



Evaluation of the Implementation of Linkages to Learning: Status of the Initiative in MCPS

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Executive Summary

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) conducted an evaluation of the Linkages to Learning program in Montgomery County Public Schools. Linkages to Learning (LTL) is a collaborative initiative among the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS), Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), and local non-profit agencies. Through a collaborative process, the program delivers school-based services that address the social, economic, health, and emotional issues that interfere with the academic success of a child. Linkages to Learning supports the foundational commitment underlying the strategic planning framework in MCPS, in particular, the strategic priority that “community members and MCPS will actively partner to ensure that all students are prepared for their futures by supporting schools, advocating for resources, creating opportunities for experiential learning, and supporting the core values of the strategic planning framework” (MCPS, 2015).

Currently, LTL is located in 29 MCPS schools—23 elementary and 6 middle schools. The program focuses its services, for students and families impacted by poverty, by addressing three broad areas of need:

- **Student well-being.** Services include assessment for social-emotional, behavioral concerns; classroom observation and consultation; child/family/group psychotherapy; psychosocial skills development groups; primary care and treatment at LTL school-based health centers.
- **Family services.** Services include family needs assessment; family case management, linking to community resources; parenting groups; parent education.
- **Community education and development.** Services include community needs assessment; out-of-school-time activities; English for Students of Other Languages (ESOL) classes; adult education; communitywide events.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The evaluation of Linkages to Learning focused on both process (implementation) and outcomes of the initiative. The overall goals of the evaluation were: to determine the extent to which LTL is being implemented as designed; to assess the progress made by families and students who received services at LTL sites; and to examine levels of social-emotional outcomes between schools with LTL and schools without LTL. This section of the evaluation report addresses the question—**What is the status of implementation of the three components of the Linkages to Learning initiative?**

The implementation of the LTL initiative in MCPS was examined over three years—2011–2012, 2012–2013, and 2013–2014. Specifically, the following sub-questions were addressed:

- 1a. What were the characteristics of students in schools with LTL sites?
- 1b. What were the numbers and demographic characteristics of students receiving mental health and family case management services in LTL sites?
- 1c. What services were provided for students and families who were receiving LTL mental health and/or family case management services?

- 1d. What community education and development activities were provided for all students and families at LTL sites? To what extent did volunteers, partners, and donors participate in LTL?
- 1e. What were the stakeholders' (school staff, LTL staff, and parents) experiences and perceptions of program implementation?

Methodology

The status of the Linkages to Learning program in MCPS was examined with a descriptive, non-experimental design. Twenty-eight of the Linkages to Learning schools were included in the study; one elementary school was not included because it was established in 2015. A variety of quantitative and qualitative data were compiled and analyzed.

LTL program records, MCPS student records, and LTL program documents were used to describe the services and participants in the LTL program. Data from LTL case management and mental health program records were used to describe the extent of services and activities being offered at LTL sites to address student well-being and family services. LTL program records were used to describe the community education and development activities provided for all students and families in the schools with LTL sites. In addition, data collected via locally developed surveys and focus groups described the perceptions and experiences of program stakeholders. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the findings for this evaluation report. Data were summarized across sites and by school level of sites (i.e., elementary and middle schools).

Summary of Findings

Findings are summarized for each of the specific evaluation questions.

What were the characteristics of students in schools with LTL sites? Compared with MCPS overall, LTL schools have higher percentages of students receiving FARMS at both the elementary and middle school levels and a higher percentage of students enrolled in ESOL classes at the elementary level, indicating that LTL is serving schools most impacted by poverty as intended. Demographic data indicate higher percentages of Hispanic/Latino students and lower percentages of white students and other racial subgroups in schools with LTL at both elementary and middle school levels.

What were the numbers and demographic characteristics of students receiving mental health and family case management services in LTL sites? During each of the three years included in the report, more than 3,000 students and family members received mental health or family case management services through LTL, directly or indirectly, with a high of 3,400 students and family members receiving services in 2013–2014. Since the target population of LTL is families most impacted by poverty, the large majority of students and family members who received LTL services were eligible for FARMS. The race group representing the largest percentage of students and families receiving mental health and family case management services in all three years was Hispanic/Latino, consistent with the demographic characteristics of the student populations in the schools with LTL.

What services were provided for students and families who were receiving LTL mental health and/or family case management services? The service that was provided to the largest number of clients was consultation with the LTL case manager. During 2013–2014 more than 1,500 clients received consultation; these services were provided nearly 12,000 times. Other services provided to large numbers of clients included: recreation activities; food, nutrition, and financial assistance; and consultation with school staff. In the area of student well-being, the service provided to the largest number of students was individual psychotherapy. In 2013–2014, nearly 11,000 psychotherapy sessions were provided for 648 students.

What community education and development activities were provided for all students and families at LTL sites? To what extent did volunteers, partners, and donors participate in LTL? A variety of community education and development activities were provided for the whole school community, including adult education programs; parent support and networking groups; health and nutrition programs; recreation programs and on-site camps in the summer and during school breaks; tutoring and homework clubs; and community service and volunteer activities. In addition, volunteers, partners, and donors played a significant role in the work of LTL. More than 900 volunteers, including parents, middle, and high school students, contributed over 9,000 hours to LTL activities. LTL partnerships—including business groups, charitable organizations, religiously affiliated groups—contributed nearly 2,800 volunteer hours and donations of weekend food sacks, for a total value of \$268,146; other donations from charitable organizations and individuals totaled \$388,053.

What were stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the implementation of LTL? School and LTL staff and parents who received services through LTL provided very positive feedback about the implementation of the LTL at their sites.

In focus group discussions, community school coordinators identified factors facilitating success of LTL: communication, relationships, and teamwork with school staff; meeting the specific needs of the school community; committed LTL staff; and partnerships with the community. Challenges identified by the community school coordinators were: communicating the role of LTL to school staff; limited access to physical space and building services; limited program resources; and insufficient coordination of activities between LTL and MCPS.

The service mentioned as most needed by the highest percentages of school and LTL site staff from both elementary and middle schools was mental health services. Also reported as most needed by very high percentages of staff were tutoring services, social skills groups, and food assistance.

High percentages of staff agreed that LTL staff and school staff have opportunities for communication on a regular basis, and that LTL collaboration with school staff and with community partners is effective. Over 90% of the respondents agreed that teachers view the work of LTL as supporting their work, and that the program provides opportunities for positive interactions between families and school. Though still showing a majority of staff agreeing, lower percentages (under 70%) agreed that: support from MCPS Central Office is available to address issues; the process used to conduct a community needs assessment each year is helpful in

determining critical needs; they received clear training about LTL responsibilities and expectations; and they are satisfied with the communication with MCPS Central Office about the program.

School administrators and counselors were unanimous in their agreement that LTL helps families meet their basic needs, and 90% or more also agreed that LTL is an important support for students' physical and social and emotional well-being, and that LTL helps families become more involved in their children's education. About two thirds of the administrators and counselors agreed that LTL has increased students' school attendance.

Parents were extremely positive in their responses at both elementary and middle school LTL sites. Large majorities of parents expressed their satisfaction with a range of program components. The services named most helpful by the largest number of parents were mental health services for their child and for the family. Other services reported by parents as most helpful were food and clothing assistance, and parent groups and adult education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on examination of implementation of LTL and feedback from school staff, LTL staff, and parents.

- Continue to share best practices among LTL sites and explore additional ways that these ideas can be systematically made available to LTL staff.
- Revise the needs assessment survey to ensure that the items will elicit information that is useful for decision making, and establish a structure to ensure the needs assessment process is standardized across LTL sites and more comprehensive in scope. Explore ways to reach out to all families (not only those served by LTL) to participate in the school and community needs assessment.
- Work with student support staff and administrators to clarify the Collaborative Problem-Solving process as it relates to LTL referral decisions and follow-up. Where are the obstacles; are some families more open to referral than others?
- Identify ways to increase and improve communication between MCPS central office and LTL site staff.
- Develop an electronic data base system that will link records of parent and child. Consider using an identification system that can identify members of the same family in LTL program records. This will facilitate better estimation of the impact of LTL services by complete accounting of students who were the indirect beneficiaries of the LTL services provided to their families.
- Begin discussion for establishing procedures that will facilitate LTL community school coordinators' access to MCPS student-level information, so that LTL can better serve students.

Evaluation of the Implementation of Linkages to Learning: Status of the Initiative in MCPS

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The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) conducted an evaluation of the Linkages to Learning program in Montgomery County Public Schools. Linkages to Learning (LTL) is a collaborative initiative among the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS), Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), and local non-profit agencies. The goal of the program is to address the social, economic, health, and emotional issues that interfere with the academic success of a child (Montgomery County Government, 2015). As such, the program provides accessible services to at-risk children and their families to improve adjustment to and performance in school, home, and community. Prevention and early intervention services include health, mental health, social services, and educational support (including academic tutoring for students, mentoring, and adult education classes, such as ESOL and literacy) to improve the well-being of children and their families. Linkages to Learning supports the foundational commitment underlying the strategic planning framework in MCPS, in particular, the strategic priority that “community members and MCPS will actively partner to ensure that all students are prepared for their futures by supporting schools, advocating for resources, creating opportunities for experiential learning, and supporting the core values of the strategic planning framework.” (MCPS, 2015).

Background

In 1991, the Montgomery County Council passed a resolution urging the County Executive and MCPS to create a network of school-based social, education, and mental health services aimed at supporting at-risk children and their families. The resolution cited a range of obstacles to success for children and families, including: deep poverty; poor healthcare; lack of English; emotional issues; and unfamiliarity with American mental health and social service systems. In 1993, the first Linkages to Learning sites were opened in three elementary schools, and in 1999, in response to a County Council request for further expansion, Linkages to Learning adopted its first Six-Year Strategic Plan. One of the core principles of the plan addressed the criteria for opening new Linkages sites. Rather than open sites based on perceived need, the Linkages Advisory Group decided to adopt a measure of documented need—the percentage of low-income children attending a school, as measured by the number of its students eligible for the federal government’s Free and Reduced Price Meals Service (FARMS). LTL set a goal of opening sites in each school with a FARMS rate of 60% or above. Today, ranking of proposed LTL sites is based primarily on the school’s “Ever FARMS” rate, which takes into account children who participated in FARMS in the past (but may not be currently) as well as current. Selection of future sites also considers available funding and the school’s readiness to devote space to LTL staff.

Structure of Linkages to Learning

Currently, there are 29 LTL sites in the Gaithersburg, Wheaton, and Rockville clusters, the Northeast Consortium, and the Downcounty Consortium. Most LTL sites are in elementary schools (23); the remaining sites are in middle schools (6). Schools with an LTL site are listed in Appendix A, Figure A-1.

The LTL program employs a collaborative model designed to bring together service providers within Montgomery County to deliver services that are integrated, accessible, needs-driven, and community-based (Weast, 2005). Within this model are the Linkages Resource Team (LRT) and the Linkages Advisory Group. The LRT provides administrative oversight of the initiative with representatives from MCPS, Montgomery County DHHS, and a coalition of the partner agencies. The Linkages to Learning Advisory Group consists of one executive-level representative from each of the Linkages partner agencies; at least one business representative; at least one LTL school administrator; one representative from the Local Management Board; one Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations representative; and at least one family representative. This group serves in an advisory and advocacy role for the Linkages initiative. Their responsibilities include review, feedback, and approval of the Linkages to Learning Strategic Plan, general guidance and/or specific consultation on key issues, sharing best practices, providing links to resources, and promoting Linkages to Learning's mission within the larger community. A depiction of the collaborative structure of the LTL program is shown in Appendix A, Figure A-1.

Linkages to Learning Staff

The program is staffed by a multidisciplinary team at each of the school sites. The staffing model includes one full-time community school coordinator, one full-time family case manager, and one full-time child and family therapist to work at each school in conjunction with school staff. LTL school-based health centers also have a part-time community services aide. Not all schools, however, have three full-time staff members; recent budget cuts have left middle schools with only part-time community school coordinators. A summary of the staffing configurations at elementary and middle school LTL sites in 2013–2014 is shown in Appendix A, Table A-1.

The LTL community school coordinator is responsible for the overall operation of the program at the school. The community school coordinator ensures that appropriate services are provided to students and families; the community school coordinator also forms partnerships with community organizations, conducts the community needs assessments, and organizes activities for students and families.

The LTL family case manager works with families to help them become more able to provide for their basic needs. The family case manager conducts family needs assessments, links families to needed resources and benefits, helps families navigate the school system and become more engaged with their child's education, and helps families access support groups, parenting groups, ESOL classes, and adult education.

The LTL child and family therapist works directly with students who are referred for individual therapy or participation in group therapeutic activities, such as self-esteem groups, psychosocial

skills groups, or other groups based on student needs. Students are referred to the therapist either directly by the school counselor or by the collaborative problem solving team at each school site.

Nine of the elementary schools with LTL have school-based health centers (see Figure A-1), where nurse practitioners and physicians work with the full-time school nurse and school health aide to provide primary health care services, including sick care, immunizations, and physical examinations.

Goals of Linkages to Learning

With the goals of improving student well-being and success at school, home, and in the community (MCDHHS, 2015), LTL provides accessible services to at-risk children and their families. Prevention and early intervention services include health and behavioral health services, social services, and community education/development (including after-school and family programming and adult education classes, such as ESOL and literacy). Parents also serve as leaders in LTL, working as partners with program staff to develop strengths-based, culturally appropriate solutions to the challenges confronting their children, schools, and communities.

To achieve its goals, LTL focuses its services on addressing three broad areas of need:

- **Student well-being.** Services include assessment for social-emotional, behavioral concerns; consultation with teachers; child/family/group psychotherapy; psychosocial skills development groups; primary care and treatment at LTL school-based health centers.
- **Family services.** Services include family needs assessment; family case management, linking to community resources; parenting groups; parent education.
- **Community education and development.** Services include community needs assessment; out-of-school-time activities; ESOL classes; adult education; communitywide events.

The three service areas are represented in the LTL logic model (Figure 1). The implementation of the activities detailed under each service area is expected to contribute to the realization of a series of outputs, and short- and long-term outcomes.

The activities and services shown in the outputs/results column of the logic model are the focus of this report. Within each of the service areas, Linkages to Learning provides a range of activities and services for students and their families. A description of services is shown in Appendix B, Table B1.

Logic Model of Linkages to Learning



Figure 1. Logic model for Linkages to Learning (Office of Shared Accountability, MCPS Linkages to Learning Resource Team and Casey Foundation, model developed 2013)

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The evaluation of Linkages to Learning focused on both process (implementation) and outcomes of the initiative. The goals of the evaluation were: to determine the extent to which LTL is being implemented as designed; to assess the progress of families and students who received services from LTL; and to examine levels of social-emotional outcomes between schools with LTL and schools without LTL. The evaluation of the LTL program was guided by four evaluation questions, developed in collaboration with LTL stakeholders:

1. What is the status of implementation of the three components of the Linkages to Learning initiative?
2. To what extent do students who have received Linkages to Learning services show improvement on measures of well-being over the course of LTL participation?
3. After participating in Linkages to Learning services, to what extent do families show increased capacity to a) meet basic needs and b) support student's education at home and at school?
4. Is there a difference in the levels of student engagement and parent involvement with their child's education between schools with Linkages to Learning and schools without LTL with comparable demographic characteristics?

This section of the evaluation report addresses the first evaluation question—**What is the status of implementation of the three components of the Linkages to Learning initiative?** Separate report sections address the second, third, and fourth evaluation questions.

The implementation of the LTL initiative in MCPS was examined over three years—2011–2012, 2012–2013, and 2013–2014. Specifically, this section addressed the following questions within the examination of the first evaluation question:

- 1a. What were the characteristics of students in schools with LTL sites?
- 1b. What were the numbers and demographic characteristics of students receiving mental health and family case management services in LTL sites?
- 1c. What services were provided for students and families who were receiving LTL mental health and/or family case management services?
- 1d. What community education and development activities were provided for all students and families at LTL sites? To what extent did volunteers, partners, and donors participate in LTL?
- 1e. What were the stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of program implementation?

Review of Select Literature on School-Linked Services

Recent interest in the community schools model for supporting children in public schools highlights the recognition that children bring a range of needs with them to the classroom. Schools alone cannot meet all those needs, but they can play a central role in coordinating supports for children and their families to combat social and economic conditions that may impact children's success (Castrechini and London, 2012; Duncan, 2013; ICF International, 2010). A recent report

from the Coalition for Community Schools states that the function of community schools is to “purposefully integrate academic, health, and social services; youth and community development; and community engagement—drawing in school partners with resources to improve student and adult learning, strengthen families, and promote healthy communities” (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009a). Community schools provide a setting where educators and community partners can collaborate to offer a wide range of opportunities and supports to children, youth, families and communities (Jacobson, R., & Blank, M.J., 2015). Individually, community schools vary in their structure and configuration of services because, by definition, each school is set up to meet the needs of its particular community. However, community schools share the same overarching goal—to remove the barriers to success and support conditions that will promote learning.

Typically, a community school involves a partnership among the school, local government, community-based organizations, and other private and public agencies to provide services to students and their families. Services may include those focusing on healthy youth development, the physical and mental health of the student and family, family support, family and community engagement, and community development (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009b).

Harris and Wilkes (2013) identified seven key elements of successful partnerships for learning, contending that “Creating meaningful linkages and collaborations across partners is crucial to implementing community schools and other models for learning that provide students with comprehensive supports.” Their key elements are:

1. Shared vision of learning
2. Shared leadership and governance
3. Complementary partnerships
4. Effective communication
5. Regular and consistent sharing of information about youth progress
6. Family engagement
7. Collaborative staffing models

In a collaborative initiative such as Linkages to Learning, creating and sustaining successful partnerships is vital, so assessing those efforts is an important part of evaluating the program’s implementation.

Process evaluation. Before examining effects related to a program or its specific services, the elements of the program and the way the program is functioning must be well-understood. This type of information, often included in a process or formative evaluation, includes questions about the number and types of students and families the program is serving, the services provided, and the extent to which the program is implemented as intended. A clear description of these elements of the program will strengthen an interpretation of findings of program effects and also provide program administrators with important information about the ongoing functioning of the program (Shah et al., 2009). Accordingly, the aim of this report is to describe the current operation of the LTL initiative.

Methodology

Evaluation Design

In this report, the status of implementation of the Linkages to Learning initiative in MCPS was examined through a nonexperimental design. Multiple methods were used to describe the status of services and activities that are offered at LTL sites to address student well-being and family services.

Study Schools

Twenty-eight Linkages to Learning schools were included in the study. One elementary school was not included because it was established in January of 2015.

Data Sources

A variety of quantitative and qualitative data were used. LTL program records, MCPS student records, LTL program documents, and locally developed survey measures and focus group protocol were used for this component of the study.

LTL program records of case management and mental health services provided data for students and families who received LTL case management and mental health services during the 2011–2012, 2012–2013, and 2013–2014 school years. A staff member from LTL provided password-protected files containing LTL service records for analysis in OSA.

LTL records of community education and development activities provided data for participation at school-wide LTL community education and development activities during the 2013–2014 school year. LTL data also were used to report the number of volunteer hours, partnership involvement, and donations.

MCPS student records provided demographic data for students in LTL schools and students who participated in LTL activities and services, as well as for students across MCPS schools.

LTL community school coordinator focus groups were conducted by OSA program evaluation staff to elicit information about: LTL program procedures and processes; challenges; perceptions of adequacy of services and resources; interactions and coordination with community partners and school staff; and perceived effectiveness of program outreach to targeted students and families. Findings from the focus groups informed the study by identifying important program issues; focus group data also facilitated the development of staff surveys. The focus group protocol was developed by OSA evaluators (Appendix C). For convenience, the focus groups were conducted during the monthly districtwide meeting of community school coordinators in March 2014. Nineteen site coordinators participated in three focus groups.

An **LTL community school coordinator questionnaire** was administered in spring 2014 to elicit information about program procedures and processes at each school site. Data collected included: descriptions of services provided; staff on site; status of implementation of services; referral

processes. The questionnaire was developed by OSA evaluators in collaboration with the LTL resource team (Appendix C). Community school coordinators from 28 sites completed the online questionnaire (a 100% response rate).

LTL and school staff surveys were administered in spring 2014 to gather information from school and program staff at LTL sites. School administrators, school counselors, community school coordinators, school nurses and health technicians, and psychologists and pupil personnel workers assigned to the LTL schools were asked to complete the online survey. Surveys included questions about: procedures and policies; communication among stakeholders; program structure and development. The survey was developed by OSA evaluators in collaboration with the LTL resource team (Appendix C). A total of 105 staff from 28 LTL sites responded to the survey, an overall response rate of 67%.

The **LTL parent survey** assessed parent's perceptions of LTL services and activities, parent's report of student's engagement in school, and parent's engagement in student's education. Parents who received any LTL services during the 2013–2014 school year were asked to complete a survey. The surveys were collected by LTL site staff from April through June 2014. Surveys were administered by paper and pencil, were not identified by name, and were available in English and in Spanish. The estimated response rate was 23%.

Data Analysis Procedures

The specific questions associated with this section of the evaluation, which focused on the implementation of LTL, were addressed using the following analytic procedures:

- 1a. *What were the characteristics of students in schools with LTL sites?* The percentages of students with various demographic characteristics (race/ethnicity, ESOL status, receipt of FARMS, and receipt of special education services) in schools with LTL were reported. For context, the demographic characteristics of students in all MCPS elementary and middle schools also were reported.
- 1b. *What were the numbers and demographic characteristics of students receiving mental health and family case management services in LTL sites?* Numbers of students who received or whose parents received LTL mental health or family case management services, and their demographic characteristics, were reported for three years—2011–2012, 2012–2013, and 2013–2014. Since all members of the family are expected to benefit from family services such as case management or counseling, students whose family members received services were counted as service recipients, even if they (the students) did not directly participate in services or activities.
- 1c. *What services were provided to students and families who were receiving LTL mental health and/or family case management services?* Numbers of students or family members receiving specific services, as well as the total counts of types of specific services provided, were reported for three years—2011–2012, 2012–2013, and 2013–2014. Changes in types of services provided or numbers of participants receiving a specified service were examined descriptively over the three years. Information for students and families who received mental health or case management services was summarized for each of the three years separately, so there is overlap in the numbers of students served. If students (or their family members)

participated in LTL during more than one year, they were counted in each of the years they received services, so students counted across the three years are not unique and unduplicated.

1d. The data on extent of participation in community education and development activities offered at LTL sites were reported only for 2013–2014. The number of volunteer hours, partnership participation, and donations also were reported for 2013–2014.

1e. What were the stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of program implementation? Descriptive analyses (percentage agreement) were reported for quantitative data obtained from parent and staff surveys. Content analyses of parent and staff responses to open-ended survey questions and community school coordinators' responses in focus groups were conducted. Themes emerging from these qualitative data were identified and described, with examples to illustrate the findings.

Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology

Strengths

Examining the status of implementation of the Linkages to Learning program comprised an evaluation of how LTL is implemented in 28 different locations. Multisite programs pose an interesting evaluation problem, because as each site addresses its unique needs, not all of the same procedures or services will be implemented. In many ways, each LTL site must develop its own approach to decreasing barriers to academic achievement. To address this evaluation challenge, the researchers collaborated with program personnel to develop a logic model to clarify the key components of the LTL program. Likewise, to ensure that an evaluation plan was directly related to the goals and contexts of LTL, program staff were involved in the development of the plan and study measures. Because LTL is a multisite and multi-faceted program, a robust mixed method approach was used to gather a variety of quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of audiences and settings. Finally, the study design elicited information that increased the understanding of contextual factors that contribute to LTL program effectiveness. The ongoing collaboration between the evaluators and program personnel helped to refine the evaluation and increase the relevance of the findings, as well as support program improvements.

Limitations

The limitations associated with this study are related to issues in data collection; specifically, some survey response rates are low, and records of students and parents were not linked in the program files.

While the overall response rate to the LTL and school staff surveys was acceptable (67%), the different respondent groups varied in their response rates. Principals had the highest rate of response (85%), but school counselors responded at only 40%. Since counselors work closely with LTL staff in the school sites, the low response rate from this group is a limitation in the stakeholder survey data, indicating a possible lack of generalizability across the LTL sites. Response to the parent survey was estimated to be 23%, a low rate of return. The parent surveys were completed anonymously, and survey administration may have varied across sites, so the precise response rate and representativeness of the parent survey respondents is not known. The findings from the parent survey, therefore, cannot be generalized to all of the LTL schools, but must be interpreted with caution.

The data collected by the program did not link electronically (through common identifiers) the records of parents who received services at LTL sites with records of their children. Without linking parent and student, a complete accounting of students who were the indirect beneficiaries of the LTL services provided to their families could not be accomplished. In an effort to make such an analysis possible, and in preparation for further analyses examining the progress of these students, data files were sent back to family case managers at each LTL site to manually look up records for students and parents and provide identifiers to match them. This was a time-consuming effort, and not all cases were matched (about 80% of the family records were matched with students).

Results

Q1a. What were the characteristics of students in schools with Linkages to Learning?

During the 2013–2014 school year, Linkages to Learning was operating in 28 schools in MCPS—22 elementary schools and 6 middle schools. Tables 1a and 1b show the demographic makeup of the 28 LTL schools (elementary and middle schools, respectively). To provide context, the demographic makeup of all 132 elementary and 38 middle schools throughout MCPS is also shown¹.

**Table 1a
Demographic Characteristics of Students in 22 Elementary Schools With
Linkages to Learning and of Students in All MCPS Elementary Schools**

Demographic Characteristics	22 LTL Elem. Schools	22 LTL Elem. Schools—Current FARMs receipt only	135 MCPS Elem. Schools
	All students 2013–2014	FARMs receipt only 2013–2014	All students 2013–2014
	<i>N</i> =14,398	<i>N</i> =13,176	<i>N</i> =79,882
Race/Ethnicity	%	%	%
Black or African American	22.2	23.0	21.2
Asian	7.5	5.4	14.0
Hispanic/Latino	58.6	67.9	29.4
White	8.9	2.2	30.2
Two or More Races	2.5	1.3	4.9
Gender			
Female	48.2	48.6	48.2
Male	51.8	51.4	51.8
Service Provided			
ESOL (current year)	43.1	45.9	21.4
Special Educ. (current year)	12.0	12.7	12.5
FARMs (current year)	72.5	100.0	39.3
FARMs (current or previous)	78.4	100.0	44.2

¹ The demographic data for all MCPS schools includes the LTL schools.

The largest difference between the LTL schools and MCPS overall is in the FARMS rate; in elementary LTL schools, the percentage of students receiving FARMS is 33 percentage points higher than for MCPS overall, and in LTL middle schools, the difference is 18 percentage points. The difference is not unexpected, since the selection of LTL schools is based on the percentage of students who are receiving FARMS services or received services in the past. Other notable differences between the demographic makeup of the LTL schools and MCPS overall are: a higher percentage of elementary students receiving ESOL instruction (43% in LTL schools vs. 21% in MCPS), a higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino students (59% in LTL elementary schools vs. 29% in MCPS; 42% in LTL middle schools vs. 26% in MCPS), and a lower percentage of White students (9% in LTL elementary schools vs. 30% in MCPS; 19% in LTL middle schools vs. 33% in MCPS).

The target population for LTL services is students who are impacted by poverty. To examine the characteristics of students who are the target of the program's focused efforts, Tables 1a and 1b also present the demographic makeup of students receiving FARMS services in schools with Linkages to Learning in 2013–2014.

Table 1b
**Demographic Characteristics of Students in 6 Middle Schools With
Linkages to Learning and of Students in All MCPS Middle Schools**

Demographic Characteristics	6 LTL Middle Schools	6 LTL Middle Schools Current FARMS receipt only	26 MCPS Middle Schools
	All students 2013–2014	2013–2014	All students 2013–2014
	N=5,366	N=2,740	N=34,088
Race/Ethnicity	%	%	%
Black or African American	23.8	27.8	21.5
American Indian	<5.0	<5.0	<5.0
Asian	10.7	6.1	14.8
Hispanic/Latino	42.3	61.2	25.9
White	18.6	2.8	32.8
Two or More Races	<5.0	<5.0	<5.0
Gender			
Female	51.4	49.2	49.4
Male	48.6	50.8	50.6
Service Provided			
ESOL (current year)	9.8	16.4	6.7
Special Educ. (current year)	12.5	15.7	11.0
FARMS (current year)	51.1	100.0	33.2
FARMS (current or previous)	63.3	100.0	42.9

Q1b. What were the numbers of students and family members who received LTL mental health and family case management services? What were the demographic characteristics of the students who received, or whose family members received, mental health and family case management services at LTL sites?

The number of students and family members who received LTL mental health and family case management services during the three school years between 2011–2012 and 2013–2014 are shown in Table 2. Students and families receiving services at elementary and middle school LTL sites are included. The total number of participants has remained steady over three years, with over 3,300 mental health and family case management clients served each year.

Table 2
Number of Students and Family Members Who Received
Mental Health and Family Case Management Services in
Linkages to Learning During Three School Years

	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014
Students	2,291	2,250	2,374
Family Members	1,015	1,025	1,026
Total	3,306	3,275	3,400

Note. Table includes students and family members who received direct services, such as case management and therapy, as well as students who were indirect beneficiaries (i.e., children of family members who received services).

Tables 3a and 3b show the demographic characteristics of students who received LTL mental health and family case management services over the three school years, 2011–2012, 2012–2013, and 2013–2014. It should be remembered that the total numbers of participants reported in Tables 3a and 3b represent individual students who received direct services, as well as students in families who received services from Linkages to Learning. Since all members of the family are expected to benefit from family services such as case management or counseling, students whose family members received services were counted as service recipients also, even if they (the students) did not directly participate in services or activities.

In addition, participation is summarized for each of the three years separately. If students (or their family members) participated in LTL during more than one year, they are counted in each of the years they received services, so students counted across the three years are not unique and unduplicated. The year totals represent the number of students served during each year.

Overall, the students who received services from LTL sites during the 2011–2012, 2012–2013, and 2013–2014 school years were demographically similar from year to year (Tables 3a and 3b). Since LTL has more sites in elementary schools than in middle schools, about two thirds of the students served were in elementary school. Across the three years, the majority of elementary and

middle school students who received services at LTL sites were Hispanic/Latino, consistent with the demographic makeup of the target population in the schools with LTL. ESOL participation among the students receiving services from LTL was higher among elementary students than among middle school students—a difference that is expected since the majority of students receiving ESOL services in MCPS are in elementary schools.

The target population for services provided at LTL sites is students or families who are most impacted by poverty. The target populations in the LTL elementary and middle schools are shown in Tables 1a and 1b in the middle column (current FARMS receipt). Thus, if the students who received services from LTL were representative of the targeted population in the LTL schools, then the characteristics of those who received services would be similar to the characteristics of the target population in Tables 1a and 1b. As such, the demographic characteristics of the students who received LTL services were within eight percentage points of the targeted population in the LTL schools (students receiving FARMS), except for elementary students who received special education services—this group was over-represented among LTL service recipients compared with their percentage in the school population (23% of students who received LTL services vs. 12% in targeted elementary population). Among other demographic groups, the percentage of students who received LTL services who were Hispanic/Latino was slightly higher than the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students in the targeted populations of students receiving FARMS services in schools with LTL (77% compared with 70% in elementary schools; 68% compared with 61% in middle schools). The percentage of students who received LTL services who were Black or African American was slightly lower than the percentage of Black or African American students among the targeted population of students receiving FARMS services in schools with LTL (16% compared with 22% in elementary, and 20% compared with 28% in middle schools). The percentages of ESOL students among students who received LTL services were similar to the percentages of ESOL students among all students who received FARMS services at LTL schools, both at the elementary and middle school levels.

Table 3a
Number and Percent of Elementary Students Who Received
Mental Health and/or Case Management Services From Linkages to Learning
by Demographic Characteristics and School Year

Characteristics	2011–2012		2012–2013		2013–2014	
	N=1,314	%	N=1,328	%	N=1,382	%
Grade Level						
Pre-K	47	3.6	31	2.3	23	1.7
Kindergarten	164	12.5	126	9.5	121	8.8
1	181	13.8	191	14.4	170	12.3
2	204	15.5	206	15.5	258	18.7
3	245	18.6	237	17.8	244	17.7
4	229	17.4	259	19.5	276	20.0
5	244	18.6	277	20.9	292	21.0
Race/Ethnicity						
Black or African American	217	16.5	218	16.4	215	15.6
Asian	29	2.2	28	2.1	20	1.4
Hispanic/Latino	989	75.3	993	74.8	1,058	76.6
White	50	3.8	61	4.6	58	4.2
Two or More Races	29	2.2	27	2.0	28	2.0
Gender						
Female	605	46.0	627	47.2	643	46.5
Male	709	54.0	701	52.8	739	53.5
Service Provided						
ESOL (current)	735	55.9	721	54.3	706	51.1
Spec. Educ. (current)	285	21.7	274	20.6	316	22.9
FARMS (current)	1,209	92.0	1,194	89.9	1,252	90.6

Note. Only students with MCPS IDs are included in the table, since demographic information was obtained from student records.

Table 3b
**Number and Percent of Middle School Students Who Received
Mental Health and/or Case Management Services From Linkages to Learning
by Demographic Characteristics and School Year**

Characteristics	2011–2012		2012–2013		2013–2014	
	N=517	%	N=755	%	N=779	%
Grade Level						
6	203	39.3	268	35.5	262	33.6
7	159	30.8	223	29.5	238	30.6
8	128	24.8	184	24.4	195	25.0
(9+) ^a	27	5.2	80	10.6	84	10.8
Race/Ethnicity						
Black or African American	102	19.7	152	20.1	157	20.2
American Indian	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
Asian	8	1.5	28	3.7	18	2.3
Hispanic/Latino	354	68.5	495	65.6	533	68.4
White	38	7.4	57	7.5	49	6.3
Two or More Races	14	2.7	23	3.0	21	2.7
Gender						
Female	238	46.0	383	50.7	404	51.9
Male	279	54.0	372	49.3	375	48.1
Service Provided						
ESOL (current)	64	12.4	104	13.8	124	15.9
Special Educ. (current)	121	23.4	173	22.9	168	21.6
FARMS (current)	444	85.9	597	79.1	635	81.5

Note. Only students with MCPS IDs are included in the table, since demographic information was obtained from student records.

^a Grade 9 or above students may be siblings or still in case records after participating in LTL in middle school.

Q1c. What services were provided to students and families who were receiving LTL mental health and/or family case management services?

Services provided at Linkages to Learning sites address a wide range of student and family needs. Table 4 shows specific services in the areas of student well-being and family services and the number of case management and mental health clients who received them during each of the three school years. Students and families receiving LTL mental health and/or family case management services also participated in the schoolwide activities in the area of community education and development; their participation in those activities is reflected in the total numbers participating in the schoolwide activities, reported in Table 6.

The number (*N*) of clients represents the number of individuals served during each of the school years reported—both students and family members are counted. Only one parent per family is counted, and children in the family who attended other schools are not counted. In addition, the

total count of services is shown, since many of the services are provided multiple times per client. Services are listed within the three broad areas of need that LTL addresses: student well-being; family services; and community education and development. The list of services is not exhaustive, and does not include “indirect” services, such as team meetings and writing reports.

Services are summarized for the three years separately. If a client—student or family member—participated in LTL during more than one year, they are counted in each of the years they received services. The counts of services reflect services provided during the reporting year. In LTL program records, an encounter with LTL may be counted in more than one service category; for example, a family may receive both family consultation and a medical referral during one visit, and both services would be recorded. In many cases, an encounter may be recorded as a family consultation and also may include linking the family to resources and benefits, such as assistance obtaining clothing, furniture, food, housing; assistance with legal/immigration; and medical/dental referrals.

Student well-being. In the area of student well-being, the service that was provided the most was individual psychotherapy (Table 4). In 2013–2014, nearly 11,000 psychotherapy sessions were provided for 648 students. Other services that were provided for large numbers of students (over 600 for each in 2013–2014) were: recreation activities; consultation with school staff; and consultation with other agencies.

Family services. The service that was provided to the largest number of clients was consultation with student or family member. During 2013–2014 more than 1,500 clients were the direct recipients² of family consultation; these services were provided nearly 12,000 times (Table 4). Other services provided to large numbers of clients (600 students or family members in 2013–2014) were food, nutrition, and financial assistance; and holiday assistance.

Trends. Over the three years, an increase in the number of students or family members receiving case management or mental health services, as well as the number of service sessions provided, was observed in several service categories, including: consultation with school staff; psychosocial skills development groups; family needs assessment; consultation with family; legal, eligibility, immigration, and employment assistance; and out-of-school time activities.

Among students and families enrolled in family case management, the number receiving a few of the services decreased over the three years. A smaller number of family therapy services was provided in 2014, and fewer students received medical, dental, or optical assistance of referrals.

² Students in the family accrue benefits from family consultation and other case management services, but the number of “direct recipients” reflects only the family member working directly with the case manager.

Table 4
Number of Clients Receiving Linkages to Learning Direct Services
and Total Count of Recorded Service Sessions Provided During Three School Years

Service	2011–2012 N=2,069		2012–2013 N=2,227		2013–2014 N=2,216	
	Number of clients	Total Count of recorded service sessions	Number of clients	Total Count of recorded service sessions	Number of clients	Total Count of recorded service sessions
Student well-being						
Consultation with school staff and classroom observation	679	1,800	783	2,968	817	3,009
Consultation with other agency, CPS, MH professional	635	1,610	672	1,869	689	2,006
Individual psychotherapy	609	9,318	644	10,769	648	10,912
Psychosocial skills development groups, therapeutic recreation	444	2,847	463	3,664	463	3,485
Out-of-school-time activities (rec. activities, including summer camp, after-school)	679	4,134	846	6,355	836	5,711
Medical/dental/optical assistance or referral	371	948	321	827	292	711
Tutoring, mentoring	87	692	90	1,315	63	697
Family services						
Family needs assessment	421	484	460	599	566	791
Consultation with family/client	1,402	8,621	1,566	11,912	1,588	11,946
Family or group psychotherapy	649	3,961	617	3,323	541	2,494
Food, nutrition, financial assistance	707	6,827	853	6,830	817	7,072
Clothing, furniture, housing	536	2,016	565	2,011	504	1,530
Help with school system, school supplies, child care	533	1,119	547	1,495	526	1,390
Parenting groups, adult support groups	361	2,587	384	2,273	368	2,273
Legal, eligibility, immigration, employment assistance	496	1,696	545	2,207	576	1,946
Holiday assistance	619	1,847	646	1,890	634	1,726
Translation	273	692	266	750	281	765
Transportation	93	260	136	363	170	468

Number of services per client. Many of the services provided by LTL are ongoing, so clients may participate numerous times. For example, a student may participate in psychosocial skill groups for a series of weeks; another student may meet with a therapist weekly for a period of time; a family may meet with a family case manager as needed for several months or longer; a parent may attend ESOL classes weekly for a semester or longer. In addition, many clients receive more than

one type of service during their involvement in LTL. Table 5 shows median³ number of different services provided for each client and median number of service sessions recorded for each client.

Table 5
Median Number of Different Types of Services and Total Service Sessions
Provided to Case Management and Mental Health Clients Through Linkages to Learning
Services During Three School Years

	2011–2012 N=2,069	2012–2013 N=2,227	2013–2014 N=2,216			
	Median	Min, Max	Median	Min, Max	Median	Min, Max
Number of different types of services, per client	4	1, 25	5	1, 25	5	1, 26
Total number of service sessions, per client	17	1, 260	20	1, 176	22	1, 210

Note. N represents number of clients who had record of at least one direct service encounter.

The number of different types of services remained steady over the three years, with a range of 1 to 25 or 26, and a median of 4 or 5. The total number of sessions per client, however, grew over the three years, from a median of 17 sessions in 2011–2012 to 22 sessions in 2013–2014.

Q1d. What community education and development activities were provided for all students and families at LTL sites? To what extent did volunteers, partners, and donors participate in LTL?

Community education and development activities. Community education and development activities that were provided for the whole school community included: adult education programs; parent support and networking groups; health and nutrition programs; recreation programs and on-site camps in the summer and during school breaks; tutoring and homework clubs; and community service and volunteer activities. Table 6 shows the activities that were provided at the LTL school sites during 2013–2014. The number sites offering each activity type, the number of sessions, and total attendance through all sessions is shown.

³ The median, or midpoint of the values, was used to describe the number of different services and total number of service sessions because it is less influenced by the extremes (a few clients with unusually high numbers of services) compared to the mean.

Table 6
Community Education and Development Activities Provided by LTL During 2013–2014 School Year

Program Type	Examples of Activities	Number of Sites Offering (25 reporting*)	Total Number of Sessions Offered by All Sites	Total Attendance, all Sessions
Adult education	MCPS resources, tax workshop, GED, legal presentation	11	141	293
Adult ESOL classes	Level I, Level II, Basic, intermediate conversation	16	675	2,525
Employment/ skill development	leadership, computer classes, literacy, civic education, craftsmanship/microenterprise	7	138	489
Parent education and support	parent coffees, parenting skills, empowerment, positive discipline	22	400	2,975
Health and wellness	walking club, zumba, asthma management, yoga, exercise class	16	238	1,558
Nutrition	nutrition classes, smart sacks, healthy habits, weekend backpack program	15	184	2,883
Holiday events	Holiday shop, Thanksgiving distribution, Valentine's workshop	9	16	1,202
Recreational programs	Craft club, ballet class, soccer club, art club, Fantastic Fridays, yoga with a twist	21	451	4,716
Tutoring, Homework clubs	Homework club, reading corner, mentoring, siblings club	16	575	1,690
Field trips	Butler's Orchard, Air and Space Museum, movie, Nutcracker ballet, Great Falls	8	25	413
Community service/ volunteer	Neighbors 4 Neighbors, book festival, coat drive, holiday cards workshop	10	38	416
On-site camps	Therapeutic camp, chess family camp, art camp, basketball camp, nature camp	14	144	517
Other	Focus groups, LTL open house, book festival, sponsored hair cuts	19	109	1,804

* Records were provided by 25 sites; two were combined programs (two sites serve two elementary schools), and one middle school had limited programming for 2013–2014.

Note. Activities listed for each program type are examples, but are not all-inclusive. For some activities, the attendance counts were duplicative (participants were counted each time they attended an activity).

Each LTL site develops activities according to the needs of the school community. Across all the LTL sites, the activities that were offered in greatest numbers for parents were adult ESOL classes and parent education and support. A total of 675 adult ESOL classes were offered, with a total attendance 2,525, and 400 parent education and support sessions were offered, with a total attendance of 2,975. The activities that were provided in greatest numbers for students were

recreational programs and tutoring/homework clubs. A total of 451 recreation sessions were offered, with a total attendance of 4,716, and a total of 575 tutoring/homework sessions were offered, with a total attendance of 1,690.

Participation in Volunteer Opportunities. During the 2013–2014 school year, parents, middle and high school students, and community member volunteers all contributed to the work of LTL. Volunteers gave their time in a range of LTL activities, including tutoring, helping with after-school activities, packing Smart Sacks, leading adult education workshops, and many others. Table 6 summarizes the numbers and hours of volunteers during 2013–2014.

Table 7
Number of LTL Volunteers and Hours Worked, 2013–2014

Type of volunteer	Number	Number of hours
Parent	144	741
Middle school student	297	2,647
High school student	272	2,709
College student or intern	64	1,862
Professional/Training	47	289
Other adult	131	897
<i>Total</i>	955	9,145

A total of 955 individuals volunteered with LTL in 2013–2014, and they contributed 9,145 hours. More than half of the volunteers were middle and high school students. Parents also volunteered in large numbers and averaged more than five volunteer hours each.

LTL partnerships. LTL also has developed partnerships with a range of groups in the community whose work has benefitted the initiative in myriad ways. Partners provided workshops for parents on issues such as health, parenting, and insurance; provided mentoring and tutoring; taught exercise and dance classes; provided dental care; and provided other services and activities for students and their families at LTL sites. An additional important activity of the partnerships is the donation and preparation of bags of healthy food for students to take home on the weekends (Smart Sacks). The types of partnerships, the number of volunteer hours provided by these groups, and the value of donated hours and Smart Sacks during 2013–2014 are shown in Table 8.

Table 8
Types of LTL Partnership Groups, Hours, and Food Sacks, 2013–2014

Type of partner group	Number of hours	Value of goods: Weekend Smart Sacks
Business organizations	192	
Church, temple, religious affiliate	639	
City, county, government agency	172	
College or university	103	
Charitable organizations	704	
MCPS (schools, staff)	34	
Other	952	
		\$171,313
<i>Total number of partner hours</i>	2,796	
<i>Total value of donations (includes hours + food sacks)</i>		\$268,146.00

Volunteers from partner groups donated nearly 2,800 hours and provided weekend Smart Sacks valued at over \$171,000, for a total value of \$268,146.

Donations to LTL. In addition to the hours and weekend Smart Sacks provided by the partner groups, individuals and community organizations also make donations of needed items to LTL. Community members, churches, temples, school groups, and many other charitable organizations made more than 14,000 donations to LTL during the 2013–2014 school year. The types of donations and total value are shown in Table 9.

Table 9
Number and Types of LTL Donations, 2013–2014

Type of donation	Number	Value*
Adult clothing (number of bags)	260	\$8,650
Children's clothing (number of bags)	698	\$16,515
Coats	404	\$8,695
Food donation (number of bags)	6,364	\$109,720
Books	757	\$9,671
School supplies	1,152	\$43,220
Household items (bags) and furniture	97	\$6,795
Toys (number of bags)	280	\$5,470
Cash and gift cards	672	\$24,809
Holiday gifts	2,100	\$76,987
Thanksgiving basket	959	\$55,370
Other donation	700	\$22,151
<i>Total number of donations</i>	14,443	
<i>Total value of donations</i>		\$388,053

* Value estimated by LTL, using guidelines from Goodwill Industries.

Q1e. What were LTL stakeholders' (LTL staff, school staff, parents) experiences and perceptions of the implementation of LTL?

Experiences of Community School Coordinators: Focus Groups. All LTL community school coordinators were invited to participate in a focus group. Nineteen community school coordinators participated in focus groups in March 2014 and were divided into three groups of six or seven participants. OSA evaluators developed the protocol and led the focus groups. The focus groups were held at the same location and immediately followed a districtwide community school coordinator meeting.

Broad topics of the focus groups included discussions of factors that facilitate successful implementation of LTL, concerns and challenges, and program outreach. The themes that emerged from the groups within each of these topic areas are shown in Tables 10a, 10b, and 10c along with examples of the discussion points in each.

Factors facilitating success. In the first part of the focus group discussion, participants were asked to talk about factors that facilitate success in LTL. The themes that emerged in each of the groups were: effective communication between school staff and LTL; good relationships and teamwork with school staff; meeting specific needs in the school community; committed LTL staff; and robust partnerships with community. Table 10a provides a summary of discussion points within each theme.

Table 10a
Summary of Discussions in Community School Coordinator Focus Groups:
Factors Facilitating Success in LTL

Theme	Discussion points
Effective communication between school staff and LTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LTL staff were included in monthly meetings with school staff• LTL staff provides reports at school meetings• Lines of communication are open with school• Opportunities were available to share information about LTL• Met with school staff during pre-service to describe program and referral procedure• Lunch with grade team so teachers understand LTL
Relationships among school staff and LTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good relationships with school staff, school administration• Regular schedule of team meetings—school staff and LTL• Made effort not to duplicate efforts of school or PTA• LTL was trained to use ConnectEd; schools broadcast LTL messages through ConnectEd

Table 10a (continued)

Theme	Discussion points
LTL meets specific needs of students and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching the population needing service • Providing after-school programs • Food assistance, Smart Sacks • Language assistance, ESOL classes
Committed staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of staff, continuity • Support from supervisors and other community school coordinators
Partnerships with community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work effectively with agencies • Good support from community • Partnered with UMd, MC to provide workshops

Challenges for LTL. The second area of discussion in the focus groups was concerns and challenges. The four themes that emerged were: limited understanding of the role of LTL by school staff; inadequate physical space and access to building services; insufficient program resources; lack of consistent processes; and insufficient coordination with MCPS to address needs at the school. Table 10b summarizes the issues that were discussed within these themes.

Table 10b
Summary of Discussions in Community School Coordinator Focus Groups:
Concerns and Challenges

Theme	Discussion points
Need for school staff to understand the role of LTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for staff to understand who gets served, what services • Value of LTL is not always clear to school staff • Sometimes viewed as crisis manager • Often used as translation service
Physical space and services challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some feel like they are begging for space • It is difficult to compete with other activities for use of school buildings after school hours • Some space arrangements are difficult (e.g., at one site must walk through health center) • Sharing office space does not allow privacy for students or families during therapy sessions or needs assessment/case management • LTL staff don't know who to call for building services

Table 10b (continued)

Theme	Discussion points
Need for more resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more staff, especially for mental health services • Middle school programs are under-staffed • LTL staff turnover is high. Many coordinators were new this year. Staff turnover makes it difficult to provide a consistent message and build relationships with school and families. • LTL staff turnover perceived to be due to low pay, stressful job • LTL staff morale: “Feel like a Band-Aid on a big, leaking drum” • There is high demand for after-school activities and recreational programs but LTL cannot afford them
Challenges with LTL administration and structure/MCPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a standardized process; LTL sites handle many matters in their own way • Not enough coordination with MCPS; e.g., backpacks, Neediest Kids program • Would help to have access to student school records, attendance

Program outreach. The discussion on program outreach focused on effective strategies and challenges faced by LTL staff to outreach or participation. Table 10c summarizes the points expressed in each of the themes.

Table 10c
Summary of Discussions in Community School Coordinator Focus Groups:
Program Outreach

Theme	Discussion points
Effective strategies for outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/Community bulletin board • Share information during PTA meetings, kindergarten orientation, Back to School night and other events • School web site • Work with School-Based Health Center • Work with Parent Community Coordinator • Parents come for ESOL classes, then come for services • Principal puts LTL events on master calendar • Weekly newsletter • Open houses • Information booth at schoolwide activities • Flyers • Morning coffees • ConnectEd • Health Fairs • Some workshops are for the whole community • Activities best attended when they include recreation, food, childcare

Table 10c (continued)

Theme	Discussion points
Challenges to outreach or participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural: Some ethnic groups attach stigma to services, especially mental health services; language barriers are challenging; male parents are hard to reach • Mobility of the family can be an obstacle, many of our families move to other schools and no longer have LTL • Some families are difficult to contact • Outreach can be tricky at some sites because program is full or limited space

Experiences of Community School Coordinators: Responses to site-level questionnaire. A questionnaire eliciting information about the implementation of LTL was sent to the community school coordinator at 28 sites. Community school coordinators were encouraged to consult with other LTL staff at their site in order to provide the most complete information on the questionnaire. Community school coordinators from all 28 sites completed the questionnaire (reflecting a 100% response rate). Responses to the questionnaire are shown in Tables 11, 12, 13, and 14.

Referrals for services. Table 11 shows the various ways that students and their families were referred to LTL. Community school coordinators reported each of the referral sources used at their school.

Table 11
Referral Sources at LTL Sites Reported by Community School Coordinators

Cases are referred by:	Elementary Schools (N=22)		Middle Schools (N=6)	
	n	%	n	%
School counselor	22	100.0	6	100.0
Family self-referral	20	90.9	5	83.3
Teacher	14	63.6	2	33.3
Collaborative Problem-Solving Process	10	45.5	2	33.3
Family Case Manager initiates	10	45.5	0	0.0
Other agencies	2	9.1	1	16.7
School nurse	2	9.1	1	16.7
School administrator	2	9.1	0	0.0
Child & Family Therapist	2	9.1	0	0.0
Student self-referrals	0	0.0	1	16.7

For all schools—both elementary and middle—school counselors were the most commonly reported referral source. In addition to school counselor referrals, other referral sources reported by large numbers of community school coordinators were: family self-referrals and teacher referrals (more prevalent in elementary). In 45% of the elementary sites, some referrals were initiated by the Family Case Manager; this procedure was not reported as a referral source in middle schools.

Program procedures and processes. In response to the questionnaire, community school coordinators from each of the LTL school sites reported on the implementation status of a range of LTL processes and procedures. Table 12 shows the reported status of a number of LTL procedures and processes related to services and work with stakeholders.

Questionnaire responses indicated that in the elementary schools, the majority of processes are fully in place; only one process was reported by less than 80% of the elementary respondents to be fully in place—“Access to a professional learning community to discuss ideas with LTL staff at other school sites”—65% of elementary community school coordinators reported the process fully in place. In response to the other processes, reports from only a few elementary sites (four or fewer) indicated that a process was not fully in place.

In the six middle schools, several processes were not fully in place at more than half of the sites. The following processes were reported by only two sites to be fully in place: examining data to determine community needs; linking school and community partners; providing regular feedback to parents; and access to professional learning community with other LTL sites.

Table 12
**Status of Program Procedures and Processes Reported by LTL Community School
 Coordinators**

	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%	Initiated or partially in place		Not yet in place	
				<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Clear procedures to identify students needing LTL services.							
Elementary Schools	20	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Timely provision of recommended interventions and services for students.							
Elementary Schools	20	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Timely provision of recommended interventions and services for families.							
Elementary Schools	20	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Defined process for assigning students for psychotherapy sessions offered by LTL.							
Elementary Schools	20	19	95.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Clear process for determining when to exit a student from psychotherapy sessions offered by LTL.							
Elementary Schools*	19	17	89.5	2	10.5	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	5	83.3	1	16.7	0	0.0
Defined process for assigning a student for psychosocial skill development groups offered by LTL.							
Elementary Schools*	19	17	89.5	2	10.5	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	5	83.3	1	16.7	0	0.0
Clear process for determining when to remove a student from psychosocial skill development groups.							
Elementary Schools*	19	17	89.5	2	10.5	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	4	66.7	1	16.7	1	16.7
Process for examining data to determine predominant community needs.							
Elementary Schools	20	19	95.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	4	66.7	0	0.0
Process for linking school and community partners to match services with identified needs.							
Elementary Schools	20	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	3	50.0	1	16.7
Process for providing feedback to parents about services and progress of students are making.							
Elementary Schools	20	16	80.0	4	20.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	4	66.7	0	0.0
Process for articulating LTL expectations and responsibilities at your school.							
Elementary Schools	20	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	3	50.0	2	33.3	1	16.7
Access to a professional learning community to discuss ideas with LTL staff at other school sites.							
Elementary Schools	20	13	65.0	6	30.0	1	5.0
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	3	50.0	1	16.7

Note. Two elementary sites that were new in 2013–2014 are not included in the table.

* One respondent left item unanswered.

Implementation of program services and activities. Table 13 shows the status of implementation of LTL program services and activities as reported by the community school coordinators. The services and activities are listed in the table with the highest percentage ratings of successful implementation listed first.

The process that was rated with the highest level of successful implementation by both elementary and middle school community school coordinators was “Providing basic resources to families”; 84% of elementary community school coordinators reported this process was successfully implemented without challenges, and 50% of the middle school community school coordinators reported that level of success. Other processes rated successful without challenges by more than half the elementary community school coordinators were: consulting with teachers (65%), and working with community agencies to address the needs of families (55%) and to address the needs of students (50%). Processes with relatively low reports of successful implementation without challenges pertained to out-of-school-time activities and following up with families to support follow through with services.

Table 13
Status of Implementation of LTL Program Services and Activities
Reported by Community School Coordinators

	Successful implementation with no challenges		Successful implementation with some challenges		Difficult implementation ..need to address challenges		Not implemented or not started		
	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Providing basic resources to families.									
Elementary Schools*	19	16	84.2	3	15.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	3	50.0	3	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Consulting with teachers about needs for referred students.									
Elementary Schools	20	13	65.0	7	35.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	1	16.7	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Working with community agencies to address the needs of families.									
Elementary Schools	20	11	55.0	7	35.0	2	10.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Working with community agencies to address the needs of students.									
Elementary Schools	20	10	50.0	8	40.0	2	10.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	5	83.3	0	0.0	1	16.7
Scheduling psychosocial skills development groups.									
Elementary Schools	20	9	45.0	7	35.0	3	15.0	1	5.0
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	3	50.0	1	16.7	0	0.0
Process to refer families for community resources.									
Elementary Schools	20	9	45.0	11	55.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Providing ESOL classes for parents.									
Elementary Schools	20	8	40.0	6	30.0	1	5.0	5	25.0
Middle Schools	6	1	16.7	3	50.0	1	16.7	1	16.7

Table 13 (continued)

	Successful implementation with no challenges		Successful implementation with some challenges		Difficult implementation... need to address challenges		Not implemented or not started		
	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Process to monitor family's utilization of community resources.									
Elementary Schools	20	8	40.0	11	55.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Providing out-of-school-time activities for students.									
Elementary Schools	20	8	40.0	11	55.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	4	66.7	1	16.7	1	16.7
Increasing student participation in MCPS out-of-school-time activities.									
Elementary Schools	20	8	40.0	10	50.0	2	10.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Working with parents to ensure that students receive and follow through with recommended services.									
Elementary Schools	20	8	40.0	11	55.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	5	83.3	1	16.7	0	0.0
Creating/establishing needed out-of-school activities at school site.									
Elementary Schools	20	7	35.0	13	65.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	5	83.3	1	16.7	0	0.0
Strategies for increasing the ability of families to navigate and access resources available in the community.									
Elementary Schools	20	7	35.0	12	60.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note. Two elementary sites that were new in 2013–2014 are not included in the table.

* One respondent left item unanswered.

Table 14 shows the responses of the community school coordinators regarding processes supporting the implementation of LTL.

Table 14
Processes Supporting Implementation of LTL Services and Activities
Reported by LTL Community School Coordinators

	Successful implementation with no challenges			Successful implementation with some challenges			Difficult implementation		Not implemented or not started	
	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Coordination of LTL activities and services between partner agencies and LTL staff.										
Elementary Schools	20	13	65.0	7	35.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	3	50.0	3	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Compiling and managing records of all LTL activities and participants.										
Elementary Schools	20	13	65.0	7	35.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	4	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Coordination of LTL activities and services between the school and LTL staff.										
Elementary Schools	20	12	60.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	4	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Developing parents' trust about having their children receive recommended mental health services.										
Elementary Schools	20	11	55.0	9	45.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	1	16.7	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Having suitable space for LTL activities and storage of materials.										
Elementary Schools	20	10	50.0	7	35.0	3	15.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	1	16.7	3	50.0	0	0.0	
Working with school staff to prioritize students in need of services.										
Elementary Schools	20	10	50.0	9	45.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	1	16.7	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Coordination of LTL services and activities with other school-sponsored activities.										
Elementary Schools	20	9	45.0	10	50.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	2	33.3	3	50.0	1	16.7	0	0.0	
Having ample access to schedule recommended therapy time for students.										
Elementary Schools*	19	9	47.4	9	47.4	1	5.3	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	1	16.7	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Working with stakeholders to prioritize identified needs within the school.										
Elementary Schools	20	7	35.0	13	65.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	3	50.0	3	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Increasing parent participation in LTL activities and meetings.										
Elementary Schools	20	7	35.0	12	60.0	1	5.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	3	50.0	3	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Developing methods to bridge cross-cultural barriers/working with families from different cultures.										
Elementary Schools	20	6	30.0	9	45.0	5	25.0	0	0.0	
Middle Schools	6	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	

Note. Two elementary sites that were new in 2013–2014 are not included in the table.

* One respondent left item unanswered.

Community school coordinators in elementary schools reported most success with “coordination of activities between partner agencies and LTL staff” (65%) and “...between school staff and LTL” (60%), and with “compiling and managing LTL records” (65%). More than half the elementary community school coordinators reported challenges in the implementation of these processes: “working with stakeholders to prioritize identified needs within the school” (65% implemented with challenges); “increasing parent participation in LTL activities and meetings” (60% implemented with challenges; 5% difficult implementation); and “developing methods to bridge cross-cultural barriers...” (45% implemented with challenges; 25% difficult implementation).

On average, the community school coordinators in middle schools reported lower levels of successful implementation of processes supporting the services and activities of LTL. On most of the items (8 of 11) fewer than half of the respondents reported successful implementation without challenges.

Perceptions of program staff and school staff. Two versions of a survey were sent to (1) LTL school principals and counselors; and (2) LTL community school coordinators, school nurses and health technicians, and psychologists and PPWs assigned to the LTL schools. The survey elicited respondents’ perceptions about various aspects of LTL and how the program is working at the site. Table 15 shows the number of staff members who completed surveys.

Table 15
Number of Staff Responding to Linkages to Learning Survey, May 2014

Respondent	Elementary Schools n	Middle Schools n	All LTL Schools n (% response)
Principal	19	5	24 (85.7%)
School Counselor	14	2	16 (40.0%)
LTL Community School Coordinator	17	4	21 (75.0%)
Nurse or Health Technician	18	1	19 (79.2%)
Psychologist or PPW	19	6	25 (67.6%)
Total	87	18	105 (66.9%)

Twenty-eight sites were represented in the survey data. One middle school site had only one respondent; the other 27 sites had between two and seven respondents. Response rates for the respondent groups ranged from 40% to 86%, with an overall response rate of 67%.

Most needed LTL services. Table 16 shows the services reported as most needed for students and their families. Services are listed in order from highest number of staff (elementary and middle school) endorsing to lowest.

The service named as most important by the highest percentages of staff from both elementary and middle schools was mental health services (92%). Also endorsed by very high percentages of staff (more than 80%) were tutoring, social skills groups, and food assistance.

Many of the services were endorsed by similar percentages of elementary and secondary staff. A few of the services provided for families were rated by higher percentages of elementary staff than middle school staff, including: literacy classes; domestic violence resources; housing assistance; and locating childcare resources. Two services for students were rated differently by elementary and secondary staff: Tutoring and homework help was endorsed by a higher percentage of elementary staff, while a higher percentage of middle school staff indicated that mentoring was one of the most important services.

Table 16
**Number and Percentage of Elementary and Middle School Staff
 Indicating LTL Services Most Needed for Students and Their Families**

Service	Elementary (N=87 respondents)		Middle (N=18 respondents)		All LTL Schools (N=105 respondents)	
	Number of respondents	% of respondents	Number of respondents	% of respondents	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Mental health services	81	93.1	16	88.9	97	92.4
Tutoring, homework help	76	87.4	12	66.7	88	83.8
Social skills groups	70	80.5	17	94.4	87	82.9
Food assistance	70	80.5	15	83.3	85	81.0
Spring break or summer camps for students	65	74.7	13	72.2	78	74.3
Housing assistance	66	75.9	11	61.1	77	73.3
Workshops on student issues	60	69.0	14	77.8	74	70.5
Finding med. assistance for those with no med. ins.	62	71.3	12	66.7	74	70.5
Immigration/citizenship assistance.	63	72.4	11	61.1	74	70.5
Mentoring	58	66.7	15	83.3	73	69.5
Assistance applying for aid through Health and Human Services	56	64.4	14	77.8	70	66.7
Securing health insurance	58	66.7	12	66.7	70	66.7
Clothing assistance	58	66.7	11	61.1	69	65.7
Adult ESOL classes	56	64.4	12	66.7	68	64.8
Support groups address issues	54	62.1	14	77.8	68	64.8
Adult literacy classes	56	64.4	8	44.4	64	61.0
Employment services	51	58.6	11	61.1	62	59.0
Holiday assistance	50	57.5	12	66.7	62	59.0

Table 16 (continued)

Service	Elementary (N=87 respondents)		Middle (N=18 respondents)		All LTL Schools (N=105 respondents)	
	Number of respondents	% of respondents	Number of respondents	% of respondents	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Domestic violence resources	50	57.5	6	33.3	56	53.3
Acculturation groups	44	50.6	12	66.7	56	53.3
Family field trips	46	52.9	7	38.9	53	50.5
Transition groups	42	48.3	10	55.6	52	49.5
Legal assistance	44	50.6	6	33.3	50	47.6
Locating childcare resources	39	44.8	4	22.2	43	41.0
Furniture assistance	28	32.2	3	16.7	31	29.5
Arts and crafts	28	32.2	2	11.1	30	28.6
Computer classes for students	25	28.7	5	27.8	30	28.6

Survey respondents also were asked to specify other programs and services that they believe would be valuable for students and their families. Thirty-one of the 105 staff respondents suggested other programs or made additional comments. These services were named by staff with reference to their local school; some schools already have the service or program in place. Many of the programs suggested for students were groups to support students facing a range of concerns or difficulties, including:

- Bullying
- Alcoholic or addicted parents
- Self-esteem
- Neighborhood safety
- Parent deportation
- Parent divorce
- Anger management
- Pregnancy prevention
- New to U.S.
- Reunification
- Incarcerated parent
- Domestic violence

Other student groups or activities suggested by respondents included:

- Chess for success
- Study skills
- Fitness and nutrition
- Activities for students to earn SSL hours

Respondents also identified some services needed for parents and families, including:

- Translation and interpretation
- Driver's license application assistance
- Computer classes for adults
- Creating a social support network
- Nutrition information
- Transportation assistance, cab fare for important meetings
- Advocating for your child

Staff perceptions of LTL processes. Table 17 shows the percentages of elementary and middle school staff who agreed with the each statement ("Strongly agree" or "Agree") about processes related to LTL at their school.

High percentages (over 90%) of staff agreed that LTL staff and school staff have opportunities for communication on a regular basis, and that LTL collaboration with school staff (86%) and with community partners (93%) is effective. Over 90% of the respondents agreed that teachers view the work of LTL as supporting their work, and that the program provides opportunities for positive interactions between families and school.

Though still showing a majority of staff agreeing, lower percentages (under 70%) agreed that: support from MCPS Central Office is available to address issues (66%); the process used to conduct a community needs assessment each year is helpful in determining critical needs (64%); they received clear training about LTL responsibilities and expectations (63%); or they are satisfied with the communication with MCPS Central Office about the program (58%),

Table 17
**Number and Percentage of Elementary and Middle School and LTL Staff
 Agreeing With Statements About LTL Processes**

	Elementary (N=87 respondents)			Middle (N=18 respondents)		
	Strongly agree /Agree			Strongly agree /Agree		
	N*	n	%	N*	n	%
School administrators and LTL staff have the opportunity to communicate with each other on a regular basis at our school.	81	76	93.8	16	16	100.0
School staff (teachers, counselors) and LTL staff have the opportunity to communicate on a regular basis at our school.	83	77	92.8	18	18	100.0
At our school, LTL provides opportunities for positive interactions between families and school.	83	78	94.0	17	16	94.1
LTL staff and community partners (e.g., agencies, organizations) collaborate effectively to provide programs or services.	75	70	93.3	15	14	93.3
Teachers in our school view the efforts of LTL as supporting their work.	82	75	92.6	16	15	93.8
School staff and LTL staff collaborate effectively to address the needs of students and families in our school.	85	72	84.7	18	17	94.4
Supports and activities organized by our school staff and those organized by LTL are well-coordinated.	76	65	85.5	16	14	87.5
The communication mechanisms we use to inform our school community about the LTL programs and services available work well.	80	62	77.5	17	17	100.0
Parents and family members play an active role in LTL by working as partners to develop ways to address challenges.	79	60	75.9	13	13	100.0
An effort is made in a timely fashion to address concerns about facilities and resources at my school site when needed.	74	56	76.7	17	13	76.5
Support from MCPS Central Office is available if needed to address issues related to LTL.	60	39	65.0	13	9	69.2
The process used to conduct a community needs assessment each year is helpful in determining the critical needs of our students.	61	38	62.3	13	9	69.2
I received clear training about LTL responsibilities and expectations.	83	54	65.1	18	10	55.6
I am satisfied with the communication with MCPS Central Office about our LTL program.	66	38	57.6	15	9	60.0

Note. Response options were: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, and No information. Responses of “No information” were not included in the calculation of percentages.

* N represents the number of respondents who rated the item with agreement/disagreement (not including “No information”).

Survey responses were further examined to explore whether school staff (administrators, counselors, psychologists, PPWs, and nurses/health technicians) had perceptions that were different from LTL staff (community school coordinators). In response to most of these survey items, school staff agreed at levels similar to LTL staff. The percent agreement for school staff and LTL staff on each of the survey items is shown in Appendix D, Table D-1. The items that elicited the largest differences are listed below.

School staff agreed at higher levels than LTL staff with the following survey items:

- Parents and family members play an active role in LTL by working as partners to develop ways to address challenges (83% vs. 67%)
- Teachers in our school view the efforts of LTL as supporting their work. (95% vs. 86%)

School staff agreed at lower levels than LTL staff with the following survey items:

- LTL staff and community partners (e.g., agencies, organizations) collaborate effectively to provide programs or services. (91% vs. 100%)
- The communication mechanisms we use to inform our school community about the LTL programs and services available work well. (79% vs. 91%)
- I received clear training about LTL responsibilities and expectations. (60% vs. 76%)

School staff were somewhat more positive about the involvement and support of parents and teachers, and LTL staff were somewhat more positive about collaboration and communication with the community. Although a higher percentage of LTL staff responded that they had received training about LTL, this was one of the items with relatively low levels of agreement (76% of LTL staff, 60% of school staff).

Survey respondents also were given the opportunity to reply to three open-ended questions: what is working well in LTL at your school; suggestions for improvement; and additional comments.

Staff perception of successful aspects of LTL. A total of 93 (88.6%) LTL and school staff responded to the open-ended question asking, “In your opinion, what is working well in LTL in your school?” Respondents were free to provide comments on any aspect(s) of the initiative they chose; no topics were suggested or prompted. Staff responded with many ways that the program is working well and benefiting their school. Responses fell into three main categories: collaboration and communication; the services and programs LTL provides; and the commitment and skills of the LTL staff. Table 18 provides examples of representative comments in each of the areas.

Table 18
Responses of LTL and School Staff to Survey Item Asking What Is Working Well
(N=93 respondents)

Category	Representative comments (paraphrased)
Collaboration, teamwork, communication (n = 44)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent communication • We are all working toward the same goal • Excellent collaborative partnership with school and with community • Strength of the team—work together to offer our families the best services possible • Developed excellent programs together • Regularly scheduled staff meetings with LTL are helpful
Quality of services and programs (n = 34)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework club and afterschool activities • Food Program, Smart Sacks, nutrition programs • Adult education programs (computer, ESOL, literacy, field trips) • Help Latino population get involved with school • Great resource for families in crisis • Quality therapy and involvement with families • Social skills groups, parent coffees • Support the emotional well-being of our students and families
Commitment and skills of LTL staff (n = 12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapist and case manager are easily approachable and always available to help • Very knowledgeable and supportive • Hardworking staff—doing a wonderful job • Fabulous team here to support our students, families, and teachers • Very committed staff • Excellent resource to our staff, community

Many respondents (n = 44) remarked on the strength of the collaboration and teamwork among LTL and school staff members, including the following comments:

- “The LTL team is open and collaborative—we work in harmony!”
- “I feel I can pick up the phone any time and work with the LTL staff.”

A large number of respondents (n = 34) described aspects of the programs and services that work well in their school. Many noted LTL’s role in supporting families in need and providing mental health services; representative comments included:

- “They truly embody outreach”
- “The mental health aspect of the care they provide is essential and appreciated.”
- “This program is an essential part of our school and plays an integral role in the success we have had in virtually all facets of student learning and school culture.”

Finally, the commitment and skills of the LTL staff was identified by many respondents (n = 12) as a reason that the program is working well. School staff respondents offered many positive comments about the LTL staff—noting that they are hard-working, knowledgeable, and committed to supporting the students and families. School staff members offered the following descriptions of LTL’s effect on the school:

- “Our students and families are so needy, and LTL is able to reach families in a way that school staff cannot.”

- “I could not do my job effectively without their continued support. [Our school] thrives because of the help of our Linkages team!”

Suggestions for improvement. A total of 77 (73%) staff members responded to the survey items with suggestions for improvement. Like the responses to the previous open-ended question, respondents were free to provide comments on any aspect(s) of the initiative. The areas mentioned by the largest number of respondents are listed in Table 19, along with examples of representative comments.

Table 19
Responses of LTL and School Staff to Survey Items With Suggestions for Improvement
(N=77 respondents)

Category	Representative comments (paraphrased)
More staff, greater availability of services, expand the program <i>(n = 27)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More staff is needed, more therapists • Need ability to provide services to more students and families • Long waiting list for mental health therapist • Expand the program • Wish LTL was in middle and high schools • Would like more families to meet criteria for LTL • Need more funds, financial resources
LTL procedures, structure <i>(n = 16)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce red tape to get families into case management; contact parent in timely manner • Access to student data (attendance, suspension) for LTL staff • Need more diversity—many in community see it as a program for Spanish-speaking people only • Need a time limit for families to stay on caseload • Policy or procedural information gets lost or changed as it is relayed through many individuals • Sometimes mismatch in LTL hours and school hours is challenging
Staff needs <i>(n = 8)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more training, workshops about community resources • Streamline MCPS processing of LTL staff • LTL staff turnover is a challenge—it takes time to build trust among school staff and LTL and parents
Communication, collaboration <i>(n = 7)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need an LTL member on school leadership team • Improve the connection between LTL and school staff so that everyone knows the services that can be provided • Need to get more information back to the school team: How can teachers support/reinforce the work of LTL? • Need more communication with outside staff (i.e., PPW, psychologist)
Coordination with Central Office <i>(n = 7)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication from central office is not consistent • Stop moving staff—we need consistency • More coordinated effort is needed from central office to support LTL (e.g., building services, space) • Need better coordination with Title I Parent Activities, backpack program
More information about LTL for school staff <i>(n = 5)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many school staff members do not understand LTL mission • Some school staff have had no training about LTL or their services • Provide a realistic overview of boundaries and limits of LTL services for the school community • School staff need to know expectations for working with LTL

The largest number of comments in the suggestions for improvement pertained to increasing the reach of the program ($n=27$). Specific needs identified were in the area of mental health—respondents described the need for more staff, particularly mental health therapists ($n=10$), and making the services available to more students and families ($n=8$). Several respondents mentioned the need for additional funds ($n=4$), both to maintain the services, and also to enable direct support for families in need.

A few program procedures were noted as areas for improvement. Greater diversity in program participation was mentioned as a need by three respondents, including a recommendation for increasing recruitment efforts to families of all race/ethnic groups. Other procedures noted by small numbers of respondents pertained to eligibility for services ($n=4$), a need for time limits for participation ($n=3$), and communication of policy within LTL ($n=5$). The training and support needs of LTL staff were also noted by a few respondents ($n=4$).

Communication was another topic that emerged in the comments of a few respondents ($n=7$)—both the collaboration and communication between LTL and school staff, as well as the importance of all school staff having information about the program so they can support the work of LTL. It should be noted that the topic of communication and collaboration was named by many ($n=44$) as an aspect that is working well; the variation in responses is a reminder that the sites are unique in their implementation and respondents are referring to experiences at their own sites.

Several respondents ($n=7$) noted concerns about working with the MCPS central office, including communication with staff at sites, ensuring that building services are provided, and coordinating efforts with other MCPS service initiatives, like the backpack program.

Additional comments. Finally, many staff expressed appreciation for the program, asserting that LTL provides a vital service for students and families in their community. Many stated that they could not do their jobs without the support of LTL. Representative comments from school staff included:

- “The Linkages to Learning staff is an integral part of our school community... [the program] should be added to more schools in the county.”
- “Linkages is a wonderful complement to what we do here at [our school]. They support us in more ways than I can count! We are pleased and appreciative of all their efforts.”

School administrators and counselors. Additional items on the school administrators and counselors surveys were related to their perceptions of LTL program impact. Table 18 shows the percentage of staff agreeing with each of the statements. Results were combined for staff at both elementary and middle school levels because the number of respondents was too small to disaggregate them.

Respondents were unanimous in their agreement that LTL helps families meet their basic needs, and 90% or more also agreed that LTL is an important support for students’ physical and social and emotional well-being, and that LTL helps families become more involved in their children’s education. About two thirds (65%) of the administrators and counselors agreed that LTL has increased students’ school attendance.

Table 20
Number and Percentage of School Administrators and Counselors
Agreeing With Statements About LTL Program Impact

	Administrators and Counselors (N=40 respondents)		
	<i>N*</i>	<i>n</i>	Strongly agree / Agree %
LTL helps families in our school increase their ability to meet their basic needs.	39	39	100.0
LTL is an important support for our students' social and emotional well-being.	39	37	94.9
LTL is an important support for our students' physical well-being.	39	35	89.7
LTL helps our school families become more involved in their children's education.	38	34	89.5
LTL has increased our students' engagement in learning.	34	25	73.5
LTL has increased our students' school attendance.	31	20	64.5

Note. Response options were: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, and No information. Responses of "No information" were not included in the calculation of percentages.

* N represents the number of respondents who rated the item with agreement/disagreement (not including "No information").

Parent Perceptions of LTL. Parents who received direct services or participated in activities and programs offered at LTL sites during the 2013–2014 school year were asked to provide feedback about their experience with the program. The surveys were collected by LTL site staff from April through June 2014. The surveys were paper and pencil format, and available in English or Spanish. Survey data were provided by 27 of the 28 schools. Surveys for 427 parents from LTL elementary school sites and 103 parents from LTL middle school sites were collected and provided to the evaluators. It is estimated that surveys were received from approximately 23% of the parents (families) who participated in LTL during 2013–2014, but a precise response rate cannot be determined with available data. It should be remembered that surveys were administered at one point in time (at the end of the school year), and the number of families participating at any one time is fewer than the total for the year.

Table 21 summarizes the characteristics of the elementary and middle school parents who responded to the survey. Most of the respondents were women (85% of elementary parents and 86% of middle school parents). About three quarters or more of the survey respondents were Hispanic/Latino, representing a similar racial/ethnic composition to all LTL participants, as well as to the target population (i.e., currently receiving FARMS) in the LTL schools.

Table 21
Characteristics of Parents Who Completed LTL Survey

	Elementary School N=427		Middle School N=103	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Male	26	6.1	9	8.7
Female	363	85.0	89	86.4
Not reported	38	8.9	5	4.8
<i>How long have you participated in LTL?^a</i>				
1-5 months	90	21.1	11	10.7
6-12 months	79	18.5	26	25.2
1-2 years	98	23.0	26	25.2
3-4 years	102	23.9	21	20.4
5 years or more	58	13.6	18	17.5
Not reported	0	0.0	1	1.0
<i>How many children in your family have been served by LTL?</i>				
1 child	105	24.6	33	32.0
2 children	106	24.8	33	32.0
3 or more children	111	26.0	22	21.4
Not reported	105	24.6	15	14.6
Race/Ethnicity				
Black African American	37	8.7	16	15.5
White	182	42.6	46	44.7
Other race	18	4.2	8	7.8
Hispanic/Latino ^b	360	84.3	76	73.8

^a Length of participation reported by the family member may refer to any type of LTL service, including groups, classes, case management, mental health, after-school activities, etc.

^b Race and Hispanic/Latino ethnicity are reported independently, so percentages represent overlapping categories (i.e., respondent could have indicated Hispanic *and* White, and would be counted in both categories).

About one third or more of the parents reported participating in LTL one year or less (40% of elementary parents; 37% of middle school parents). Substantial numbers of parents, however, reported that they have participated in LTL for 1–2 years (23% and 25% of elementary and middle school parents, respectively), 3–4 years (24% and 20% of elementary and middle school parents, respectively), and five or more years (14% and 18% of elementary and middle school parents, respectively). Half or more of the parents reported that one or two children in their family participated in LTL.

Parents reported the kinds of services or activities LTL provided for them. Table 22 summarizes their responses. The service reported by the largest percentage of parents, both at the elementary and middle school levels, was help with finances, food, or clothing. Somewhat higher percentages of middle school parents reported participation in each of the service/activity categories offered.

The largest difference between the elementary and middle school parents was their child's involvement in groups: 30% of the elementary parents reported participation compared with 62% of the middle school parents.

Table 22
LTL Services and Activities Reported by Parents Who Completed LTL Survey

	Elementary School		Middle School	
	N=427	%	N=103	%
Service or activity	n	%	n	%
Help with finances, food, or clothing	295	69.1	82	79.6
Parent groups or workshops, including adult ESOL classes	244	57.1	67	65.0
After-school, spring break, or summer activities	226	52.9	70	68.0
Child or family counseling	222	52.0	64	62.1
Children's groups (e.g., social skills, therapeutic recreation)	125	29.3	64	62.1

Parents were asked to respond to a number of survey items about their experience in LTL and ways the program may have helped. At both the elementary and middle school levels, parents were extremely positive in their responses. Large majorities of parents indicated their satisfaction with the aspects of the program that were included in the survey questions. Table 23 summarizes the responses.

Table 23
Responses of Elementary and Middle School Parents Who Completed LTL Survey

Survey item*	Elementary School (N=427)			Middle School (N=103)		
	Responded Agree or Strongly Agree			Responded Agree or Strongly Agree		
	N	n	%	N	n	%
I was served in a timely manner.	414	406	98.1	103	99	96.1
I was treated with respect.	405	399	98.5	102	100	98.0
My needs were understood.	388	381	98.2	103	100	97.1
Overall, I was satisfied with the service I received.	412	398	96.6	103	102	99.0
LTL has helped my child feel a part of the school.	294	281	95.6	92	89	96.7
LTL has helped our family feel a part of the school.	299	289	96.7	91	87	95.6
LTL has helped me know how to communicate with teachers.	286	269	94.1	92	88	95.7
LTL has helped me learn ways to help with schoolwork.	291	274	94.2	90	83	92.2
LTL has helped my child feel good about going to school.	297	281	94.6	86	82	95.3
LTL has helped my child to get more involved in school activities.	297	283	95.3	57	52	91.2

* Not all surveys included all questions, and not all respondents answered every question. The percentage was computed as follows: the number of respondents answering “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” (n) divided by the total number of respondents answering the question (N).

Parents were asked what services were the most helpful for them or for their child. The services named by the largest number of respondents were counseling and therapy, for their child and for the family. Other services reported by parents as most helpful were food and clothing assistance, and parent groups and adult education.

Parents were invited to provide additional comments about their experience in the program. The comments received were a mix of many grateful compliments and several suggestions or requests. Parents praised the program and its staff with such comments as “Fantastic support for family, [we were] treated with greatest kindness and respect,” and the program “provided resources that I didn’t know were available.” One parent expressed feelings about the program in this way: “My suggestion is to continue this beautiful program, always helping and educating our families as it does.”

A couple of concerns were noted by responding parents. One parent reported being uncomfortable as the only English speaker in the group meeting. Another recommended that LTL “should encourage a more active role in PTA, not just volunteering, but holding leadership roles.”

Parents also offered some suggestions. Several expressed the need for more funds for food assistance, employment assistance, and help paying bills. Parents also described their desire for

more classes, including parenting workshops, English classes, and budget and financial classes. One parent suggested workshops for parents and children together, and another requested that classes be available in the evening.

Summary

Findings are summarized for each of the specific evaluation questions.

What were the characteristics of students in schools with LTL sites? During the 2013–2014 school year Linkages to Learning was operating in 28 schools in MCPS—22 elementary schools and 6 middle schools. Compared with MCPS overall, LTL schools have higher percentages of students receiving FARMS at both the elementary and middle school levels, a higher percentage of students enrolled in ESOL classes at the elementary level, and higher percentages of Hispanic/Latino students and lower percentages of White students at both elementary and middle school levels.

What were the numbers and demographic characteristics of students and family members receiving case management and mental health services in LTL sites? During each of the three years included in the report, more than 3,000 students and family members received services through LTL, directly or indirectly, with a high of 3,400 students and family members receiving services in 2013–2014. Since the target population of LTL is families most impacted by poverty, the large majority of students and family members who received LTL services were eligible for FARMS. The race group representing the largest percentage of students and families receiving mental health and family case management services in all three years was Hispanic/Latino, consistent with the demographic characteristics of the student populations in the schools with LTL.

What services were provided to students and to families who were receiving LTL mental health and/or family case management services? The service that was provided to the largest number of case management/mental health clients was family consultation: during the 2013–2014 school year more than 1,500 clients received consultation; these services were provided nearly 12,000 times. Other services provided to large numbers of clients included: recreation activities; food, nutrition, and financial assistance; and classroom observation and consultation with school staff. In the area of student well-being, the service that was provided in the largest number was individual psychotherapy. In 2013–2014, nearly 11,000 psychotherapy sessions were provided for 648 students.

What community education and development activities were provided for all students and families at LTL sites? To what extent did volunteers, partners, and donors participate in LTL? A variety of community education and development activities were provided for the whole school community, including adult education programs, parent support and networking groups, health and nutrition programs, recreation programs and on-site camps in the summer and during school breaks, tutoring and homework clubs, and community service and volunteer activities. In addition, volunteers, partners, and donors played a significant role in the work of LTL. More than 900 volunteers, including parents and middle and high school students, contributed over 9,000 hours to LTL activities. LTL Partnerships—including business groups, charitable organizations, and religiously affiliated groups—contributed nearly 2,800 volunteer hours and donations of weekend

food sacks for a total value of \$268,146; other donations from charitable organizations and individuals totaled \$388,053.

What were stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the implementation of LTL? School and LTL staff and parents who received services through LTL were positive in their responses about the implementation of the program.

Staff perceptions. Community school coordinators provided feedback through focus groups and surveys. They identified factors facilitating success: communication, relationships, and teamwork with school staff; meeting the specific needs of the school community; committed LTL staff; and community partnerships. Challenges identified by the community school coordinators were: helping school staff understand the role of LTL; physical space and building services; program resources; and program administration and coordination with MCPS.

Questionnaire responses indicated that in the elementary schools, the majority of processes are fully in place, but in the six middle schools, several processes were not fully in place at more than half of the sites. The process that was rated with the highest level of successful implementation by both elementary and middle school community school coordinators was "Providing basic resources to families."

The service named as most needed by the highest percentages of school and LTL staff from both elementary and middle schools was mental health services. Also reported as most needed by very high percentages of staff were tutoring, social skills groups, and food assistance.

High percentages of staff agreed that LTL staff and school staff have opportunities for communication on a regular basis, and that LTL collaboration with school staff and with community partners is effective. Over 90% of the respondents agreed that teachers view the work of LTL as supporting their work, and that the program provides opportunities for positive interactions between families and school. Though still showing a majority of staff agreeing, lower percentages (under 70%) agreed that: support from MCPS Central Office is available to address issues; the process used to conduct a community needs assessment each year is helpful in determining critical needs; they received clear training about LTL responsibilities and expectations; and they are satisfied with the communication with MCPS Central Office about the program.

School administrators and counselors were unanimous in their agreement that LTL helps families meet their basic needs, and 90% or more also agreed that LTL is an important support for students' physical and social and emotional well-being, and that LTL helps families become more involved in their children's education. About two thirds of the administrators and counselors agreed that LTL has increased students' school attendance.

Parent perceptions. At both the elementary and middle school levels, parents were extremely positive in their responses. Large majorities of parents indicated their satisfaction with a range of aspects of the program. The services named most helpful by the largest number of parents were counseling and therapy, for their child and for the family. Other services reported by parents as most helpful were food and clothing assistance, and parent groups and adult education.

Parents were invited to provide additional comments about their experience in the program. The comments received were a mix of many grateful compliments and several suggestions or requests. Parents praised the program and its staff with such comments as “Fantastic support for family, [we were] treated with greatest kindness and respect,” and the program “provided resources that I didn’t know were available.” Parents also offered some suggestions. Several expressed the need for more funds for food assistance, employment assistance, and help with bills. Parents also described their desire for more classes, including parenting workshops, English classes, and budget and financial classes.

Discussion

During each of the last three years, over 3,000 students and family members were served by LTL. Perceptions of the program expressed by LTL staff, school staff, and parent participants were uniformly positive, both in reports of implementation and experience in the program. By all measures included here, Linkages to Learning is meeting critical needs in their communities.

A theme that emerged throughout the study was an appreciation of the collaborative nature of the program. Feedback from school staff, program staff, and parents recognized the cooperation among all stakeholders, citing regular communication, working as a team, and respectful partnerships. The survey items pertaining to communication and collaboration were among those with the highest levels of agreement, and respondents added many comments about the importance of teamwork. Likewise, good communication and teamwork among stakeholders were identified as factors for success by the community school coordinators during focus group discussions.

Through focus groups and survey responses, a few areas were identified as concerns or challenges. Stakeholders from all groups expressed the concern that some needs are not being met—not all students and families needing LTL can be served. Shortages are particularly felt in the need for mental health therapists—many sites have a waiting list for students needing psychotherapy. In addition, school and LTL staff, as well as parents, wished that more resources (financial, food) could be available and more parent groups and student after-school activities could be provided. Since the six middle schools have only half-time community school coordinators, with less time to devote to community education and development services, the need for more groups in middle schools is particularly acute. Clearly, response to these concerns is limited by funding and budget constraints, but the needs were consistently expressed by stakeholders.

Finally, several school staff members suggested that a wider, more diverse group of participants is needed, that the program should encourage new families to become involved, and that it may be helpful to set a time limit on how long families can remain in case management. Taken together, this feedback suggests that a number of stakeholders believe that LTL services may be more difficult for some students and families to access, particularly if they have not participated previously and when resources are scarce.

Recommendations

- Continue to share best practices among LTL sites and explore additional ways that these ideas can be systematically made available to LTL staff.
- More than one third of the staff at LTL sites indicated that, in its current form, the community needs assessment is not helpful.
 - Revise the needs assessment survey to ensure that the items will elicit information that is useful for decision making.
 - Establish a structure to ensure the needs assessment process is standardized and comparable across LTL sites and more comprehensive in scope (e.g., use a variety of data).
 - Explore ways to reach out to all families (not only those served by LTL) to participate in the school and community needs assessment. Establish relationships with OSA and institute structures to facilitate the distribution of the needs assessment survey to all households in LTL schools through MCPS. It is important to include the perspectives of all families; families who are not being served currently may have needs that are not known to the program, and their feedback may inform program planning. Include an item on the survey where parents can indicate whether or not they have participated in LTL.
- Work with student support staff and administrators to clarify the Collaborative Problem-Solving process as it relates to LTL referral decisions and follow-up. Where are the obstacles? Are some families more open to referral than others?
- Survey responses to items about communication between MCPS and LTL had relatively low levels of agreement. Identify ways to increase and improve communication between MCPS Central Office and LTL site staff.
- Develop an electronic database that will link the records of parent and child. Consider using an identification system that can identify members of the same family in LTL program records. This will facilitate better estimation of the impact of LTL services by a complete accounting of students who were the indirect beneficiaries of the LTL services provided to their families.
- Explore possible access to specific student data by community school coordinators. The use of MCPS IDs will allow data files to be more easily managed in future MCPS analyses. In addition, some current student data (e.g., attendance, behavior referrals, some course information, suspension) may be useful in counseling and case management, and will convey to the student that school and LTL are working together to help.

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Appendix A

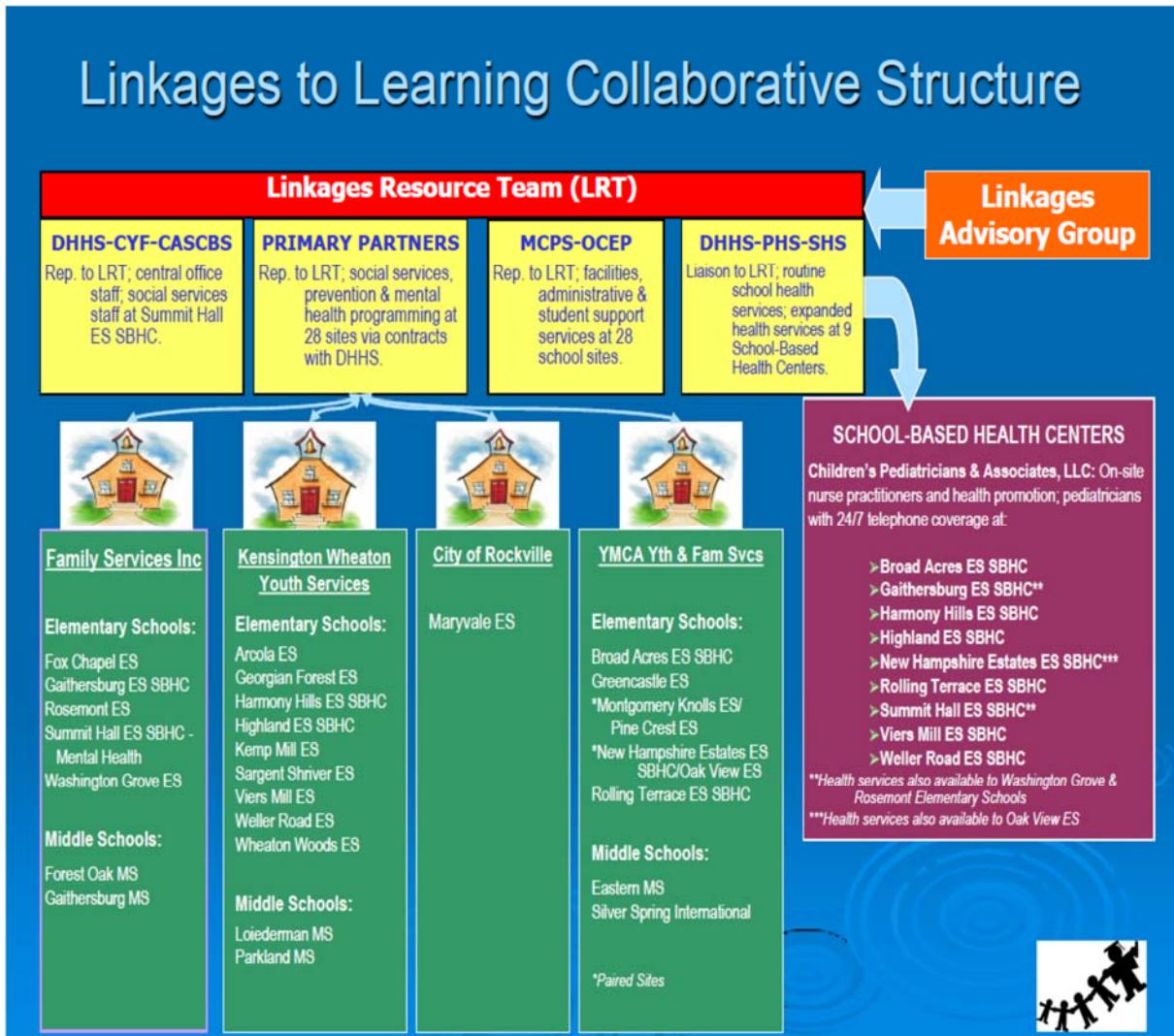


Figure A-1. Linkages to Learning collaborative structure

Table A-1
Number and Type of Staff at Linkages to Learning Sites, 2013–2014 School Year

Staff Position	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	All LTL Schools
Community school coordinator	22	6	28
Full-time / part-time	16 / 6	0/6	16/12
Case manager	22	6	27
Full-time / part-time	19/2	4/2	23/4
Mental health therapist	22	6	27
Full-time / part-time	20/2	6/0	26/2
Nurse practitioner*	7		7
Full-time / part-time	6/1		6/1

* Nurse practitioners are in School-Based Health Centers only.

Appendix B
Table B-1
Services Offered by Linkages Sites

Student well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diagnostic assessment for social-emotional, behavioral concerns• Child/family/group psychotherapy• Classroom observation, teacher consultation• Homework club, tutoring, mentoring• Psychosocial skills development groups• Referral and case management for children with physical and medical issues• At SBHCs: Provision of services addressing mental health, preventive dental, and mental health needs
Family services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family needs assessments• Family case management (providing/linking to concrete resources and benefits, such as: assistance obtaining clothing, furniture, food, housing; assistance with legal/immigration; medical/dental referrals; employment needs; translation and transportation assistance; assistance accessing day care)• Parenting groups• Help navigating school system• Help navigating community resources

Appendix C

Focus Group Questions—LTL March 20, 2014

Welcome/Introduction

We work in the Office of Shared Accountability in MCPS. We want to get an overview of the three service areas (Student Well-being Service Area, Family Services Area, Community Education and Development) of the LTL program offered to students and parents at each site, as well as your experiences in your work with LTL.

We are interested in all perspectives—we understand that each site is different and you each have unique experiences—we would like to hear your thoughts—hearing from all of you will give us the best overview of the program.

To provide a back-up to my notes I would like to tape record the meeting. Does anyone have a concern or objection? (If yes, do not tape.) I'll be taking notes too, so it will help me if you speak one person at a time.

Let's begin by having each person in the room tell us your name and the site you represent. Any new sites?

I. What are the most successful aspects of LTL at your site?

What factors have facilitated successful implementation of LTL in the three service areas at your sites? What is working well? What are the strengths at your site?

Think about the three service areas:

- a. Student well-being
- b. Family Services
- c. Community education and development

II. Concerns/Issues/Challenges/Suggestions

What challenges have you faced with LTL? Issues with any of the following?

- a) the structure of LTL model;
- b) reaching out to at-risk populations;
- c) working with school staff;
- d) other challenges?

III. Informing the community and program outreach

How does your site provide specific information about the LTL services that are available to students, parents, and the community? (as provided by MCPS, community, and private services)

Is your site's outreach successful? Are there some students/families that you have trouble reaching, or who are reluctant to participate? What do you do to reach them?

What suggestions do you have for increasing interest and participation in the services and activities offered through LTL?

IV. Needs not met

Are there needs that have arisen or been observed at your site that are not addressed by LTL or that LTL has no capacity to address? Or had not planned for so has no capacity to address?

Do you think changes to the model/structure of LTL would make it more effective?
Other changes that you think would help?

Could the needs of students and families served by your LTL site be met in any other ways/through alternative models?

V. Other issues that you would like to discuss?

Can you think of other issues it would be important for us to know?

- a. Non-compliance? How does your site deal with it? Process in place?
- b. Coordination with school staff? Community partners?
- c. Communication among partners, with families, community
- d. Expectations—from school, families, partners

VI. Study Plans

We will be collecting a range of information from each site. Our plan is to interview site coordinators at each school next month (or so) and we will ask you to coordinate completion of a "fact sheet" with specific information about services at your site (numbers of referrals, caseloads, activities, that sort of thing). THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME. YOUR INPUT IS VERY IMPORTANT; THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE PROVIDED WILL BE VERY USEFUL IN PLANNING THE STUDY.

Site-Level Questionnaire

Linkages to Learning Site Level Questionnaire

As you may know, the Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) in MCPBS is conducting an evaluation of the Linkages to Learning (LTL) program. The purpose of the study is to understand the day-to-day operation at Linkages to Learning sites, the program's impact on students and families, and areas in need of improvement. This Linkages to Learning Site Level Questionnaire is one of the sources of information that will be used to understand how the program operates at each school site. To ensure a complete picture of the Linkages program at your school, please seek input from Linkages staff at your site, or complete the questionnaire as a team. Data collected from all sites will be combined and reported in aggregate to ensure confidentiality. Results will be used to provide stakeholders with guidance on what is working well and what could work better.

Background Information

1. Choose the school for which the Linkages to Learning Information is being provided.

2. For each LTL staff position, please indicate whether it is full time or part-time at your school site or whether the position is not at your school site.

	LTL Staff Positions		
	Full time	Part-time	Not at this site
Site coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Case manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health therapist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health aide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nurse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nurse practitioner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pediatrician	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If "other" is chosen, please identify the staff position and whether it is full time or part-time.

3. What year did Linkages to Learning start at your school site?

Please provide semester and calendar year (e.g., fall 2011 or spring 2012).

Activities and Services

4. Please list the LTL activities held at your school during the 2013-2014 school year. Describe the group or activity (e.g., anger management, homework club, adult ESOL class, etc.) and provide the information asked under each column heading.

	Information on Activities or Groups					
	Description of activity or group	# of participants	Frequency (e.g., weekly, daily, bi-monthly, monthly) and Duration (e.g., 30 min, 1 hr, 45 min)	Length of session or group (e.g., 8 weeks, semester)	Meets when (e.g., during school, at lunch, after school)	Individual leading this activity/group
1						

2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

Overview of Client Services

6. How are cases assigned to the case manager at your school?

Check all that apply.

- School counselor refers cases to case manager
- A teacher or other school staff refers cases to case manager
- Case initiated by case manager
- Family self-refers to case manager
- Student self-refers to case manager
- Other (specify below)

Specify others who refer cases to the case manager at your school.

6. What is the maximum number of cases the case manager can be assigned to handle at one time at your school?

7. What is the largest number of cases the case manager has handled at one time at your school during school year 2013-2014?

8. What is the smallest number of cases the case manager has handled at one time at your school during this school year 2013-2014?

8. What is the typical case load (average) for the case manager at your school during this school year?

Do you have any other comments about the case manager case load (e.g., wait list, scheduling constraints)?

10. How are cases assigned to the mental health therapist at your school?

Check all that apply.

- School counselor refers cases to therapist
- Teacher or other school staff refers cases to therapist
- Cases referred to therapist by case manager
- Family self-refers to therapist

- Student self-refers to therapist
 Case initiated by therapist
 Other (specify below)

Specify others who refer cases to the therapist at your school.

11. What is the maximum number of cases the therapist can be assigned to handle at one time at your school?

12. What is the largest number of cases the therapist has handled at one time at your school during school year 2013-2014?

13. What is the smallest number of cases the therapist has handled at one time at your school during school year 2013-2014?

14. What is the typical case load (average) for the therapist at your school?

Do you have any other comments about the mental health therapist case load (e.g., wait list, scheduling constraints)?

Linkages and Community Partnerships

15. List and describe agencies and partners working and collaborating with your site during school year 2013-2014 (e.g., YMCA, Montgomery Co. Dept. of Recreation, local church).

Name of agency or partner	Describe type of collaboration	Target(s) (students, staff, families)	Number of students/families impacted
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

Planning and Coordination of LTL Services

16. How often does each meeting occur?

	Frequency				
	Weekly	Bi-weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Other (specify below)
Meeting of all the LTL staff at this school site	<input type="radio"/>				
Meeting of the onsite LTL staff with school staff (administrator, counselor, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Meeting of case managers from all LTL sites	<input type="radio"/>				

Meeting of site coordinators from all LTL sites	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Meeting of LTL staff from all sites and Linkages Resource Team (MCPS, DHHS, and private partners)	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please indicate any other relevant LTL meetings that occur. Please provide the group or staff and their frequency of meeting.

Overview of Experiences with Implementing Components of LTL Program

17. Please indicate the stage of implementation for the specified processes at your school site in 2013-2014.

	Implementation		
	In place	Initiated or Partially in Place	Not yet in place
Clear procedures to identify students needing LTL services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timely provision of recommended interventions and services <u>for students</u> (new referrals and continuing).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timely provision of recommended interventions and services <u>for families</u> (new referrals and continuing).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Defined process for assigning students for <u>psychotherapy</u> sessions offered by LTL.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear process for determining when to exit a student from <u>psychotherapy</u> sessions offered by LTL.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Defined process for assigning a student for <u>psychosocial skill development</u> groups offered by LTL.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear process for determining when to remove a student from <u>psychosocial skill development</u> groups offered by LTL.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Process for examining data to determine predominant community needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Process for working with and linking school and community partners to match services with identified needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Process for providing regular feedback to parents about the services their students are receiving/progress students are making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Orientation about LTL expectations and responsibilities are articulated to a school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to a professional learning community to discuss ideas or issues with LTL staff at other school sites.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. Please indicate your LTL staff's experience with planning and coordinating the specified activities at your site in 2013-2014.

	Implementation			
	Successful implementation with <u>no</u> challenges	Successful implementation with <u>some</u> challenges	Difficult implementation...need to address challenges	Not implemented or not started
Allotting recommended therapy time for students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working with school staff to prioritize students in need of services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having suitable space for LTL activities and storage of materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordination of LTL activities and services between the school and LTL staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Coordination of LTL activities and services between partner agencies and LTL staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coordinating LTL services and activities with other school sponsored activities (PTA, after school activities, school wide activities).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compiling and managing records of all LTL activities and participants.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Please Indicate your LTL staff's experience with coordinating services for students.

	Implementation			
	Successful implementation with no challenges	Successful implementation with some challenges	Difficult implementation...need to address challenges	Not implemented or not started
Scheduling for psychosocial skills development groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consulting with teachers about needs for referred students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing out-of-school-time activities (including weekends and summer).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing parents' trust about having their children receive recommended mental health services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with parents to ensure that students receive and follow through with recommended services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Please Indicate your LTL staff's experience with coordinating services for families.

	Implementation			
	Successful implementation with no challenges	Successful implementation with some challenges	Difficult implementation...need to address challenges	Not implemented or not started
Process to refer families for community resources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Process to monitor family's utilization of community resources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategies for increasing the ability of families to navigate and access resources available in the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Please Indicate your LTL staff's experience with the specified activities at your school site.

	Implementation			
	Successful implementation with no challenges	Successful implementation with some challenges	Difficult implementation...need to address challenges	Not implemented or not started
Working with stakeholders (school, community, and partner agencies) to prioritize identified needs within the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing student participation in out-of-school-time activities (Excel Beyond the Bell, ELD SAIL, summer school).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with community agencies to address the needs of students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with community agencies to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

address the needs of families.	1	2	3	4
Providing ESL classes for parents.	0	0	0	0
Increasing parent participation in LTL activities and meetings.	0	0	0	0
Developing methods to bridge cross-cultural barriers/working with families from different cultures.	0	0	0	0
Providing Smart Snacks to families.	0	0	0	0

12. Is there anything else that you would like to share about Linkages to Learning as it works at your school site?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire about the Linkages to Learning program at your school site!

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School Staff and LTL Staff Survey

Linkages to Learning (LTL) Survey

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) in MCPS is conducting an evaluation of the Linkages to Learning (LTL) program. The goal of this survey is to help us identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement. All responses are confidential and will be combined with responses from other LTL school sites. Results will provide LTL stakeholders with guidance on what is working well and what could be improved.

1. What is your position?

- Principal
- School counselor
- LTL site coordinator

2. Please select your level of agreement with each of the statements.

	Level of Agreement					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agrees nor disagrees	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No information
School administrators and Linkages to Learning (LTL) staff have the opportunity to communicate with each other on a regular basis at our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School staff (teachers, counselors) and LTL staff have the opportunity to communicate on a regular basis at our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School staff and LTL staff collaborate effectively to address the needs of students and families in our school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers in our school view the efforts of LTL as supporting their work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LTL staff and community partners (e.g., agencies, organizations) collaborate effectively to provide programs or services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The communication mechanisms we use to inform our school community about the LTL programs and services available work well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The process used to conduct a community needs assessment each year is helpful in determining the critical needs of our students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supports and activities organized by our school staff and those organized by LTL are well-coordinated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents and family members play an active role in LTL by working as partners to develop ways to address challenges confronting their children, schools, and communities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At our school, LTL provides opportunities for positive interactions between families and school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

LTL is an important support for our students' physical well-being.	<input type="radio"/>					
LTL is an important support for our students' social and emotional well-being.	<input type="radio"/>					
LTL helps families in our school increase their ability to meet their basic needs.	<input type="radio"/>					
LTL has increased our students' school attendance.	<input type="radio"/>					
LTL has increased our students' engagement in learning.	<input type="radio"/>					
LTL helps our school families become more involved in their children's education.	<input type="radio"/>					
I am satisfied with the communication with MCPS Central Office about our LTL program.	<input type="radio"/>					
Support from MCPS Central Office is available if needed to address issues related to LTL.	<input type="radio"/>					
I received clear training about LTL responsibilities and expectations.	<input type="radio"/>					
An effort is made in a timely fashion to address concerns about facilities and resources at my school site when needed.	<input type="radio"/>					

3. In your opinion, to what extent does Linkages to Learning affect each of the following?

	Level of Impact			
	To a large extent (a lot)	To a moderate extent	To a small extent (a little)	No effect
Parents volunteering at school or in a school activity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents helping out in their child's classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents' attendance at parent-teacher conferences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents' attendance at back-to-school night.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents' and students' attendance at school-wide activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student behavioral issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facilitating classroom management of behavioral issues that arise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. In your opinion, what is working well with Linkages to Learning at your school?

5. What suggestions do you have to improve Linkages to Learning?

Appendix D

Table D-1
Number and Percentage of School Staff and LTL Staff
Agreeing with Statements aBout LTL Processes

	School Staff (N=84 respondents)		LTL Staff (N=21 respondents)		All Staff (N=105 respondents)	
	n	% Strongly agree/Agree *	n	% Strongly agree/Agree *	n	% Strongly agree/Agree *
School administrators and Linkages to Learning (LTL) staff have the opportunity to communicate with each other on a regular basis at our school.	72	94.7	20	95.2	92	94.8
School staff (teachers, counselors) and LTL staff have the opportunity to communicate on a regular basis at our school.	76	95.0	19	90.5	95	94.1
At our school, LTL provides opportunities for positive interactions between families and school.	74	93.7	20	95.2	94	94.0
LTL staff and community partners (e.g., agencies, organizations) collaborate effectively to provide programs or services.	63	91.3	21	100.0	84	93.3
Teachers in our school view the efforts of LTL as supporting their work.	72	94.7	18	85.7	90	92.8
School staff and LTL staff collaborate effectively to address the needs of students and families in our school.	70	85.4	19	90.5	89	86.4
Supports and activities organized by our school staff and those organized by LTL are well-coordinated.	62	87.3	17	81.0	79	85.9
The communication mechanisms we use to inform our school community about the LTL programs and services available work well.	60	78.9	19	90.5	79	81.4
Parents and family members play an active role in LTL by working as partners to develop ways to address challenges.	59	83.1	14	66.7	73	79.3
An effort is made in a timely fashion to address concerns about facilities and resources at my school site when needed.	54	78.3	15	71.4	69	76.7
Support from MCPS Central Office is available if needed to address issues related to LTL.	35	64.8	13	68.4	48	65.8
The process used to conduct a community needs assessment each year is helpful in determining the critical needs of our students.	33	62.3	14	66.7	47	63.5
I received clear training about LTL responsibilities and expectations.	48	60.0	16	76.2	64	63.4
I am satisfied with the communication with MCPS Central Office about our LTL program.	36	59.0	11	55.0	47	58.0

* Response options were: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, and No information. Responses of "No information" were recoded to missing and were not included in the calculation of percentage.

