers Say They Don't Participate24

Figure 8: Recommended Family and Adult-Oriented Activities27

List of Tables

Table 1: Total Caregiver Participant Count by Beacon (7/1/06 – 5/31/07)15

Table 2 Unduplicated Caregiver Participants and Hours of Services by Service Category15

Table 3: Beacon Family Oriented Services and Activities16

Table 4: Beacon Communication with Caregivers.....17

Table 5: Staff Vision for Caregiver and Family Involvement at Beacon.....18

Table 6: Staff Assessment of Why Caregivers Get Involved with Beacon.....22

Table 7: Staff Assessment of Why Caregivers Do Not Participate in Beacon23

Table 8: Caregiver Respondents' Availability (Availability marked in yellow)25

Table 9: Staff Recommendations for Engaging Caregivers and Families26

Table 10: What Staff Want to Know from Caregivers.....26



Section 1: Introduction

Resource Development Associates (RDA) has prepared the following report to present findings from parent and guardian (herein “caregiver”) interviews and Beacon Program Manager family engagement (herein “staff”) surveys. The report is designed to describe caregiver perceptions of the Beacon Centers and evaluate caregiver and family involvement in the San Francisco’s Beacon Initiative.

Background

Established in 1994, the San Francisco Beacon Initiative (SFBI) is a public-private partnership promoting youth and family centers in public schools. The Initiative’s goal is to offer opportunities, services and activities that foster the healthy development of children, youth, families, and communities. Eight Beacon Centers—housed in public schools across San Francisco—provide youth with social, athletic, educational, and recreational opportunities before and after school, on weekends, and during the summer. The eight Beacon Centers include: Bayview-Hunters Point Community Beacon Center (herein referred to as Bayview), Mission Beacon Center (Mission), Chinatown Beacon Center (Chinatown), OMI/Excelsior Neighborhood Beacon Center (OMI), Richmond Village Beacon (Richmond), Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center (Sunset), Visitacion Valley Community Beacon (Visitacion Valley), and Western Addition Beacon Center (Western Addition).

The San Francisco Beacons were established to support the development of youth into adults who 1) are economically self-sufficient; 2) have healthy family/social relationships; 3) contribute to their communities; and 4) are physically & mentally healthy. Beacon Centers were originally envisioned to help San Francisco’s public schools transition into community hubs, open nights and on weekends, with each site creating programming to serve the particular needs of its community.

Between 1998 and 2001, Public-Private Ventures (PPV) evaluated the Initiative. In 2003, upon contracting with RDA, SFBI instituted a comprehensive set of Quality Standards to guide the continuous improvement of the eight Beacon Centers. From 1998 onward, both PPV and RDA found extraordinarily high levels of consistency and quality across the eight Beacon Centers.

In 2006, SFBI began a strategic planning process to harness lessons learned through the evaluation process and from recent advances in the field. As a result, SFBI established the following goals for 2007-08:

- 1) Increase the overall quality of Beacon Centers across the city, developing capacity to learn from each others’ best practices and from peers nationwide.
- 2) Engage the community (including families and neighborhood adults) in activities to enlist social capital in supporting healthy youth development.
- 3) Clarify the Beacon role, assess community need, and negotiate site access for strengthened and effective programming throughout school day, after-school, evening, weekend, and summer hours.

SFBI plans to utilize a social capital framework to advance these goals.

Best Practices

Current best practices in the field of out-of-school youth programming suggests that successful caregiver, family and community engagement in youth programming is associated with a myriad of positive adolescent outcomes, both social and academic. According to one study, higher rates of participation amongst Latino caregivers on Chicago’s school counsels was associated with an increase in Latino youth

academic achievements¹. Out-of-school youth programs can involve caregivers and families in a variety of substantive ways²:

- **Provide adult enrichment and educational opportunities:** Adult education programming acknowledges that caregivers are instrumental in helping teach children. By enhancing their own language, literacy and self-confidence, caregivers can help their children learn.
- **Engage caregivers in meaningful and shared experiences with their children:** Meaningful shared experiences between participant youth, caregivers and other family members can promote bonding, healthy communication and opportunities for shared learning. Shared activities can include family-oriented parties, dinners, on-site volunteering and community-projects, field trips and youth performance showcasing.
- **Include caregivers in participatory governance:** Involving caregivers in decision-making and program governance assumes that if family members have a voice in the program, they will more likely stay involved. In addition, caregivers provide excellent insight into the academic needs and extracurricular interests of their children.
- **Provide an informal and trusting environment for caregivers to connect with the schools:** Youth programs can help promote communications between caregivers and their children's school administration and teachers by offering school orientations, mediation. In times of family crisis, programs can provide a safe environment for caregivers and youth to reconnect with schools and academics.

Due to increasing evidence of the importance of family involvement in adolescent social and academic growth, and after considerable dialogue with the Beacon Initiative Coordinator, SFBI contracted RDA to conduct a qualitative evaluation of caregiver and family engagement in Beacon Center programming. This 2006-07 Beacon Caregiver Satisfaction and Participation Report spotlights caregiver experiences and staff perception of caregiver involvement at their respective Beacon Centers.

Section 2: Purpose and Methodology

A. Purpose of Evaluation

The following San Francisco Beacon Caregiver Satisfaction and Participation Report is a snapshot of current caregiver and family involvement in the Beacon Centers' programs. RDA interviewed a relatively small selection of Beacon Center participant caregivers and surveyed at least one Program Manager from every Beacon. Based on these qualitative interviews and surveys, this evaluation:

- Illustrates a number of ways in which the Beacon Centers individually and collectively meet the needs of youth participants, their caregivers and families, and highlights some successful methods of engaging caregivers and their families in participating in the Beacon programs.
- Identifies challenges and opportunities for improving the Beacon programs, focusing particularly on improving caregiver and family-oriented services.
- Offers a variety of practical recommendations for increasing caregiver participation in order to enhance and improve services to youth and their families.

¹ Harvard Family Research Project, "Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education" (2007).

² Casp, Margaret et. al. Beyond the Head Count: Evaluating Family Involvement in Out-of-School Time (2002).

The primary audiences for the evaluation results include the overall Beacon administration and the directors and staff of the individual Beacon Centers. This report responds to Beacon's goal of transforming San Francisco public schools "into youth and family centers that become a beacon of activity for the surrounding neighborhood."

B. Methodology

In order to develop a broad-based and multi-dimensional illustration of caregiver and family involvement in Beacon, this report relies on two primary sources of qualitative and one primary source for quantitative data:

- *Caregiver Interviews*: RDA conducted a total of sixteen phone interviews with caregivers (parents and guardians of Beacon youth participants)—two from each of the eight Beacon Centers— during the months of May and June 2007. Interviewees were selected, based on availability, from amongst a list of five to eight names provided by each Center's director. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, and Cantonese. All interviewees were assured that they would remain anonymous in the final report. Each of the respondents stated that their children either currently, or had in the past, participated in activities at a Beacon Center. Caregivers were asked a series of questions about theirs and their children's experiences with their neighborhood Beacon Centers, and were asked to help identify opportunities for improvement. In addition to responding to questions about services for youth participants, the caregivers were asked to identify ways in which their local Beacon Centers could develop and improve the family and caregiver programs. See Appendix for a copy of the Caregiver Interview questions.
- *Staff Survey*: Program Managers from each of the eight Beacon Centers responded to a written survey assessing family and caregiver involvement. In addition, five other staff members from the Richmond Beacon responded to the survey. (See attachment, Staff Assessment of Parent/ Caregiver Involvement). Staff members answered six questions designed to assess their understanding of family and caregiver needs, and the capacity of the Beacon Centers to meet these needs.
- *Contract Management System (CMS)*: Beacon Centers use CMS, a management information system required by their primary funder, the Department of Children, Youth and their Families, to record their participants' registration and services data and data regarding services to caregivers. For this report, RDA reviewed data from July 2006 through May 2007 in order to understand the number of caregivers each Beacon center served and the type of activities in which they participated.

C. Data Limitations

Every attempt has been made to represent the Initiative accurately and fairly thus far. However, due to a reliance on Beacon staff to provide a limited and selective list of caregiver contacts, some elements of the evaluation may be skewed toward positive perceptions or demonstrate a greater degree of caregiver participation. In addition, due to the nature of qualitative data collection, some factors of the evaluation may be over- or understated or possibly overlooked.

Throughout the report, when appropriate, RDA references the specific Beacon Center to which the data refers. For the sake of caregiver confidentiality, the report references the Centers more generally. In addition, because the scale and manner of selecting the interview samples, no efforts were made by the evaluator to generalize caregiver satisfaction for specific Centers or the initiative as a whole.

In addition, due to budget cuts, RDA was unable to monitor data entry into CMS, and recognizes that data collection and entry issues may exist that may contribute to lower than actual participation records. This is especially true of participation records for caregivers and families, given that clear standards and guidelines have never been set.

D. Report Organization

The first section (Section A) of this report relies on caregiver narratives to evaluate youth-oriented programs and services. Caregivers were asked what their children, and they themselves, liked and disliked about Beacon. The second section (Section B) of this report presents data on the current state of family and caregiver involvement at the Beacon Center. The third section (Section C) of this report looks at staff and caregiver understanding of the Beacon mission and programmatic goals. The next section (Section D) evaluates current programs and services for families and caregivers. Staff members were asked what they thought caregivers needed from Beacon and why they thought family members participated or did not participate in the program. In contrast, caregivers were asked how the Beacon helped meet their needs, what other needs they had, and why they participated or did not participate in Beacon. The following section (Section E), offers both caregivers and staff recommendations for improving family and caregiver programming and increasing caregiver participation. In the final section of this report, RDA provides practical recommendations to increase family and caregiver participation, enrich family and caregiver-oriented programming, and, in turn, promote positive social and academic outcomes amongst youth participants.

Section 3: Findings

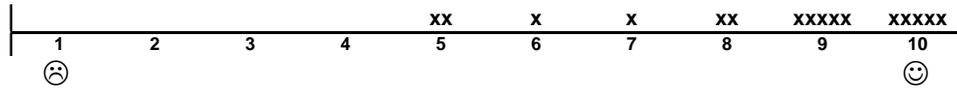
A. Youth Services and Programming Assessment

RDA interviewed a total of sixteen caregivers--two from each Beacon Center. The initial series of questions focused on how the program served their children, what their children liked and did not like about the program, and what the caregivers themselves liked and did not like about the program. (Although these questions were open-ended and did not specifically pertain to youth-oriented programming --e.g. *What do you like about Beacon?*—aside from one or two references to family-oriented activities, caregivers exclusively critiqued the youth programs.) In addition, caregivers were given the opportunity to offer recommendations for improving Beacon. Once again, they exclusively focused on the experiences of their children and opportunities to improve youth services and programs.

This section paints a picture of the Beacon Youth programs and services from the perspective of participant caregivers. Beacon caregivers have not formally participated in the Initiative-wide evaluation since 2003-04. The purpose of this section is to provide some feedback from caregivers across all eight Beacon Centers and to serve as a first step in including caregivers and families in improving the overall quality of the Beacon.

In general, caregivers were very pleased with the Beacon Centers' performance. Interviewees were asked to rate the quality of the Beacon program on a scale of one to ten—ten being the highest rating. Ten respondents rated their overall satisfaction as a nine or higher. The following is a breakdown of responses amongst the sixteen interviewees. The symbol "x" indicates the caregivers' response.

Figure 1: Caregiver Overall Satisfaction Rating for Beacon



Youth Program—Why Children Attend

Caregivers were asked a general and open-ended question about why their children attended Beacon Center programs in order to better understand the caregiver’s motivations for having their children participate. In response, most interviewees described the specific activities that drew their children to the program. All sixteen respondents unanimously stated that their children went to the Beacon Center to participate in the programmatic activities. Some spoke generally of the activities, while others specified certain classes, organized sports activities or enrichment programs. Fourteen out of sixteen caregivers mentioned that their children participated in the Beacon Program for academic reasons--to do their homework. Of those fourteen, six specifically mentioned the more focused homework assistance and tutoring program. One Bayview caregiver stated, *“My daughter goes to Beacon for tutoring. She gets help when she needs it, and I ask the program leader to check her homework every day.”*

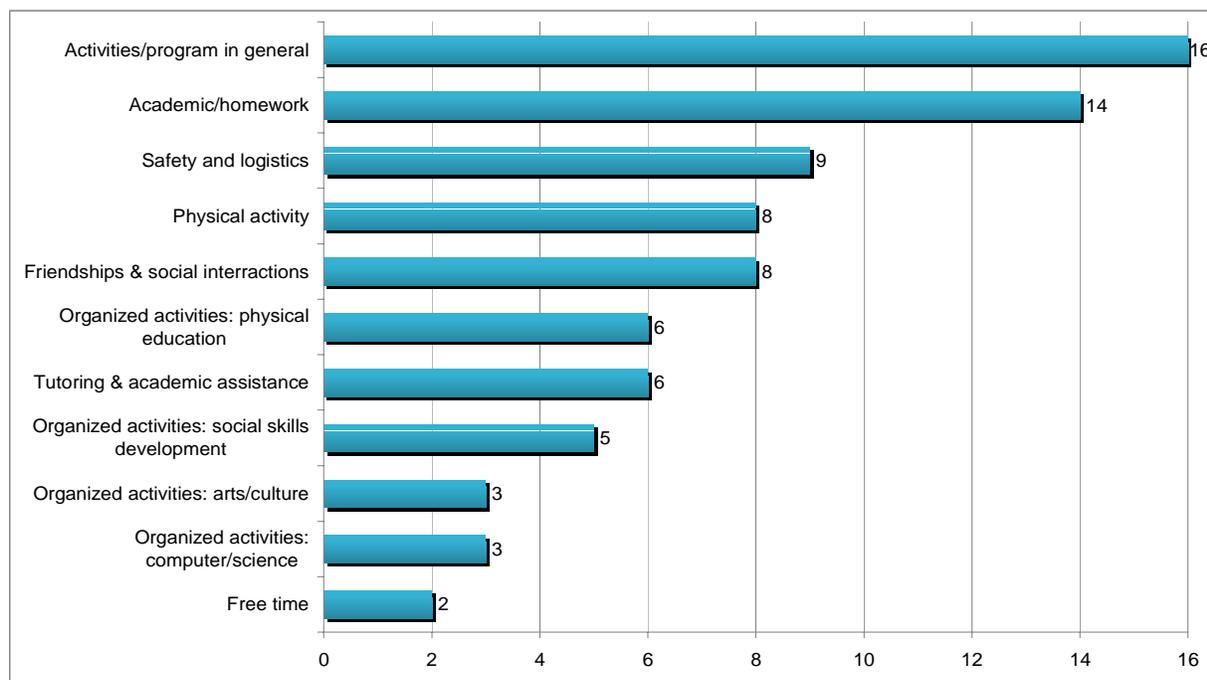
Key Finding: Caregivers value having their children participate in the Beacon for the enrichment opportunities it offers their children, not just for the convenience of after school care.

Nine respondents mentioned that their children went to the Beacon Centers for after-school care or other logistical reasons such as convenience, accessibility and safety. For example, one parent said that her daughter had wanted to go to an after school program since elementary school, but she could only send her to Beacon now since it was free. Another caregiver explained, *“My son goes so that he doesn’t have to hang out on the streets.”* One parent stated that her son went to the Beacon because *“He has no choice. It’s the only after school program.”*

Half of the interviewees (8) mentioned that their children participated for the social interactions, like the opportunity to spend time with other children. Of those eight, six caregivers described social enrichment programs such as peer counseling, leadership development and gender-specific peer programs. One parent explained, *“My son goes for the boy’s talk, which is a bunch of boys getting together to talk about life and the changes they are going through.”*

Half of the interviewees also mentioned the importance to their children of participating in some form of physical activity such as dance classes or organized sports. Of those eight, six specifically mentioned organized physical education classes such as dance (Bayview), skateboarding (Mission), and boxing (Visitacion Valley). One parent of a Mission Beacon student stated that her son went to Beacon to participate in the bicycle club, *“The teachers ride around San Francisco with the kids. The bicycle club gave him a bike for free!”* Three parents mentioned the significance of the Beacon’s cultural and arts curriculum, particularly: creative writing (Bayview); trips to the de Young Museum, music, jewelry-making and cooking classes (Richmond); newspaper writing (Sunset); and Spanish, cooking and drama classes (Chinatown).

The following graph shows the breakdown of reasons that caregivers gave for why their children participate in the Beacon programs:

Figure 2: Caregiver Reasons for Why Children Attend Beacon

Interview responses suggest that caregivers value Beacon for more than just the convenience of after-school care. Caregivers recognize that Beacon can help their children develop both socially and academically. One of the first steps in building caregiver and family participation is to broaden the greater community's—particularly caregivers—perception of the capacity of out-of-school programs to enrich the lives of young people.

Youth Program—What Their Children Like About Beacon

Thirteen out of the sixteen caregiver respondents expressed that in general their children liked the Beacon Program very much. A Richmond parent explained, *"He loves the program; when I go to pick him up, he says, 'Daddy, can I stay longer.'"* Eleven of the sixteen caregivers, in fact, could not identify anything they didn't like about the program. For example, a Western Addition caregiver expressed that the only thing her son didn't like about the Beacon Center was not being there all the time.

Most markedly, thirteen caregivers stated that their children liked the activities. One Richmond parent explained, *"My daughter doesn't want to participate in all of the activities, but this is ok, because she can join other programs. There is so much variety."* The specific recreational activities that parents identified their children enjoying include: dance, arts and crafts, and creative writing classes (Bayview); Spanish, bicycling and drama classes (Chinatown); bicycling, salsa dancing and skateboarding (Mission); multicultural dinners (OMI/E); basketball (Richmond); board games, newsletter writing (Sunset); computer and art (Western Addition).

Key Finding: According to caregivers, Beacon makes learning fun. Children love the socially, physically and culturally enriching activities.

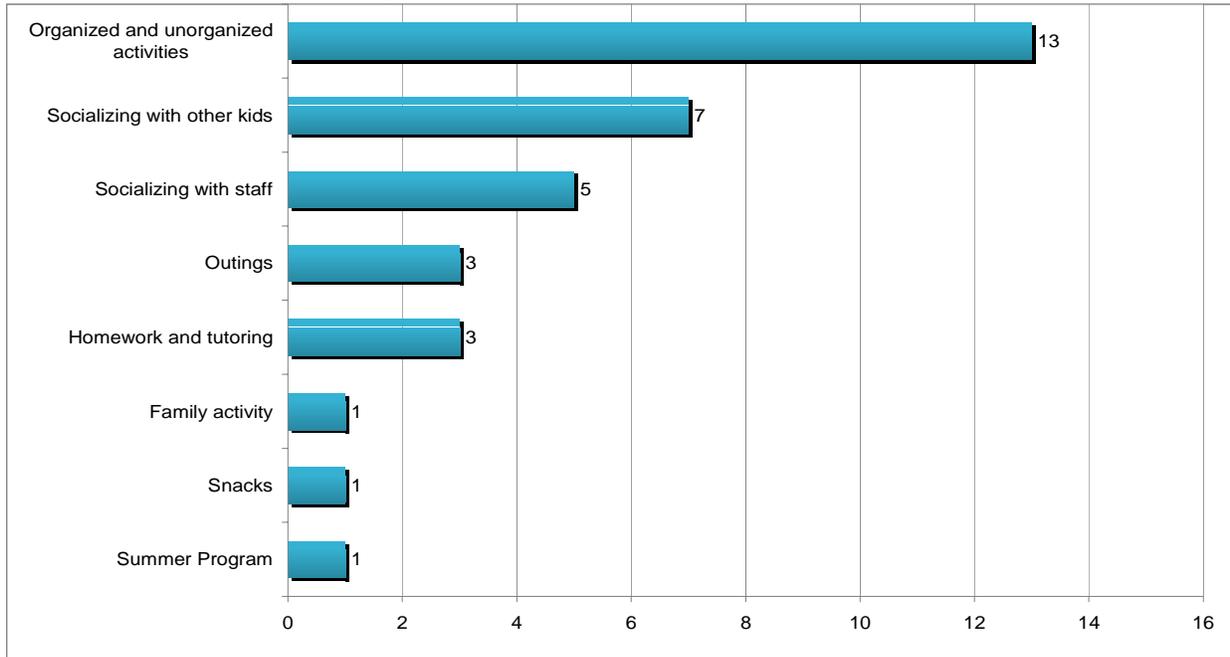
Seven of the interviewees stated that their children enjoyed interacting with other children and five expressed that their children liked spending time with the staff. For example, a Richmond caregiver asserted that her daughter thinks that the counselors are cool. *"She doesn't want to talk to me. She wants a friend, someone*

she can open up to. The counselors are young, but still responsible adults." Another caregiver conveyed

that since she was a single mother, her son liked being around the adult male staff. *"There are a lot of male teachers; they take an active role in my son's life, and they care."*

In addition, three caregivers identified that their children liked to do their homework at Beacon and/or receive help with their homework from Beacon staff. Three caregivers stated that their children especially liked the outings. The following graph depicts what caregivers believe their children like about Beacon:

Figure 3: Caregiver Reasons for What Children Like About Beacon



Youth Program—What Their Children Don't Like About Beacon

Only five of the sixteen caregivers were able to identify aspects of the Beacon program that their children did not like. Two parents (both from Chinatown) stated that their children did not like the snack. Two Beacon respondents stated that their children didn't like to do their homework at Beacon. (However, it is unclear whether these children enjoy doing homework anywhere). One parent of a Visitation Valley Beacon participant stated that her two children did not like the Beacon program. *"There are no special activities that they enjoy. They don't want to go, but I don't want them to come home early when I am working."* Incidentally, the other Visitation Valley respondent stated, *"My son gets really excited about the program. The activities are very interesting."*

One parent of a Mission Beacon participant stated that she no longer sends her son to Beacon because he admitted to her that he had smoked marijuana at the Center during activity time, *"He felt pressured by other children to do something wrong. The program doesn't protect children. They have a 'no-snitch' policy."* He didn't tell a staff person because he was scared.

What Caregivers Like About Beacon

RDA asked Beacon participant caregivers an open-ended question about what they themselves most like about the program. Responses varied substantially. Most prevalently, eleven of the sixteen caregivers stated that they liked the Beacon staff and/or the administration. Adjectives used to describe the staff included, caring, professional, respectful, personable and friendly. One caregiver of a child from the OMI Beacon stated that she trusted the Beacon staff more than she trusted the school staff, *"The staff are very*

supportive, especially when issues come up. They keep me in the loop and they are always open to the children—it doesn't matter how big or small the issue is." The other OMI caregiver stated that she especially liked the fact that many of the Beacon teachers were once Beacon participants.

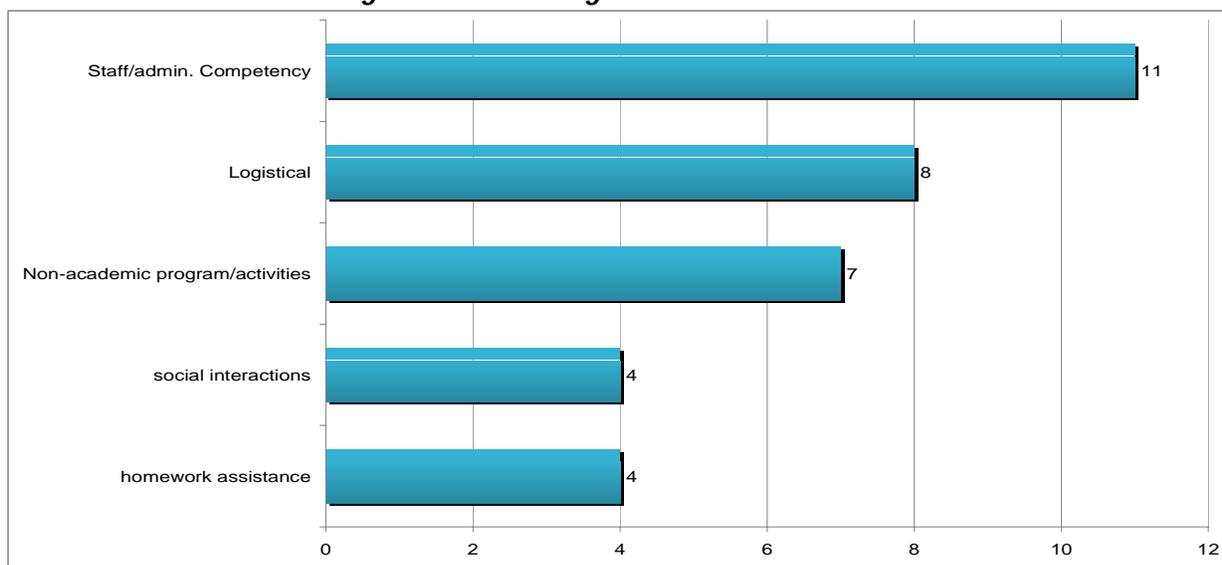
Key Finding: Caregivers like what the program does for them in terms of providing convenient childcare, but they really like staff's commitment and their children's development.

Half the caregivers stated that they especially liked the Beacon programs for logistical reasons: four caregivers liked the fact that the Centers were on school property or in the neighborhood; four mentioned that they liked that their children were safe; three liked the hours of supervision and the convenience that the program afforded them; and one liked that the program was free.

In general, caregivers were pleased about the quality and the variety of the youth-oriented, non-academic programs and activities. Seven out of sixteen mentioned programmatic content in general, or specifically. An OMI caregiver explained, "I like that the program broadens their horizons and keeps the kids thinking: sewing, music, dance, arts and crafts. These things may help them later on in their career." A Richmond caregiver admitted that at first she wasn't very impressed with the program: "It's not like a state-of-the-art thing; it's in a cafeteria for goodness sake. But the kids love it, and I love the variety of the activities and the respect they give the children." Caregivers specifically mentioned liking the following: newspaper activity, computers and outdoor sports (Sunset); the institute for incoming 6th graders and the bike program (Chinatown); the volunteer program at the food bank (Richmond); and the leadership program (Bayview).

Four caregivers stated that they liked the social interactions and the development of social skills that the Beacon program offers their children. A Bayview caregiver stated, "I like that her peers are diverse; she's not just around children of her race." A Western Addition caregiver stated that there were not a lot of children in her neighborhood, so she was grateful for the program because it provided an opportunity for her son to meet and play with other children.

Four caregivers out of sixteen specifically identified liking the academic program. One caregiver mentioned the tutoring was critical because she could not help due to a language barrier. Several other caregivers mentioned that they also didn't feel comfortable or knowledgeable enough to help their children with homework.

Figure 4: What Caregivers Like About Beacon

In effect, the caregiver interviews suggest there is a synergy between why children attend Beacon programs and what the caregivers feel the Beacon programs offer their children. Caregivers want more than the convenience of on-site after-school care, and they are satisfied that they are getting more.

What Caregivers Don't Like About Beacon

When asked specifically about likes and dislikes, the majority of caregivers (11 of 16) could not or did not identify anything that they dislike about Beacon. However, a few caregivers identified some serious concerns that related to staffing ratio. One Chinatown caregiver stated, *"There is no one to help him with his homework. I've talked to the staff about this, but they just make excuses. They take care of the children but they don't help them."*

Key Finding: While caregivers value the educational component, some perceive that Beacon lacks capacity to provide sufficient academic support and supervision.

A Sunset caregiver responded, *"The staff ratio is terrible. I don't feel like there is enough interaction between staff and children. When they play sports it is fine, but when I go into the library there is something like 100 students to one staff person. If there were any tutoring going on, I'd be surprised."*

One Mission caregiver was concerned about the lack of supervision: *"I liked the program until I found out that the kids weren't being monitored. Also, I couldn't understand why they didn't help him with his homework. They didn't make him sign up for homework. I had to tell the staff that he had to do his homework but I can't say he got a lot of help."* In addition, this caregiver was concerned about high school students volunteering unsupervised with the junior high children. Due to the incident described earlier—her son having smoked marijuana at Beacon—she felt that this lack of supervision wasn't safe.

Aside from the issue of understaffing, only one caregiver expressed serious dissatisfaction with Beacon. A Visitation Valley caregiver stated that she did not think there were enough "enrichment" activities for the children. *"They are bored. The staff just let them sit around and cuss."*

Finally, one OMI caregiver identified an issue that is less about the Beacon program itself, and more about how the school and the Beacon program interact. She would like to see more communication between the two programs. *"I wish the school would be more involved with the Beacon program. They keep them separate. I don't trust the school, but I do trust Beacon."* She described an incident in which she asked the

school for a Beacon staff to be present during a disciplinary meeting, but, according to the Beacon case manager, the school did not invite him to attend.

These interviews suggest that while in general, caregivers are very satisfied with Beacon, there are some areas that could be improved. Budget limitations may restrict the capacity to add more positions, but there may be some opportunities to reprioritize staff activities and responsibilities. In addition, at least one caregiver recognized the potential value of greater linkages between the school and the Beacon. The following section looks at caregiver recommendations for improving programming for youth.

Caregiver Recommendations—Youth Programming

Caregivers were asked what changes they would like to see in their local Beacon Center. Every interviewee provided at least one suggestion concerning youth- or family-oriented programming. In regards to youth program, there was a very diverse array of suggestions. While some of these recommendations might apply to all the Centers, since each Beacon Center provides unique programming, some recommendations may specifically relate to their local program.

▪ ***Academic Programming***

Six caregivers recommended improvements to the academic programming. A Richmond caregiver suggested that the tutors **check the participants' homework** at the end of the day. A Mission caregiver suggested that students be required to do their homework before participating in the extracurricular activities, *"The staff could take homework more seriously. I understand that you can't just depend on Beacon, but the child should not be allowed to make the choice not to do their homework."* A Chinatown and a Sunset caregiver both recommended **dedicating more staff** to helping the children with their homework. The Sunset caregiver explained, *"It is not lack of staffing; it is more a matter of prioritization. Since the majority of the kids go to the library to study, the staff should spend most of their time there."*

Three caregivers requested more opportunities to communicate with staff regarding academics. An OMI caregiver stated that the Beacon staff could **send home report cards or progress reports** on academics and social behavior. Similarly, a Bayview parent recommended **bi-weekly check-ins** to help develop stronger relationships between staff and caregivers. A Spanish-speaking Chinatown caregiver suggested that staff **provide explanations of homework to parents** in their native language. Similarly, two other caregivers (OMI and Chinatown) recommended regularly-scheduled classes to help caregivers catch up on academics.

▪ ***Security and Safety***

Three caregivers recommended **more emphasis on security and monitoring** of student behavior. A Bayview caregiver stated, *"I would like to see classes on safety--how not to talk to strangers. People are getting killed every day, and the children don't know why."* Having found out that her son smoked marijuana at the Beacon Center; a Mission caregiver recommended that the program place more priority on monitoring the children's behavior. She recommended **special staff training** on how to recognize when children are using drugs. In addition, she stated, *"they need to talk to the students about peer pressure; let them know that it is ok to say no."* She also recommended doing away with the Center's "No snitch" policy. Suggesting further opportunities for staff training, a Western Addition caregiver stated, *"I would like the staff to pay a little more attention to how the children treat each other, because some of the African American kids discriminate against the Latinos."*

- **Access, Activities and Staffing**

Three caregivers recommended that the Beacon Centers **extend the hours and days** of their youth programming. A Chinatown caregiver asked for a summer youth program and a Bayview caregiver requested more evening and weekend programming. A Western Addition caregiver requested that the staff **extend the amount of time for recreational activities**, *"I would like the activities and games to go a little longer. They take away the jump rope and ball a half hour before the parents come to pick them up."*

Three caregivers made recommendations regarding youth extracurricular activities. While many caregivers liked the variety of activities, one Western Addition caregiver wanted **more continuity**, *"they are not consistent. At times the teachers for these special classes don't come. My daughter liked the drumming class and wanted to continue, but then it finished."* Several caregivers recommended **specific activities** including, taking care of a Beacon Center pet such as a hamster (Richmond), a class in counseling skills and anger management (OMI), dance and chess classes (Visitacion Valley); and new and improved computer games (Sunset).

Finally, three caregivers made additional recommendations concerning staff. One Chinatown caregiver requested **additional African American staffing** and another requested **Spanish/English bilingual staff**. A Sunset caregiver recommended that the **director be given a raise**. She explained, *"I don't think those types of positions pay very well."*

The foundation of any youth program, by definition, should be grounded in youth-oriented programming and activities. If the children don't come, there is no program. Nonetheless, Beacon's mission recognizes the significant benefits of caregiver and family involvement in Beacon programming. The following sections focus on evaluating current levels of caregiver and family involvement, and identifying opportunities for increasing the involvement.

B. The Current State of Family and Caregiver Involvement

This section shares the current state of family and caregiver involvement at the Beacon Center from the perspective of the Beacon Program Manager and from data entered into the CMS system by Beacon staff. RDA asked Beacon staff to identify their current methods of engaging caregivers and families. The evaluators also reviewed CMS data to determine the actual number of caregivers served and the type of activities in which they participated during the 2006-07 school year. This purpose of this section is to begin to map services and activities specifically targeted towards caregivers and families in order to better understand programmatic strengths and challenges.

Caregiver and Family Participation

RDA reviewed data from the CMS and documented the number of caregivers that attended at least one activity during the summer of 2006 and the 2006-07 school year. The data suggests some inconsistency or lack of reporting. For example, Bayview and Chinatown Beacons report serving no caregivers during this period. On the other hand, Richmond and Visitacion Valley served close to 300 caregivers and OMI/Excelsior and Sunset served well over 100. This data does not reflect caregivers who participated in outreach events or activities. The following table shows the total number of caregivers each Beacon served during the 2006-07 school year.

Table 1: Total Caregiver Participant Count by Beacon (7/1/06 – 5/31/07)

	2006 Summer Cycle	2006-2007 School Year	Total Caregiver Participant Count ³
All Beacons	121	806	927
Bayview	0	0	0
Chinatown	0	0	0
Mission	0	22	22
OMI/Excelsior	0	142	142
Richmond	0	282	282
Sunset	26	161	187
Vis Valley	95	198	293
Western Addition	0	1	1

The table below summarizes the services provided by the Beacon Initiative overall, and by each of the Beacon Centers that recorded data for caregivers. The unduplicated number of parents served ranged from 1 to 282 and the average hours of service per caregiver participant for each program ranged from 6 to 84. The eight Beacon Centers served a total of 808 caregiver participants, with an average of 33 hours per caregiver participant. Caregivers participated in a variety of activities. Nearly half the total caregiver participation hours (45 percent) were dedicated to sports and recreation. In addition, 13 percent of the total caregiver participation hours were dedicated to job retention related activities, 12 percent to arts, music and cultural activities, and 11 percent to academic support and enrichment.

Table 2 Unduplicated Caregiver Participants and Hours of Services by Service Category

Caregiver Participant	Individual Beacon						Beacon Overall		
	Mission (22)	OMI/E (142)	RVB (282)	Sunset (164)	VVBC (197)	WABC (1)	Undup Caregivers	Hours	% of Total Services
Average Hours of Service Per Caregiver Participant	63	6	12	26	84	16		33	
Total							808	26,961.19	100.00%
Academic Support & Enrichment		20%	29%	9%	4%	90%	182	3,001.81	11.13%
Arts, Music and Cultural Activities		1%	60%	15%	3%		278	3,274.57	12.15%
Case Management					1%		2	242.75	0.90%
Conflict Resolution/Mediation	10%						7	140.00	0.52%
Counseling- General							0	0.00	0.00%
Counseling- Behavior Health							0	0.00	0.00%
Early Childhood Development							2	10.50	0.04%
Educational Guidance					1%		27	177.45	0.66%
Family Support		43%			3%		98	913.00	3.39%
Health/Violence Prevention Education	10%				2%		51	462.00	1.71%
Information Referral		12%					21	103.25	0.38%
Job Development				5%	1%		100	374.92	1.39%
Job Retention					22%		80	3,677.75	13.64%

³ This number includes duplicated participants.
Caregiver Satisfaction and Participation Report

Job Readiness				10%	1%		86	586.65	2.18%
Legal Services							0	0.00	0.00%
Life Skills			5%	23%	1%		187	1,295.90	4.81%
Mentoring				.5%			14	24.37	0.09%
Sports and Recreation	80%	16%	6%	25%	58%	10%	165	12,120.08	44.95%
Supportive Services		7%		.5%			23	81.13	0.30%
Vocational Assessment		1%					2	11.25	0.04%
Vocational/Employment Training				1%			11	45.50	0.17%
Work Experience				4%			40	171.59	0.64%
Youth Leadership Development				6%			53	246.72	0.92%

Staff Identify Family Services, Activities and Resources

In addition to the CMS data on caregiver participation, staff were asked to summarize the opportunities for caregivers and families to engage in Beacon Programming. Each of the Beacon Centers provides a unique set of services and activities intended to involve families and caregivers. The following table synthesizes into three categories the range of services and activities that staff members from each of the eight Beacon Centers identified. These categories include: family-oriented events, activities and field trips; adult-oriented workshops and classes; and social services.⁴

Table 3: Beacon Family Oriented Services and Activities

	OMI	Mission	Visitation Valley	China-town	Bayview	Sunset	Western Addition	Richmond
Family Events/ Activities/ Field trips	X	X		X	X	X		X
Workshops/ Adult Classes	X	X	X	X		X		
Social Services	X		X				X	X

According to survey results six out of eight Centers organize family-oriented special events, field trips, fairs, and/or holiday activities. According to the respondents, these family activities include holiday celebrations and field trips (Bayview), showcase performances (Chinatown and Mission), fairs (Richmond), and barbeques (Sunset).

Staff from five Beacon Centers reported providing adult education classes and workshops, including, parenting and job training workshops (Visitation Valley), homework assistance workshops (Chinatown), and computer and ESL classes (Sunset and Visitation Valley). Adult-oriented recreational classes offered include photography (Sunset) and Tai-Chi (Visitation Valley).

Key Finding: Beacon Centers vary greatly in how many caregivers they serve, which activities they use to serve them, and how deeply they get served.

Staff from four Beacon Centers reported that their sites offer family- and caregiver- oriented social services, including, case managers and therapy (OMI), financial literacy and food/nutrition information (Western Addition), job placement (Visitation Valley), and mediation between family members and the school (Richmond). In addition, staff from the Richmond Beacon stated that the Center provides childcare during PTSA meetings.

⁴ Due to the nature of qualitative surveying and open-ended questioning, this table should not be interpreted as a complete list of family- and caregiver-oriented services and activities.

Communication and Family and Caregiver Involvement in Decision-Making

According to a Harvard study on out-of-school programming, successful family involvement necessitates the participation of caregivers in program governance. Out-of-school programs “will be more responsive to family needs and make programming accessible to them if families have a voice in the process.”⁵ Staff members from each Center were asked to identify the methods they use to communicate information with caregivers and ways in which they involved caregivers in decision-making.⁶ Staff of three Centers, Mission, Western Addition, and Richmond, stated that they communicated one-on-one with caregivers. Of these, all three stated that they sent letters or notes home and had face-to-face meetings with caregivers. Staff from five Centers, OMI/E, Visitacion Valley, Western Addition, Richmond and Sunset Beacon, used group communication methods: four sent flyers, weekly bulletins or newsletters home, three had group meetings and two conducted caregiver surveys.

Table 4: Beacon Communication with Caregivers

	OMI/E	Mission	Vis Valley	Sunset	Western Addition	Richmond
Individual Communication						
Face to face		X			X	X
Letters/notes		X			X	X
Phone calls		X				
Group Communication						
Flyers/newsletters	X			X	X	X
Group meetings			X	X	X	
Surveys			X			X

Several staff identified the types of information they share with caregivers: Mission Beacon provides homework check-ins and makes disciplinary phone calls; Richmond Beacon provides student and program updates as well as nutrition and service information; Visitacion Valley provides information about new services and programs—both Beacon and non-Beacon; and the Western Addition provides reports on children’s social and academic progress, and offers parent orientations.

Staff members were also asked to identify ways in which their programs provided decision-making opportunities to caregivers. Of the six respondents, only two, Sunset and Visitacion Valley Beacons, identified holding community or school site councils. Visitacion Valley and Richmond staff survey caregivers. Staff from the Richmond Beacon specifically stated that caregivers were surveyed about what activities the Beacon program should provide to the youth. The Western Addition Beacon respondent specifically stated that parents are not involved in decision-making.

Key Finding: *Few Beacon Centers have ongoing and consistent decision-making opportunities for caregivers.*

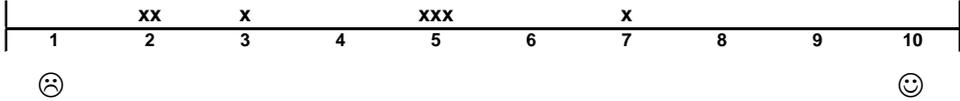
Level of Satisfaction with Family and Caregiver Involvement

When staff members were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with family and caregiver involvement, on a scale of one to ten (ten being the highest), of those who responded, the average score was approximately four. The following is a breakdown of the responses:

⁵ Casp, Margaret et. al. Beyond the Head Count: Evaluating Family Involvement in Out-of-School Time (2002).

⁶ Staff from the Bayview and Chinatown Beacon did not respond to these questions.

Figure 5: Beacon Staff Overall Satisfaction Rating for Caregiver Involvement



The Visitacion Valley staff person was most satisfied (rating of 7), while both the OMI and Western Addition staff were most dissatisfied, each providing a score of 2. It is worth noting that, according to the survey, Visitacion Valley provided some of the most comprehensive opportunities for caregiver involvement in decision-making, as well as parenting workshops and adult educational opportunities. Conversely, in the OMI and Western Addition programs, staff identified no opportunities for parental decision-making and staff from the Western Addition Center specifically stated, "Our Beacon does not currently offer programming for parents/families."

Key Finding: Many Beacon Program Managers are not satisfied with the level of family and caregiver involvement.

C. Understanding of Beacon Mission and Program Goals

This section looks first at the Beacon Program Manager’s vision of successful family engagement and then at the caregivers’ understanding of what they thought were Beacon’s goals. Increasing the capacity of Beacon to better serve caregivers and families, rather than just youth, necessitates a shift in perspective amongst the entire Beacon community, including staff, administration and family members. RDA’s objective in engaging the Beacon staff in a discussion of caregiver goals serves the dual purposes of increasing awareness amongst providers of the issue of family engagement, and helps refine institutional goals and identify practical objectives. Asking caregivers to articulate what they think are Beacon’s goals reveals the degree to which the respondents recognize Beacon’s efforts to involve caregivers and families as a central aspect of Beacon programming.

Staff Identify Their Goals for Caregiver and Family Engagement

When asked to express their vision for family and caregiver involvement in the Beacon Program, staff members identified a combination of programmatic and outcome goals. In identifying programmatic goals, staff from five out of the seven Centers that responded expressed a desire to improve services in order to achieve more family and caregiver involvement. For example, staff from four of these Centers wanted to provide more family events, three expressed a desire to offer more classes, and two hoped to offer additional resources to family members. Staff from two Beacon Centers envisioned providing more opportunities for caregiver involvement, in general. In terms of outcome goals, four Centers hoped to see more family and caregiver participation and four specifically identified that they would like to have more caregiver volunteers. Respondents from the seven programs envisioned the following:

Table 5: Staff Vision for Caregiver and Family Involvement at Beacon

Chinatown	Programmatic	The provision of life skills development and parenting workshops; access to mental health services; ESL classes; social networks; parent advocacy.
	Outcome	None identified.
Mission	Programmatic	The offering of more family events, such as a health and resource fair, and adult classes (English and computer).
	Outcome	More parent volunteers for field trips.
OMI/Excelsior	Programmatic	A greater utilization of Beacon’s space.

	Outcome	More consistent participation, including volunteers for special events; and interest in resources and classes.
Richmond	Programmatic	Staff initiation of more parental involvement; the development of a monthly or weekly newsletter; the offering of family nights; and the development of trust between staff and parents.
	Outcome	Steady, consistent and increased participation by parent volunteers; more input from parents about offerings; and caregivers ensuring student participation.
Sunset	Programmatic	None identified.
	Outcome	Parents come to events offered at middle school.
Visitacion Valley	Programmatic	None identified.
	Outcome	More youth/adult participation, including volunteering and assisting with programs.
Western Addition	Programmatic	The provision of parenting and adult educational classes, family nights with health information and games; parent orientations and meetings at the beginning of every semester, including summer, childcare for all ages during monthly parent meetings; the facilitation of back-to-school nights.
	Outcome	None identified.

Caregivers Identify the Goals/Purpose of Beacon

The success of a youth-serving program in many ways depends upon the caregiver perception of the program. Caregivers can provide critical support--but only if they are aware of the intentions and programmatic goals. For example, if caregivers are not aware of before-school programming, they will not send their children in the morning. If they are not aware that the program intends to support caregivers and families, as well as youth participants, they will not take advantage of the services and participate. Presumably, on the other hand, caregivers who can identify family-oriented programmatic goals are more likely to participate in caregiver and family programming.

Caregivers were asked what they thought was the purpose or goals of the Beacon program, and during what periods they thought the Beacon provided services. All of the caregivers interviewed knew about Beacon's after-school program. Six caregivers, from Bayview, Mission, OMI, Sunset and Visitacion Valley recognized Beacon's summer programming as well. Only one caregiver (OMI) identified that the Beacon Center was available in the morning, during the school day and in the evening: *"Beacon is open during the day for children to go and talk to peer counselors and receive anger management. The school counselor or teacher will send troubled or disruptive children to Beacon, or they can go there if they think no one cares...In the evenings sometimes they have potlucks and parent meetings."* One Richmond caregiver thought that the Beacon might be open in the morning, but was not sure.

Caregivers varied in their understanding of Beacon's mission. Half of the respondents (8) recognized that the program seeks to provide a safe environment for their children: *"to keep the children off the streets;"* and *"to keep the kids out of trouble"*. Nearly half (7) the respondents identified that the Beacon exists to help socialize their children: *"to teach the children to respect and take care of each other;"* and *"to help children develop friendships."* In addition, seven interviewees believed that the goal of Beacon is to provide fun or entertaining activities for the children, while six caregivers expressed that the purpose of the Beacon is to provide academic or educational enrichment programming.

Five of the sixteen caregivers, when asked what they thought were the goals of the Beacon program, identified family and/or caregiver support: *"to help working parents with childcare;"* *"to give parents a*

break," and "the program is for parents who can't afford childcare." Only one respondent recognized that Beacon intentionally offered family-oriented activities such as potlucks and parent meetings.

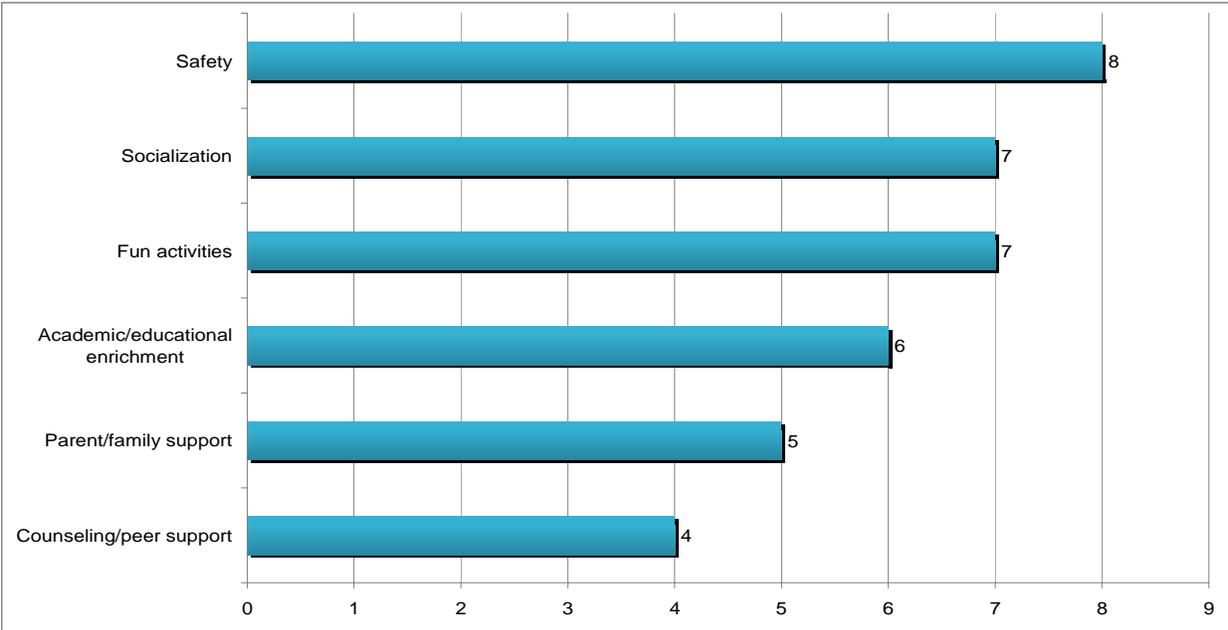
Key Finding: Only one respondent recognized that Beacon intentionally offered family-oriented activities.

Finally, four caregivers expressed that they thought one of the goals of the beacon program is to provide some form of personal development or counseling support to their children: "The purpose of

the program has to do with identity, so that the children know who they are;" "to talk about issues they can't talk about at home;" and "the program gives the youth an opportunity to express themselves. For the pre-teens it is useful because they take the time to listen to their concerns—whether it is about puberty or getting into fights. They have meetings were the children can go and talk, anger management and peer counselors."

The following chart illustrates what caregivers believe are the goals of the Beacon program:

Figure 6: The Purpose of Beacon, According to Caregivers



D. Successes, Opportunities, and Challenges in Caregiver and Family Engagement

This section evaluates Beacon’s success in meeting family needs, and examines caregiver motivations for, and barriers to, participating in Beacon, from both the perspective of caregivers and staff. With feedback from both sets of stakeholders--caregivers and staff--a more complete picture of Beacon’s family engagement opportunities, successes and challenges emerges.

Meeting Caregiver and Family Needs: Staff Perspective

Successful caregiver and family engagement entails ongoing and thoughtful communication between staff and caregivers. Staff should be aware of how they are meeting the needs of family members and what opportunities they have to meet additional caregiver and family needs. Correspondingly, caregivers should feel safe and comfortable communicating their needs and desires for themselves and their children with staff. With this in mind, RDA asked staff members from the eight Beacon Centers to identify the ways in which their programs met family and caregiver needs. The majority stated that the program helped

caregivers meet the needs of their children. For example, five respondents recognized the importance of providing childcare--especially safe, fun and engaging childcare. Of these, a Richmond and Mission Beacon staff person each recognized that their programs met caregiver needs by providing academic assistance and tutoring. For the Mission respondent, providing a snack for the children also helps meet family needs.

Aside from helping caregivers by meeting the needs of their children, three out of the eight respondents stated that their programs met the specific needs of adults. The Visitation Valley Beacon staff person stated that their Center provides a Goodwill job placement program and monthly parenting workshops. One staff person from the Richmond Beacon stated that family and caregiver social needs are being met because staff welcomed and acknowledged parent questions and concerns. *"When parents are able to express their opinions, it makes them feel more connected and aware of the program services."*

Staff from two programs (OMI and Chinatown) stated that their programs did not succeed in providing participant families enough support. The Chinatown staff person stated, *"Needs are being met minimally outside of providing a safe and engaging space for children after school and in the summer. And although this is a great need, it only scratches the surface. Parents/caregivers also need life-skills development, parenting workshops, access to mental health services, ESL classes, social networks, and parent advocacy opportunities."*

Perhaps indicating a lack of an effective communication strategy⁷, the Bayview staff person responded to the question about how caregiver needs are met through their program: *"I'm not sure at this time."*

Meeting Caregiver and Family Needs: Caregiver Perspective

Caregivers were asked how the Beacon benefited them, and which of their needs were being met through the program. There were three primary responses, all of which related to the affects of the youth programming: Ten caregivers specified that the program met their childcare needs, six felt that the program benefited them by providing academic assistance to their children, and three expressed that the program reduced their stress, particularly knowing that their children were safe. The following are a sample of caregiver responses:

- Beacon benefits me because I don't have to struggle to find out how to help my daughter with her lessons. Back in my day, we didn't learn things the same way they do now.
- The program relieves a lot of stress for me. I don't have to take time to leave work to pick my son up right after school gets out.
- When I get home, I'm so tired. I don't have time in the afternoon to play or do homework with my son.
- Beacon gives me a break.
- It gives me some extra time.
- I'm self-employed; the program allows me to work on my business uninterrupted.
- I'm a single parent with two kids. It allows me to work full-time.
- Beacon takes care of my son until I can pick him up; that's all I need.

Key Finding: *According to staff and caregivers, Beacon benefits caregivers by providing childcare, which helps relieve stress and provides much needed time. For some caregivers, Beacon also helps keep them informed about progress in school.*

⁷ or a lack of sufficient time to fill out the survey
Caregiver Satisfaction and Participation Report

One parent expressed that the program helped them to feel more connected to their child: *"Staff give me feedback on my son's improvement, so that when I go to school, I can talk to the teachers. I am aware of his behavior now, and I can deal with it at home. At school, they are overwhelmed with students and don't take as much time. The Beacon program communicates with parents every couple of days."*

Key Finding: *Only one caregiver identified a benefit of participation that did not have to do with the provision of youth services.*

Only one caregiver identified a way in which the program benefited her that did not have to do with the provision of youth services. She explained, *"I'm currently unemployed. They have given me advice about work."*

While staff were more likely to identify ways in which Beacon benefited the family aside from just youth participants, the caregivers were less inclined to recognize this benefit. This disconnect may be the result of the aforementioned lack of ongoing and consistent caregiver involvement in Beacon governance.

Motivations for Participating in Beacon: Staff Perspective

Staff and caregivers should share an understanding of what motivates caregivers and families to participate in Beacon, and what the barriers are to effective involvement. Through this understanding, both stakeholders ought to be able to identify how best to mitigate challenges to successful caregiver and family engagement. To initiate an understanding between staff and caregivers, RDA asked both to identify caregiver motivations and barriers to participate.

Staff from all eight Centers identified a wide variety of specific reasons for family and caregiver involvement in Beacon. The following table synthesizes their responses into four general categories. Six out of eight respondents mentioned that caregivers come to the program to participate in adult/family activities or services; four out of eight respondents emphasized that caregivers get involved in the program to support their children; three mentioned that caregivers participate because of the safe and friendly family atmosphere; and two respondents mentioned that caregivers come to volunteer.

Table 6: Staff Assessment of Why Caregivers Get Involved with Beacon

	OMI	Mission	Vis Valley	China-town	Bay-view	Sunset	Western Addition	Richmond
To participate in adult/family programs	X	X	X	X	X	X		
To support children		X	X	X				X
The safe/friendly atmosphere	X	X						X
To volunteer			X		X			

The Bayview staff person specifically mentioned that parents participate to *"give something back"* to the community. The Chinatown respondent stated *"parents and caregivers come to learn about ways that they can support their children to succeed in life, especially in terms of academic performance...and they come to celebrate their children's accomplishments."* According to a Mission staff person, caregivers participate because the Center provides a *"safe place to get information."* According to the Richmond staff, caregivers participate because they want to see what their children are doing and they like to see their children enjoying themselves. The OMI respondent stated that caregivers come to their Center to utilize the family wellness resources.

The Western Addition staff person stated that caregivers come to the Beacon Center only to *"pick up their children."* For these caregivers, the Beacon provides after school programs for working parents, and

additional services for children that the parents are unable to provide. From this perspective, caregivers are motivated to participate only to the extent that their children's needs are served.

Barriers to Participating in Beacon: Staff Perspective

Staff from the eight Centers cited an equally diverse set of reasons why they think families and caregivers do not participate in Beacon: all eight respondents mentioned time constraint and/or conflicts with work schedules; four respondents cited the fact and/or perception that the program offers no services for families and caregivers; two cited lack of caregiver interest; and two respondents mentioned that caregiver feel intimidated or ashamed about their lack of education.

Table 7: Staff Assessment of Why Caregivers Do Not Participate in Beacon

	OMI	Mission	Vis. Valley	China-town	Bay-view	Sunset	Western Addition	Richmond
Lack of time/ schedule conflicts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Perceived or real lack of adult/family services		X		X			X	X
Intimidation/shame				X	X			
Lack of interest	X			X				

In addition to the abovementioned constraints, several program staff identified additional reasons. For some Chinatown caregivers, according to staff, the Beacon Center is far from home. In addition the staff person cited "poor recruitment" on the part of the Beacon program. The OMI respondent stated that some caregivers don't come to the Beacon because they are only minimally involved in their children's lives. One Richmond staff person stated, "*Beacon is seen as a youth space.*" While most of the respondents specifically identified parents working long hours and having scheduling conflicts, the Sunset staff person pointed out that when parents are responsible for multiple children of different age levels--their own as well as those of other family members--they have to drive to various after-school programs to pick them up. This limits their capacity to participate fully in one particular program.

Motivations for and Barriers to Participating in Beacon: Caregivers Perspective

In order to better understand barriers to family participation and opportunities to improve services for families and caregivers, the sixteen caregivers who participated in the phone interviews were asked if they themselves participated in any of the Beacon activities or programs. It must be re-emphasized that these interviewees were not drawn from a random sample of Beacon caregivers, but rather, they were selected from amongst approximately five names given to the evaluator by staff of each Center. These caregivers more likely had regular contact with the providers, and were also more likely to be available when the evaluator attempted to call.

Of the sixteen respondents, eleven stated that they did not participate in Beacon activities. Three stated that they rarely participated, or stated that they participated only by going to children's performances or family events. Only two (Mission and OMI) expressed a more regular involvement. The Mission caregiver expressed appreciation for family programming, "*I think the Beacon is great. I like that families can get involved and that staff don't hesitate to ask for help...I go on field trips and pass out food and flyers during Beacon dinners.*" The OMI caregiver also gave high praise for the program, but stated that it was difficult to get parents involved. She described meeting with the Center's Director to brainstorm about outreaching to parents. In addition, she said, "*I drop into the school almost every other day. Usually there are only one or two parents that show up at Beacon events, but there are times when I'm the only one. I try to be a big booster of all activities.*"

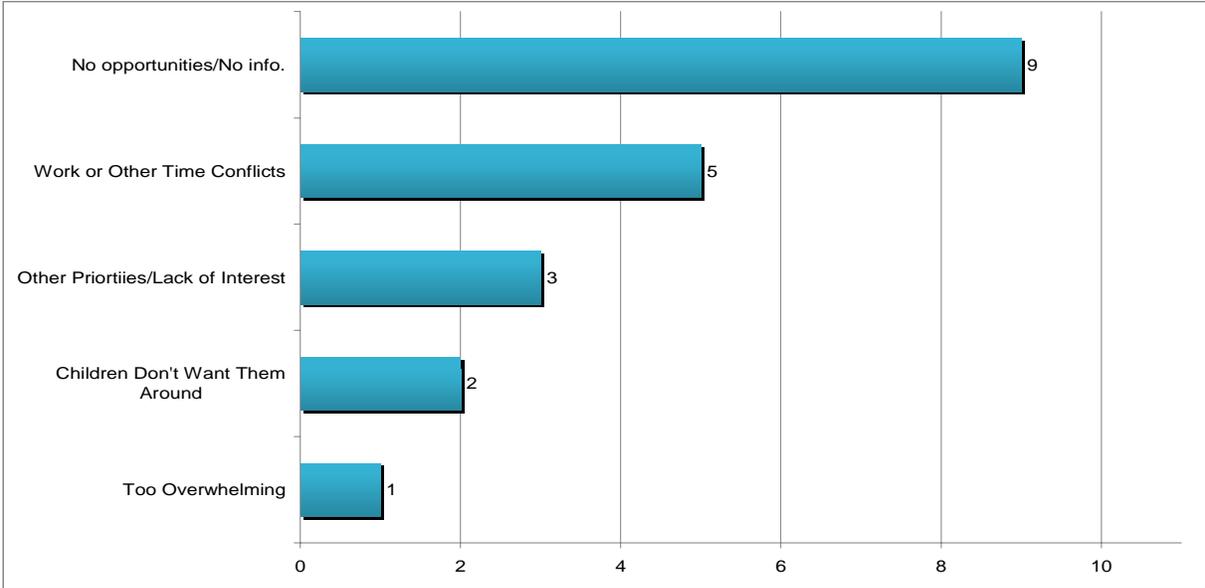
The majority of the respondents (11) stated that they did not participate in Beacon. Of these eleven, eight stated that there were no opportunities or they did not know of any opportunities to volunteer or participate in family/adult-oriented programming. One Chinatown caregiver stated, "The staff said that there are no opportunities to volunteer. All I can do is pick up my daughter." The other Chinatown caregiver stated, "They don't invite me to participate in the program. They even go on trips without the help of parents." A Richmond caregiver expressed, "I don't know anything that Beacon offers families." The other Richmond caregiver expressed similarly, "I don't have enough information about how to participate. I don't know what kind of activities I can do with them." A Sunset caregiver also did not know about opportunities to participate or volunteer. One Visitacion Valley caregiver stated that there were no programs for mothers, while another said that she was not aware of any activities for parents. An OMI caregiver stated that it never occurred to her to volunteer at Beacon.

Key Finding: About half of the staff and caregivers identified a lack of opportunity (or perceived lack of opportunity) to participate as a primary barrier to participation.

Three caregivers admitted having other priorities or lacking interest in Beacon programming. A Bayview caregiver expressed the following sentiment, "I don't participate in Beacon because it is time consuming. I have other priorities and responsibilities. It is time for myself." A Richmond caregiver stated that there were "too many people asking for volunteers." A Visitacion Valley caregiver stated that she didn't participate in Beacon programs because they didn't interest her.

Two caregivers of a twelve-year old daughter and a fourteen-year old son expressed that their lack of participation was due to the fact that their children did not want them at Beacon. One caregiver expressed, "I don't think it is helpful to have activities for parents to do with kids. My son is a teenager and he doesn't want me around." Finally, one Sunset caregiver admitted that the reason she did not participate was because the noise was too overwhelming for her. Of the sixteen caregivers interviewed by evaluators, nearly one-third (5) stated that they did not participate in Beacon because of work or other time conflicts such as caring for young children

Figure 7: Why Caregivers Say They Don't Participate



Given the fact that some caregivers stated that they could not participate in Beacon because of scheduling conflicts, RDA asked caregivers when would be the best time for them to participate in Beacon programming. Responses ranged between morning and evenings, as well as weekends. The following table shows the approximate availability of those caregivers who were interviewed for this report:

Table 8: Caregiver Respondents' Availability (Availability marked in yellow)

	7am-10am	10am-1pm	1pm-4pm	4pm-6pm	6pm+	weekends
Bayview						
Bayview						
Chinatown						
Chinatown						
Mission						
Mission						
OMI/E						
OMI/E						
Richmond						
Richmond						
Sunset						
Sunset						
Visitacion Valley						
Visitacion Valley						
Western Addition						
Western Addition						
Totals	4	5	6	10	9	4

While the majority of caregivers (10) claimed to be available in the late afternoon, it should not be assumed that this is when caregivers are available at each individual Beacon Center. A similar survey of individual Centers would allow staff to plan family-oriented activities accordingly. Additionally, this analysis did not specifically ask about weekend availability. It is probable that some additional caregivers would have stated that they were available on weekends if they had known it were an option. This evaluation of availability also suggests that opportunities for family participation should be offered at multiple times. For example, a late morning adult-only activity could potentially engage caregivers who cannot attend afternoon activities due to other parenting or work related conflicts. In any event, this type of chart should provide staff with a more comprehensive understanding of appropriate times to arrange family-oriented or adult-only activities.

E. Staff and Caregiver Recommendations

This section highlights Beacon Program Manager recommendations to further engage caregivers and families. This section then reveals caregiver suggestions for additional family- and caregiver-oriented programming and services. Caregivers' recommendations for how to increase participation at the Beacon are presented as well.

Staff Recommendations

Evaluators asked staff from the eight Beacon Centers to identify steps their program could take to achieve their goals for further engaging families and caregivers. Respondents provided a diverse range of recommendations, suggesting a wide variety opportunities to improve the program.⁸ Moreover, the

⁸ Bayview Beacon did not respond to this question. The respondent from the Sunset Beacon admitted feeling uncertainty and frustration about how staff could achieve family and caregiver participation goals. Response: "I'm not, sure anymore; we have been at it for the past eight years trying to get middle school parents involved."

diversity of responses suggests that each individual Center should develop its own unique set of programmatic goals and outcome measures, and establish its own implementation steps. Most markedly, four out of the seven respondents stated that their Center could benefit from dedicating additional staff time to family/caregiver outreach or services. Staff recommended the following additional steps for achieving more family/parental involvement:

Table 9: Staff Recommendations for Engaging Caregivers and Families

Chinatown	Dedicate staff time to developing a comprehensive parent program; connect with local resources and organizations that engage parents (i.e. Coleman, PLAN and Parents for Public Schools).
Mission	Dedicate a half-time staff position to focus on adult education, teaching computers, providing resources to families.
OMI/Excelsior	Survey parents; bring back parent liaison position; offer multilingual workshops; reward youth when parents volunteer for activities and events; make the Center more accessible to parents during the day; provide support to parents when they deal with school administration.
Richmond	Attend more PTSA and school site council meetings; offer more family days, carnivals and parent nights and survey parents on what they would like Beacon to provide during parent nights; motivate the staff, hand out flyers w/ activities that they can participate in.
Visitation Valley	Hire parents; organize community events that promote participation.
Western Addition	Survey parents/families on their needs; hold parent orientations to after school program, research (hire) subcontractors to offer programs and classes; offer classes.

What Staff Want to Know About Family and Caregiver Needs

In addition to recommendations, Beacon Program Managers were asked what they would like to know from caregivers in order to better engage them. Five out of the seven respondents stated that they would like to know what types of support, in general, Beacon could offer. Staff from two Centers would like to receive more feedback from parents and two wanted to know from caregivers what would motivate them to become more involved. The following table presents what staff would like to know from caregivers:

Table 10: What Staff Want to Know from Caregivers

Chinatown	Beyond academic support, how can we help their children? What topics should we address at parent info night? Why don't parents show up to parent nights?
Mission	What kinds of classes are caregivers interested in taking?
OMI/Excelsior	What kind of help can Beacon offer? What would it take for parents to better utilize our services?
Richmond	What types of programming or info could help meet their daily needs? How can we encourage parent/caregiver participation? When is the best time for them to participate? What problems do their children have that staff might not know about? How well do we serve their needs? General feedback and suggestions on improving program.

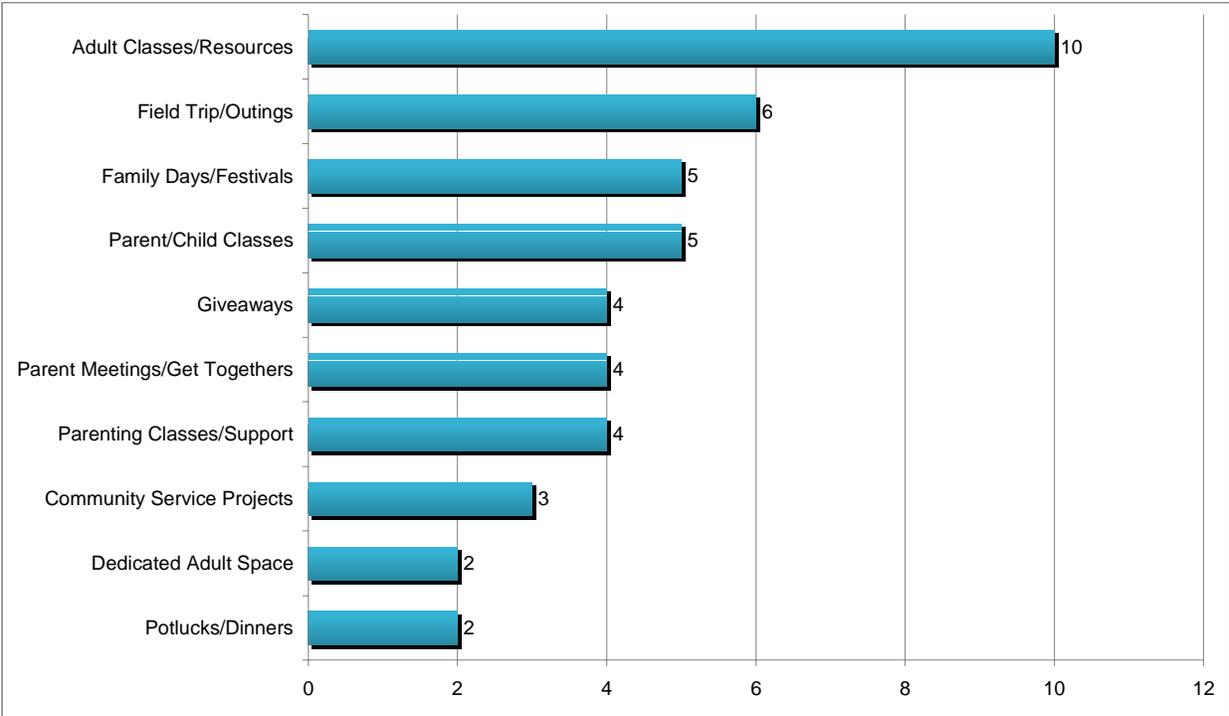
Sunset	How are we doing? How can we encourage parents to go to events? What needs do they have at home? What services are they currently using?
Visitacion Valley	What are their expectations of Beacon and how can we support them and their children?
Western Addition	How can Beacon support them in their daily lives?

Caregiver Recommendations—Caregiver and Family Programming

Caregivers were asked several questions related to their needs and interests, and what the Beacon Centers could offer them and their families. When probed, fifteen of the sixteen respondents could identify opportunities to improve family-oriented programming or activities aimed at engaging parents and children together.

Since caregiver interests and needs vary tremendously, their recommendations for family and caregiver-oriented programming likewise varied a great deal. The following chart shows the general types of activities that caregivers expressed interest in participating in:

Figure 8: Recommended Family and Adult-Oriented Activities



▪ **Adult-Education**

As the above chart demonstrates, the majority (10) caregivers expressed interest in adult-oriented classes and other resources for adults. The specific types of classes that caregivers recommended included, career building (Bayview), health, violence prevention and immigration (Chinatown), exercise (OMI, Richmond), knitting and crocheting (OMI), computer (Sunset, Visitacion Valley, Richmond), ESL (Visitacion Valley), and GED (Western Addition). Several of the caregivers related their interest in adult-oriented classes to better parenting. One Western Addition caregiver expressed her interest in

taking a GED class, *"So that when my son gets older, he won't drop out of school and say, 'But mommy, you didn't finish.'" A Sunset respondent wanted computer classes because, "my kids are more 'with it' than I am. It could help me catch up with the current generation."* A Richmond caregiver stated, *"Someone should push me to exercise. I could take a class after dropping my kids off at school. We could have a race at the end of the school year for the parents. We cheer the kids for all their activities; they could cheer us on too."*

- ***Field trips and Family-oriented Activities***

Six caregivers expressed interest in participating in outings or field trips such as camping (Bayview, Richmond), group trick-or-treating (Bayview), bowling and amusement parks (Chinatown), museums (Richmond, Western Addition), and trips to the zoo and swimming pools (Western Addition). Five caregivers expressed interest in on-site festivals or family days, and five suggested activities that parents and children could participate in jointly. For example, a Bayview caregiver recommended a hands-on sculpting class to help parents and children build their relationship; an OMI caregiver recommended sewing, music and jewelry-making classes; and a Richmond caregiver suggested cooking classes. Three caregivers recommended family potlucks or dinners, and two recommended community-service projects that parents and children could do together such as gardening around the school (Richmond), garage sale fundraisers (Chinatown), and neighborhood improvement projects (Sunset).

- ***Parenting Classes and Resources***

Four caregivers also stated that they would like Beacon to provide parenting classes and workshops, or other parenting resources such as counseling and mediation. For example, an OMI caregiver recommended that the Beacon provide mediation between students, their families and the schools, and literature on parenting. A Sunset caregiver requested classes on how to interact with teenagers, *"twelve is such a hard age. They don't want us around. It undermines my self-esteem. I would like a class on how to bridge the gap and be more involved in their lives."* A mother of a six-year old Western Addition participant stated, *"It would be wonderful if they had a parenting class. I would sign my baby's daddy up in a heartbeat. I like those types of classes that aren't out of a textbook. We could sit in a circle and talk about what kinds of problems we are having with parenting."*

Four caregivers stated that they would like the Beacon program to help provide for family needs such as food and clothing (OMI, Chinatown, Visitacion Valley), gifts, such as holiday toy giveaway (Bayview) or sports tickets (Chinatown). One Bayview respondent recommended increasing opportunities for mutual aid between caregivers. Like her son's baseball team, the Beacon Center could circulate a parent contact sheet. *"We could use it as a support network for picking up our children."*

- ***Other Dedicated Adult Space and Activities***

Four caregivers expressed interest in having parent meetings and get-togethers. For example, a Bayview caregiver wanted an opportunity to get to know other parents and a Chinatown caregiver wanted to have parent meetings to brainstorm how to improve the program. A Western Addition caregiver specifically stated that she wanted Spanish/English bilingual meetings for parents to find out what Beacon offered. Several caregivers stated that what they would really like is a dedicated parent space. A Chinatown caregiver wanted a space for confidential conversations and computer access, and an OMI caregiver expressed interest in a space to relax, *"I would like a place to just lie down a while, listen to a tape and have peace of mind. I would love a getaway place just for parents."*

Caregiver Recommendations for Increasing Parent Participation

In addition to asking how parents and families could be better served, the evaluators asked caregivers for suggestions on how to get other parents more involved. Several caregivers provided cogent explanations about why caregivers do not participate and several unique suggestions emerged. One Richmond caregiver talked about the difficulty getting some parents to even go into the Center. *"They're shy, don't speak English or they work two or three jobs. The kids sign themselves out while the parents wait in the car. They're not bad people, they're just tired. You have to get them to go inside. Maybe make tea. First you get them to come in, then you can see if they will participate."*

Another OMI caregiver recommended more extensive outreach to understand family needs and barriers to participation, *"I wouldn't have known about what Beacon offers, except that I'm assertive. I inquired. Maybe the Beacon staff could do home visits. You learn so much about what the family is going through. Some families don't even have food."* A Bayview caregiver also suggested more outreach, *"You can't expect someone to get involved if they don't know who you are."*

A number of caregivers recommended that the Beacon offer more opportunities to volunteer. One Bayview caregiver said that the Center relied on outside volunteers and that it should first ask for volunteers from amongst the parents. *"They need to announce ahead of time when they need volunteers, so we can plan ahead."* A Chinatown caregiver echoed this desire to be asked to volunteer and participate in helping to improve the program, *"They should talk directly to parents. Have a meeting and ask us how we would improve the program."* A Richmond caregiver also recommended parent meetings, *"We should have parent meetings several times per year to evaluate the program and come up with ideas on how to improve it together. Then no one can say that they didn't have time to participate."* Both a Western Addition and Sunset respondent recommended having food and drink at meetings, to encourage attendance. A Mission caregiver volunteered to make outreach calls to parents, *"You need to talk to them one-on-one. Flyers don't work because the children don't give them to their parents."* A Western Addition caregiver recommended gearing activities to reflect the capacity of parents to volunteer their time, *"I know some parents are busy, but some can participate too. We should plan activities around those who can participate. We don't have to take the children out, we can do activities right there in the school."*

Section 4: Recommendations

Based on the results of the staff surveys and caregiver interviews, RDA identified recommendations in order to help engage caregivers and families, and, in turn, promote positive social and academic outcomes amongst youth participants. The recommendations are presented as short, medium and long-term strategies that all eight Beacon Centers and the overall Initiative can implement or, at the very least, begin to implement in 2007-2008. The following recommendations are cross-the-board opportunities for improvement:

Short-Term Strategies

Short-term strategies require minimal leadership time, but do require some Beacon staff time to plan and implement. Short-term recommendations include developing and improving relationships with caregivers, initiating activities that respond to caregiver and family needs, and establishing data collection policies and procedures. Many of the following recommendations can be implemented and evaluated in Year 2007-08.

- **Build Beacon Relationships with Caregivers**

Host monthly or bi-monthly caregiver orientations: Throughout the school year, new students are constantly enrolling in the Beacon program. As new youth join, Beacon Centers orient them and

their families to program activities and rules. Centers can also introduce caregivers to the staff, the benefits of youth and caregiver participation, and opportunities for caregiver and family participation. By hosting and publicizing monthly or bi-monthly orientations, Beacon Centers may be able to reach those caregivers and families that have been enrolled in Beacon, but have not yet participated in an orientation. Snacks should always be served at these meetings and a raffle can serve as an incentive to participate.

Appoint a caregiver 'meet and greet' staff person: One caregiver expressed that in order to increase caregiver participation, the Beacon Center first needed to get caregivers to step inside the Center. Caregivers might be more inclined to enter the Center and participate, if invited to do so. During times when caregivers are dropping off or picking up their children, Beacon Centers can appoint a staff person to meet and greet caregivers and families and make them feel welcomed. This role can rotate on a monthly basis so that each staff member has an opportunity to spend time interacting with and getting to know the caregivers. The designated meet and greet person can also go outside and talk to caregivers in their cars, especially those caregivers who never step in to sign their children out, and invite them inside for tea, coffee, or snacks.

Keep caregivers informed of new data highlighting Beacon successes: A key finding from this report is that caregivers value having their children participate in the Beacon for the enrichment and academic benefits, not just for the convenience of after school care. This implies that caregivers may be interested in learning about the overall positive outcomes that the Beacons contribute to. Other caregivers of non-participating youth may also be interested in this information, and the data may motivate these caregivers to enroll their children. The Beacon Centers can communicate positive evaluation findings to caregivers through the school, by posting key findings on bulletin boards, or creating a brochure or flyer.

Train all staff members in how to engage with caregivers: Many caregivers expressed their appreciation for Beacon Center staff and their ability to work and engage with their children. However, it is not clear how well current Beacon staff engage caregivers and how much support they receive in this area. RDA recommends that the Beacon Centers invest some time to train staff by recruiting speakers from local parent groups, the school parent coordinator (if they have one), and other Beacon personnel with more experience in this area.

- **Implement Activities Motivated by Caregiver Needs**

Plan activities around successful existing program: Reviewing the CMS data for 2006-07, RDA learned that most Beacon Centers have engaged caregivers in some type of programming. RDA recommends using these existing activities as opportunities to build additional programming for caregivers. For example, given that a great deal of the total caregiver participation hours were dedicated to sports and recreation, Beacon Centers could try to recruit caregivers for other sports or recreation activities or initiate a different type of activity when the sports and recreation activity ends.

Implement Back-to-School Classes for Caregivers: Many caregivers expressed a desire to learn how to help their children academically. Using Chinatown Beacon Center as a potential model, all Beacon Centers could host "back-to-school" classes for caregivers so that they can feel better equipped to support their children. This will serve a dual purpose of supporting caregivers and their children, as well as building relationships between Beacon and caregivers.

Host stress reduction activities for caregivers in a dedicated space at the Beacon Center: Many caregivers shared that they value the Beacon for the time that it gives them to decompress and unwind. To entice some of these caregivers to participate, Beacon Centers could host weekly, bi-

weekly, or monthly stress reduction activities such as yoga, massage, stress reduction workshops, time management workshops, etc. Beacon staff could recruit local organizations from the communities to lead these different activities.

- **Collect Data to Help Assess Caregiver Participation**

Set guidelines for CMS Data Collection: In order to have an accurate picture of how many caregivers are being served, Beacon Centers must use the CMS system to capture this data. RDA recommends that SFBI determine guidelines for when to capture this information and how much detail is required, and communicates these guidelines to Beacon staff.

Medium-Term Strategies

Medium term recommendations require more comprehensive planning and budgetary prioritization. Medium term programmatic changes include re-evaluation of staff priorities and a Beacon wide administrative commitment to strategic planning and evaluation of Beacon governance structure. The following recommendations can be initiated in Year 2007-08 with early outcomes measured at the end of the school year.

- **Modify Staffing Structure**

Dedicate a full- or part-time position to family outreach and the development of caregiver and family participation at each Beacon: This outreach and volunteer coordinator can help offset the costs associated by their position by recruiting effective caregiver volunteers. In addition, successful volunteer recruitment can help diversify the adult presence within the Beacon Centers. It is unlikely that any Beacon Center can hire a sufficiently diverse staff to represent all Beacon families, however, a dedicated volunteer coordinator can recruit diverse and bilingual caregiver volunteers.

Establish a small fund to stipend exemplary caregiver volunteers: These caregivers can act as liaisons between the staff and other caregivers, can assist with outreach, booster the Beacon program, and act as role models for caregiver involvement. In addition, these caregivers can help staff understand caregiver concerns, motivations and the needs of families so that future outreach efforts are more effective.

Dedicate a portion of its activity funds to hiring caregivers to teach month-long or quarterly skills-building classes: Many caregivers have a hobby or activity they enjoy sharing with youth, and as the caregiver interviews suggest the children enjoy these diverse, enrichment workshops. The MIS data suggests that caregivers participate predominantly in sports, arts and cultural activities. Beacon can leverage additional caregiver engagement and enthusiasm by capitalizing on what they are already participating in.

- **Consider caregivers and families in Beacon planning and governance**

Provide real, institutionalized and consistent opportunities for caregivers to participate in programmatic decision-making: The Beacon programs with the widest array of opportunities for caregiver participation in decision-making were given the highest family-participation ratings by staff. Opportunities for caregiver decision-making include: annual caregiver evaluations or surveys of Beacon programs; individual Beacon Center governing councils with caregiver, staff and administrative membership; and parent decision-making meetings and report backs.

Develop individual family needs assessments that include one-on-one interviews with willing caregivers and surveys: Survey caregivers about availability, and structure activities around these

time slots. Based on an emerging understanding of each Centers' family needs, develop a set of outcome and programmatic goals and strategies designed to achieve these goals.

Institutionalize quarterly or bi-annual family participation meetings between staff and administrators: Each of the Beacon Centers need to participate in quarterly family participation meetings in order to identify what works and what does not work for each Center. Brainstorm strategies for mitigating the most challenging aspects of including caregivers and families in family-oriented activities, adult enrichment programming, decision-making and volunteering.

Long-Term Strategies

Long-term family and caregiver involvement strategies require significant time, resources and strategic planning. RDA recommends only one long-term programmatic change for the coming school 2007-08 school year. By focusing on one long-term strategy, the Beacon Initiative can successfully accomplish the following goal of more fully connecting Beacon Centers with host schools.

- **Build relationship between Beacon Centers and Schools**

RDA perceives relationship-building as a long-term strategy because linking and developing trust between disparate programs is a slow moving and ongoing endeavor. Attempting to shortcut the necessary steps can result in mistrust and misunderstandings, and ultimately require more time and resources to rebuild relationships. Nonetheless, successful youth programs are more likely to develop a relaxed and trusting relationship between staff and caregivers. The Beacon Centers can leverage their good parent/staff and youth/staff relationships in order to encourage teachers and school administrators to include Beacon staff in mediation, disciplinary meetings, counseling and even academic initiatives. Developing trust and establishing appropriate roles takes time. RDA recommends that each school site jointly hire a part-time school/Beacon liaison that can help nurture these relationships and take advantage of what each institution has to offer. Ultimately, it is in the best interest of each child for there to be a comprehensive and interwoven set of institutions, such as the school, youth program and family, looking after their best interests and helping them develop.



Appendix

Relevant Data from Other Sources

Interview with Host School Administrator: Between May and June 2007, as a part of the Minimum Compliance Standards Audit, the Beacon Initiative Coordinator conducted interviews with host school administrators and to gain more information about Beacon/school partnerships, general strengths, and challenges. Seven principals gave individual interviews. During the interview process, principals were asked to explain Beacon's work with families/parents/guardians. Of the five that responded to this question, two revealed that the Beacon Centers at their school site were not currently filling the role of working with families adequately. The other three principals were able to identify a few ways in which Beacons were working with families. Examples include hosting workshops for parents, parent orientations, community events, and a middle school transition program.

Focus Groups with Students: As part of the Youth Development Institute/Fund for the City of New York Project^[1], during May 2007, the Beacon Initiative contracted with another consulting agency to conduct 16 focus groups with students across all eight Beacons. The purpose of the study was to understand why middle-school aged youth do or do not come to the Beacon program, which factors might deepen their engagement, and youth's recommendations for improvement. Sixteen focus groups were conducted with a total of 95 youth. This study found that, "family expectations often superseded friends' influence to participate in the Beacon or not because youth often said they were '**FORCED**' to participate by parents. Many youth participated regardless of whether their friends were involved, but they said they appreciated Beacon Centers where it was easy to meet and make new friends through the centers." This finding implies that families serve as a key factor to participation, even more than peers.