



**Evaluation of the Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster Project in
Montgomery County Public Schools**

Office of Shared Accountability

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OFFICE OF SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

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Executive Summary

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) is conducting a multiyear evaluation of the Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster (KCWMC) Project in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The project is a collaboration among MCPS, Montgomery County Government, Montgomery County Collaboration Council, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS), Montgomery County Department of Recreation, Montgomery County Police Department, Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office, and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. The overarching goal of the KCWMC Project is to remove barriers to student success. To work toward that goal, the project is guided by three objectives, which may be described in a three-tier approach, addressing *individual*, *school-level*, and *community* needs:

- Support the well-being of Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster students and families through the Multi-Agency Team process, which links students and families to needed services and programs in Montgomery County, such as food, housing, and mental health services.
- Provide a rich out-of-school-time environment that supports positive youth development, including physical, social/emotional, and academic/intellectual growth. Project activities include Excel Beyond the Bell (EBB), RecZone, Truancy Prevention Program, Family Markets, and other activities and programs.
- Create a network of community partners that builds capacity at the school and community level to serve students and their families more effectively and efficiently and provide greater access to needed services.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of the evaluation is to understand how the KCWMC Project is operating and to determine the extent to which the project is meeting its objectives. This report is the first of two evaluation reports, and its purpose is two-fold. First, the report addresses the implementation of the project—including components aligned with all three project objectives—by examining the perceptions of stakeholders, both school-based and agency-based. Second, the report addresses evaluation questions associated with outcomes of two of the project objectives: the extent to which out-of-school-time activities and programs supported students in the two clusters; and the development of partnerships and collaborations among school and county agency staff. A second report, to be produced in December 2016, will examine the process and outcomes associated with the work of the Multi-Agency Team.

The evaluation questions that guided this part of the evaluation, and the specific information collected for each question, are listed below.

1. How is the project being implemented?
 - What were the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding the Multi-Agency Team process, out-of-school-time activities, and project partnerships?

2. To what extent were out-of-school-time activities and programs supporting students in Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster schools?
 - What activities were offered?
 - How many students participated?
 - Was participation in one type of out-of-school-time activity—Excel Beyond the Bell—related to increased student engagement and school attendance?
3. How has the Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster Project contributed to developing partnerships and collaborations among school and county agency staff?
 - What professional development opportunities were offered by the project and attended by school-based staff?
 - Did staff in participating schools report greater knowledge of available county services and how to access them as a result of their involvement in the project?
 - What decisions and solutions impacting the larger community resulted from the collaboration?

Methodology

The implementation of the KCWMC Project was examined with a nonexperimental design. Data collected with locally-developed surveys concerned the perceptions and experiences of project stakeholders, both school-based staff and project representatives from MCPS and county government. Data provided by programs were used to report the services and activities provided in the KCWMC Project, as well as the numbers of participants. Among the many activities and programs associated with the project, one out-of-school-time activity—Excel Beyond the Bell—made available student-level program data so that evaluators could analyze the relationship between EBB participation and school attendance. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize program data and survey data; analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the relationship between levels of EBB participation and school attendance.

Summary of Findings

Findings are summarized for each of the evaluation questions.

How is the KCWMC Project being implemented? What were the perceptions and experiences of the stakeholders? Feedback from school-based staff and project representatives indicated that the opportunities provided by the KCWMC Project benefit the cluster communities in a range of ways. School-based staff respondents reported that the Multi-Agency Team is an important support for students and their families, that out-of-school-time activities help students become more engaged with school, and that professional development opportunities help school staff learn about community resources and how to link students and families with needed services. Access to services was named the most valuable aspect of the project by school-based staff, and the collaborative nature of the project was viewed by school staff and project representatives as a major strength. Suggestions for improvements included the need for additional resources, additional trainings for staff and parents, and some procedural changes.

To what extent were out-of-school-time activities and programs supporting students in Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster schools? Out-of-school-time activities, ranging from small, individualized programs such as the Truancy Prevention Project, to large programs offering a variety of activities, such as Rec Zone and EBB, were held in elementary, middle, and high schools in the two clusters. Statistical analyses revealed that higher levels of participation in EBB were associated with significantly better attendance rates and fewer unexcused absences for Grade 6 and Grade 8 students. Other programs in the cluster schools benefitted students and their families, such as the Family Markets, where hundreds of families had access to healthy food; and Linkages to Learning, which provided community education programs as well as mental health and case management services in two of the cluster schools.

How has the Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster Project contributed to developing partnerships and collaborations among school and county agency staff? Project representatives described ways that collaboration in the KCWMC Project has led to program and policy changes that are benefitting students and families throughout the community. Professional development opportunities have been provided by the KCWMC to school-based staff in the two clusters; over two thirds of school-based staff survey respondents reported that they had attended a professional development opportunity given by the KCWMC Project.

Recommendations

- Plan and provide additional staff training sessions, with input from agency representatives. The expertise within the KCWMC Project, as well as relationships with community resources, positions the project to meet important professional development needs within the school community.
- Plan and provide training sessions for parents and family members in the cluster communities. Survey respondents identified a number of specific training needs, including immigration issues, opportunities and services in the community, financial literacy, mental health and drug issues, and truancy.
- Explore ways to encourage more Hispanic/Latino students to participate in EBB. Hispanic/Latino students are underrepresented in EBB enrollment, compared to their representation in the populations of the schools in the project clusters. Solicit feedback from students about activities of interest; reach out to parents to ensure they understand EBB and its benefits for students.
- Develop a centralized system of program-level record keeping, to improve tracking and coordination of services and activities in cluster schools. Currently, program data reside within individual programs, but a central overview of services and programs in place also may be helpful for planning.
- Explore ways to improve the efficiency of the Multi-Agency Team meetings, particularly to ensure that participants are present at the scheduled time. Additional reminder calls or e-mails may be needed.

- Consider development of electronic forms and a database to record intake information, referred services, and follow-up. Create a process for notifying and receiving input from siblings' counselors (with parental consent).

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The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) is conducting a multiyear evaluation of the Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster (KCWMC) Project in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The project is a collaboration among MCPS, Montgomery County Government, Montgomery County Collaboration Council, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS), Montgomery County Department of Recreation, Montgomery County Police Department, Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office, and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. The overarching goal of the KCWMC Project is to remove the barriers to student success. To work toward that goal, the project is guided by three objectives:

- support the well-being of students and families through the Multi-Agency Team process
- provide a rich out-of-school-time environment that promotes positive youth development
- create a network of community partners that builds capacity at the school and community level to serve students and their families

The purpose of the evaluation is to understand how the KCWMC Project is operating and to determine the extent to which the project is meeting its objectives. This report is the first of two evaluation reports, and its purpose is two-fold. First, the report will address the implementation of the project—including components aligned with all three project objectives—by examining the perceptions of stakeholders, both school-based and agency-based. Second, the report will address evaluation questions associated with outcomes of two of the project objectives: the extent to which out-of-school-time activities and programs supported students in the two clusters; and the development of partnerships and collaborations among school and county agency staff. A second report, to be produced in December 2016, will examine the process and outcomes associated with the work of the Multi-Agency Team.

Background

The KCWMC Project, through the joint efforts of MCPS and Montgomery County government agencies, has created a service delivery model to address the challenges underlying the racial/ethnic achievement gaps in MCPS (MCPS, 2013). The project aims to remove obstacles to student success, such as poverty, poor healthcare, lack of English language skills, and social and emotional issues, so that children can come to school ready to learn. The theory of action guiding the KCWMC Project states:

“If key state and county agencies implement an interagency, public-private collaborative to align and deliver resources in high-need areas of the county, so safety and/or social, emotional, and physical well-being of families are positively addressed, then barriers to school engagement will be reduced and school achievement will improve.” (Kennedy Cluster Project Steering Committee, 2007)

Program History

When the project was initiated in 2007, with a focus on addressing the racial/ethnic achievement gap, schools in the Kennedy High School cluster enrolled one of the largest percentages of Black/African American students in MCPS. Since then, the Hispanic/Latino student population in the Kennedy cluster has grown, so that enrollees in the Kennedy cluster schools are more likely to be Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino, compared with MCPS students overall. Many of the students are from low-income households and a larger percentage of students in the Kennedy cluster receive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services compared with MCPS students overall¹. Today the project also serves the Watkins Mill Cluster, where a large percentage of students are Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino, and impacted by English language learning needs and poverty² as well.

The original design of the Kennedy Cluster Project proposed a broad array of academic and nonacademic supports, including establishing Linkages to Learning sites in all Kennedy cluster elementary and middle schools, and providing universal pre-kindergarten for all three- and four-year-olds in the Kennedy cluster. However, the county was not able to fund the full range of recommendations (MCPS, 2008). As a result, a scaled-down version of the Kennedy Cluster program was created, preserving the original goals and objectives, but more limited in scope.

In 2008–2009, the project was introduced into five schools in the Kennedy cluster—three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Two additional schools were added in 2011–2012, one elementary school and one middle school. In January 2015, the Kennedy Cluster Project expanded to seven schools in the Watkins Mill cluster (MCPS, 2014). During 2014–2015, the project included eight elementary schools, four middle schools, and two high schools in the two clusters. Beginning with the 2015–2016 school year, two additional elementary schools were added—Brookhaven and Glen Haven—and students at Daly Elementary School with siblings at Neelsville Middle School also were included. While these schools are not in the Kennedy or Watkins Mill Cluster, the Multi-Agency Teams for those clusters believed that the project had the capacity to serve additional schools, so these high-FARMS schools were added with the approval of the KCWMC Project leadership. The currently participating schools are listed in Appendix A, Table A-1.

Project Operation

The KCWMC Project is administered by a two-tier team. The project's Operations group is made up of heads of the partner government departments, principals in the cluster schools, and other staff from county departments and MCPS. The Operations group meets semiannually to

¹ In the 2014–2015 school year, Kennedy High School enrollment was 34% Black or African American and 50% Hispanic/Latino, 55% received Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) services, and 13% received English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services. All MCPS high school enrollment was 22% Black or African American and 27% Hispanic/Latino; 28% received FARMS services and 7% received ESOL services. (Source: MCPS Schools at a Glance, 2014–2015)

² In Watkins Mill High School, 35% of the students are Black or African American, 40% are Hispanic, 14% received ESOL services, and 54% received FARMS services in the 2014–2015 school year. (Source: MCPS Schools at a Glance, 2014–2015)

discuss trends, issues, and progress in the clusters, and to develop policy recommendations for the project, as well as for MCPS and Montgomery County. After the Operations group meets, the project update and policy recommendations are brought to the KCWMC Project Leadership Team, made up of the County Executive, Councilmembers Nancy Navarro and Craig Rice, the Superintendent of Schools, School Board member Chris Barclay, the Chief of Police, State's Attorneys, and department chairs from MCDHHS and the Department of Recreation. Both the Operations group and the Leadership Team are co-chaired by Fran Brenneman, MCDHHS, representing the county government, and Donald Kress, representing MCPS.

The project also includes two care coordinators and one interpreter who are employed by MCDHHS. The care coordinators play a key role in the Multi-Agency Team process, as described later in this report.

Program Components

The KCWMC Project model is based on the assumption that schools, families, and communities play important roles in helping students succeed in school. The objectives of the project may be described as a three-tier approach, providing services at three levels—for *individual* students and families; through activities and services *at the school*; and for the larger *community*. The three components of the project are aligned with the objectives:

1. *The Multi-Agency Team process* supports the well-being of individual students and families by linking them with needed services and programs in Montgomery County. This component of the project is the most intensive, serving students and families who are referred to the team with myriad needs.
2. *Out-of-school-time activities* provide a rich environment that supports positive youth development, including physical, social/emotional, and academic/intellectual growth. This component of the project supports all students in the school by providing opportunities for positive engagement.
3. *Community partnerships* build capacity at the school and community level to serve students and their families more effectively and efficiently and provide greater access to needed services.

The Multi-Agency Team

The Multi-Agency Team connects students and their families to resources for accessing health care, housing, financial assistance, legal aid, and many other social services. Students are referred to the Multi-Agency Team by a school staff member or by a service provider outside of school. A description of the referral process for the Multi-Agency Team is included in Appendix B. Students³ and parents meet with the Multi-Agency Team to discuss the reason for referral and ways the team can help. During the discussion, the counselor explains the referral and provides relevant background, and the parents and student are asked for input. Team members discuss with the family ways to address the needs, which may include actions at school, and/or

³ Students age 18 or older can attend with or without a parent; students younger than 18 can attend with parental consent.

recommendations and referrals to services in the community. The action plans and recommendations by the Multi-Agency Team are recorded on the Client Action Form (Attachment B-2) by the project care coordinator, who also follows up with the family after the team meeting to facilitate contact with referral services and support follow-through with recommended plans.

The team comprises representatives from MCPS Kennedy and Watkins Mill cluster schools (may include counselor, principal, assistant principal, and/or pupil personnel worker); MCPS Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships; MCDHHS (including Behavioral Health and Crisis Services; Children, Youth, and Family Services; Income Supports; and Special Needs Housing); Montgomery County Police Department; Montgomery County Recreation Department; Montgomery County Collaboration Council; and the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office (SAO). The Multi-Agency Team meets twice each month at Kennedy High School and twice each month at Neelsville Middle School in the Watkins Mill High School Cluster to discuss referrals and recommend services to students and families. On average, between four and eight cases are discussed at each team meeting. Each referral is scheduled for a 40-minute discussion.

Out-of-School-Time Activities and Programs

The KCWMC Project advocates for activities and programs that will best serve the students and families in the two clusters. The collaborative structure of the project helps facilitate the introduction of activities and programs at schools where they are most needed.

A range of out-of-school-time activities and programs coordinated by the KCWMC Project are offered in the Kennedy cluster and Watkins Mill cluster schools. The programs include after-school activities for middle and high school students, programs to support families, and programs to promote health and nutrition. The activities and programs are open to all students in the school community.

Community Partnerships and Collaboration

At the core of the Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster Project is the collaboration among school and county government staff. The partnerships formed by the project offer benefits at several levels. The Multi-Agency Team addresses multiple needs of students and families. The collaboration also provides an opportunity for creative problem solving at the county level that may have wide-ranging impact. In addition, the partnership offers professional development for school and county government personnel to build capacity in the schools and community to serve students and their families more effectively and efficiently and provide greater access to needed services.

The collaborating agencies—MCPS, Montgomery County Government, Montgomery County State's Attorney, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Department of Police, and Maryland Department of Juvenile Services—signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2009 which outlined the operational responsibilities of each agency. In addition, the collaboration includes two partner agencies—Montgomery County Collaboration Council and the Montgomery County Department of Recreation. The responsibilities of each party, as specified in the MOU, are outlined in Appendix C.

Logic Model

The logic model synthesizes the main program elements into a depiction of how the program is intended to work. It makes clear the sequence of events that are presumed to bring about the results. A logic model clarifies program goals, implementation sequences, and the links between them and expected program benefits (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009a). The KCWMC Project Evaluation Committee developed the logic model in fall 2014 (Figure 1).

Logic Model for Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster Project

	Services, Activities (examples)	Outputs	Short-term Outcome indicators	Long-term Outcome indicators
Multi-Agency Team	For Students: Needs assessment, social/emotional/behavioral support; medical care referral; academic support; recreation	Number of referrals; types and number of services provided; follow-up provided by Care Coordinator	Reduce dropout; increase retention/promotion; improve attendance; reduce suspensions	Meeting grade-level proficiency level in reading/math; pass courses; earn credit; GPA improvement; graduation, college/career-ready
	For Family: Needs assessment; referral to social services; referral to mental health services; medical care referral; food; housing assistance; employment assistance; legal assistance; transportation	Number of referrals; types and number of services provided; follow-up provided by Care Coordinator	Families meeting basic needs; families gain trust with school and community agencies; families support student in school	Improved family stability and self-sufficiency
Out-of-school-time activities and school-wide programs	Excel Beyond the Bell; Truancy Prevention Program; Rec Zone; Fun food & fitness; fall vision and hearing screening; summer open lunch; family markets	Out of school time activities offered; number of students participating and level of participation; number of families participating; stakeholder feedback	Improved attendance; improved student engagement; increased family engagement in schools and child's education	School an integral and welcoming presence in the community; student academic performance improves
Community partnerships and collaboration	Partnerships among school and county service agencies; opportunity for problem-solving at county level; professional training for school staff, agency staff, after-school staff, early childhood staff	Partners participating; Operations Team meetings; partner feedback; staff feedback	Decisions, problem resolutions impacting community; school staff gain knowledge and capacity for accessing available county services	Active collaboration between school and agency staff to serve students, families, and communities

Figure 1. Logic model for Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster (Office of Shared Accountability and Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster Evaluation Steering Committee, model developed in 2014)

Figure 1 depicts each step in the series of actions that are intended to lead to the changes specified in the column of long-term outcomes. Outputs are the immediate results of the implementation of the services and activities, such as student referrals and the number of legal,

housing, and financial services provided for families. The outputs are vehicles to produce expected short-term and long-term outcomes. Outcomes are the changes expected to result from the project. The changes may occur in behaviors, attitudes, skills, academic performance, or schoolwide or communitywide processes. Short-term outcomes are primarily reflected by changes in behaviors or attitudes that are directly targeted by the services, such as increased school attendance, increased ability of families to provide for basic needs, and families' engagement in students' education. The long-term outcome indicators may include academic improvement and graduation, as well as changed relationships among school, family, and community partners.

Literature Review

Children with social and economic challenges, such as poverty, physical and mental health problems, and unstable living conditions, are less likely to succeed in school and thrive intellectually, physically, and emotionally (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Barton & Coley, 2009; Morsy & Rothstein, 2015; Sandstrom & Huerta, 2013). Children living with these disadvantages bring a range of needs with them to the classroom, and educators and policymakers are searching for ways to support them. Several approaches have emerged that aim to address the interconnected needs of students' learning and their physical and emotional health, including: Integrated Student Supports (Child Trends, 2014); Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (ASDC, 2014; Lewallen et. al, 2015); Collective Impact (Grossman & Lombard, 2015); and Community Schools (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009a). These approaches bring together various resources in the community, including the school, local government, and community-based organizations, to support students and their families. The collaborative effort may provide services to address the physical and mental health of the student and family, social services, community engagement, and other needs. The models may differ somewhat in focus, but all of the approaches recognize that children have a range of needs that must be addressed in order for them to succeed in school.

School-Linked Services

School-linked service approaches such as the KCWMC Project present challenges for evaluation. Given the diverse efforts of school-linked service programs, Gomby and Larson (1992) state that, "it is difficult and perhaps impossible to examine the literature about school-linked services through a single conceptual prism" (p. 77). Likewise, Castrechini and London (2012) point out that analyzing the effect of a complex network of services and programs on student outcomes may pose formidable challenges. Data collection and sharing among multiple providers, student mobility, varied levels of implementation, and identification of appropriate control groups are some of the potential hurdles faced by researchers in their efforts to evaluate the impact of school-linked services, including community schools. The authors point out that rigorous research focused on the coordinated approach is necessary to understand the additive effects of the program and the ways that components of the program interact to improve short-term outcomes that may be linked to longer-term outcomes.

In addition to difficult issues of research methods and design, an evaluation of school-based initiatives providing a range of services requires well-defined outcomes, and these programs vary in their goals. Some specifically aim to improve academic achievement, while others focus primarily on nonacademic outcomes such as improved physical or mental health or family functioning (Dryfoos, 2000). Indeed, much of the support provided by community schools or similar initiatives is not linked directly to academic outcomes. Instead, the programs target the needs of students and their families that would interfere with academic success. The Coalition for Community Schools' logic model (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009b), for example, posits that providing services to support the social, physical, cognitive, and economic needs of students and their families will help ensure that the conditions necessary for learning are strengthened and students have greater chance for success. Two of the guiding principles advanced by the Coalition for Community Schools (2009a) further illustrate the relationship put forth in their logic model: "Children do better when their families do better;" and "The development of the whole child is a critical factor for student success" (p. 5).

Amid the range of outcomes and research challenges, a number of reports have presented findings about programs providing school-linked services. A recent report from Child Trends (2014) reviewed the evaluation research conducted to date of integrated student support programs. The authors conclude that it appears that the models can improve academic outcomes, but that the evidence for the effectiveness of this approach is only beginning to emerge, and many questions remain unanswered. A response to the report by Child Trends from the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA (2014) underscores concern about the fragmentation of community and school practices for supporting families and children and proposes a structural change in school improvement policy, so that a "Learning Supports Component" is built into the school's operational infrastructure.

Dryfoos (2000) compiled documentation on 49 school-community programs that had produced evaluation reports or results. Some initiatives were large-scale efforts in multiple school sites; others were single-school locations. Noting that the quality of studies varied, the author pointed out that only a few would be considered "scientific" results. Others, however, the author believes, can offer "preliminary findings," for long-term efforts. From the 49 reports, Dryfoos concluded that "there is a growing body of evidence that community schools are beginning to demonstrate positive effects on students, families, and communities. The preliminary data ... suggest that many of these models have the capacity to produce multiple impacts that include, and go beyond, the expectations of traditional education reform" (p. 5).

A review of research literature on school-connected behavioral and emotional health interventions by the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools (2014) concluded that behavioral health interventions were associated with improved academic outcomes. School-based behavioral health interventions were shown to be associated both with improved academic achievement and with improvements in related behaviors known to influence academic success, such as learning skills and attendance.

Finally, two recent reports provide findings for studies of school-linked services and students' school engagement, as well as math and reading performance. Castrechini and London (2012) studied community schools in Redwood City, California, where Family Resource Centers at the

public elementary and middle schools provide integrated services to address students' and families' physical, social, emotional, and learning needs. To examine students' involvement across a range of programs and supports, the researchers classified the nearly 250 programs and activities into three main "strategy areas:" family engagement; extended learning; and support. Analyses included examination of participation by demographic characteristics and number of strategy areas accessed. The study found a relationship between family engagement and English language proficiency, particularly in early grades, but no direct links between community school program participation and standardized mathematics and English language performance. Students who participated in community school programs, specifically in family engagement and extended learning, reported feeling more supported than students with no participation, and the researchers found that students' feelings of support had a significant effect on their motivation and confidence, suggesting a possible mediating effect. The researchers conclude that:

"Evidence in this study and others shows that when students feel connected to their schools, there are important positive implications for their academic motivation and confidence, both of which have strong links to academic performance...Findings showing a strong link between positive student attitudes and supplemental community school programs suggest that community schools, through the multiple opportunities they provide for positive interactions between students and their schools, could be a promising strategy for fostering positive attitudes that promote achievement" (Castrechini & London, 2012, p. 25).

An evaluation of Communities in Schools (CIS)—a national organization with about 200 affiliates serving students in 3,400 schools—was published in a five-year report (ICF International, 2010). The evaluation examined the impact of CIS at the organizational level, the school level, and the student level. The study found substantively (effect size greater than .25) positive effects for CIS schools on dropout and graduation rates, attendance in elementary schools, middle school math and reading performance, and student perception of personal responsibility. The strongest effects were seen in schools that implemented the model with the highest fidelity.

Previous Studies of Kennedy Cluster Project in MCPS

To date, there has been one study of the Kennedy Cluster Project in MCPS. Keller (2013) conducted a case study of the project and found that "although the achievement gap has not closed for Kennedy cluster students, there is evidence that the Kennedy Cluster Project has contributed to positive academic outcomes for individual at-risk students and for the Kennedy cluster schools overall" (p. i), such as increased graduation rate, reduced dropouts, and mobility. Keller pointed out that an additional benefit of the project was the partnerships formed among schools and agencies, noting that "Better communications among members of the Multi-Agency Team yielded more efficient delivery of educational and community resources to students both inside and outside school" (p. ii).

An analysis of the Truancy Prevention Project, one of the activities within the KCWMC Project, was conducted by the University of Baltimore School of Law (2015) using program data from 2013–2014. The study examined school absences among students participating in the project,

including 43 students from the two Kennedy/Watkins Mill cluster schools. The study found that in one of the cluster schools (Neelsville MS), participation in the project was associated with a significant decrease in absences during the school year.

A study of one of the out-of-school-time activities that serves large numbers of students in the KCWMC Project middle schools, Excel Beyond the Bell, was recently conducted by Wang and Addison (2016). Their analysis included all seven MCPS middle schools that have EBB (four of the schools are in the Kennedy and Watkins Mill Clusters). The study used advanced statistical procedures to compare academic and behavioral outcomes of students with “high participation” (11 or more days in EBB), “low participation” (less than 11 days), and no participation, while controlling for demographic characteristics and prior performance or behavior. Analyses revealed that students who participated in EBB for 11 or more days had higher school attendance rates and higher marking period averages than students who participated fewer than 11 days or students who did not participate in EBB. The positive effect of EBB participation on marking period average was observed for all students, and for subgroups of Black or African American and Hispanic/Latino students, in both Grades 7 and 8. The effect of EBB on attendance was significant for all students, and for subgroups of Black or African American students, Hispanic/Latino students, White students, and students in Grades 6 and 8.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The multi-year evaluation focuses on the three objectives of the KCWMC Project—supporting students and families with the Multi-Agency Team, providing a rich out-of-school-time environment, and creating partnerships among agencies and schools. This document, the first of two evaluation reports, examines the implementation of the KCWMC Project and outcomes related to two of the project components: out-of-school-time activities and the partnerships and collaboration among county agencies and schools. The evaluation questions that guided this section of the evaluation, and the specific information to be collected for each question, are listed below.

1. How is the project being implemented?
 - What were the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding the Multi-Agency Team process, out-of-school-time activities, and project partnerships?
2. To what extent were out-of-school-time activities and programs supporting students in Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster schools?
 - What activities were offered?
 - How many students participated?
 - Was participation in one type of out-of-school-time activity—Excel Beyond the Bell—related to increased student engagement and school attendance?
3. How has the Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster Project contributed to developing partnerships and collaborations among school and county agency staff?

- What professional development opportunities were offered by the project and attended by school-based staff?
- Did staff in participating schools report greater knowledge of available county services and how to access them as a result of their involvement in the project?
- What decisions and solutions impacting the larger community resulted from the collaboration?

Methodology

Evaluation Design

The evaluation used a non-experimental design with a variety of data collection methods, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data sources and instruments, and analytic procedures, are presented separately for each of the evaluation questions.

Evaluation Question 1: How is the project being implemented?

Data Sources and Instruments.

Program documents were reviewed to provide historical background for the KCWMC Project and descriptive information about project components. The review included official documentation and project description by staff from the Multi-Agency Team.

School-based staff surveys were used to gather information about project implementation from staff in elementary, middle, and high schools in the two clusters. The survey included questions about Multi-Agency Team referrals and participation; schoolwide activities; projectwide procedures and policies; and participation in professional development opportunities provided by the KCWMC Project. The survey was developed by OSA evaluators in collaboration with the project operations committee. The surveys were administered online in spring 2015. An e-mail message was sent to all counselors, administrators, pupil personnel workers, school psychologists, and school-based recreation staff who were working in the 14 schools in the two clusters inviting them to complete the survey. Of the total 65 school-based staff members who were asked to complete the survey, 46 responded, representing an overall response rate of 71%.

Agency and MCPS project representatives' surveys were used to gather perceptions from county agency and MCPS representatives. Surveys addressed, among other topics: perceptions of the Multi-Agency Team process; partnerships; project decision-making; perceptions of professional development; challenges of the project. The survey was developed by OSA in collaboration with the project operations committee. The survey was administered online in spring 2015; the survey link was sent by e-mail to 37 agency and MCPS representatives identified by the steering committee because they had been involved in the project as a member of the operations committee or as a representative on the Multi-Agency Team. Twenty-two agency or MCPS representatives completed a survey, representing a response rate of 59%.

Analysis of Data

Program documents were used to provide background information and summaries of program components. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the survey responses from stakeholders. Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed for themes and reported in broad categories, with some examples of comments included descriptively.

Evaluation Question 2. To what extent were out-of-school-time activities and programs supporting students in Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster schools?

Data Sources and Instruments

School-level activity records, with student participation reported at the school level, were collected from project administrators, the Department of Recreation and Collaboration Council, and the Truancy Prevention and Police Explorers programs.

Student-level records for Excel Beyond the Bell were collected from the Department of Recreation and Collaboration Council; a roster of students whose parents consented to their inclusion in the evaluation study was provided to evaluators for matching with MCPS student records. Among the out-of-school-time activities in the KCWMC Project, only EBB maintained records of enrollment and attendance at activities. Parents of 85% of EBB participants signed their permission for the use of their students' data. Data for 777 students in the KCWMC Project were used in the analysis of EBB in this report.

MCPS student records were used to examine student attendance and unexcused absences for students in the analysis of EBB participation and school attendance.

EBB student survey. A subset of the students participating in EBB ($N = 244$) completed surveys reporting on ways the EBB program has helped them, such as making positive choices and feeling a sense of belonging. The survey was administered by EBB staff at the end of the spring 2015 session to a convenience sample of students in a variety of activities in all four of the cluster schools. The survey respondents represented approximately 63% of the students participating in EBB during the spring 2015 session⁴. The complete survey and scale computation is shown in Appendix D.

Analysis of Data

Summarized information about the out-of-school-time activities, such as numbers of participating students and student feedback, were reported for activities for which data were provided to evaluators by program personnel. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to study the relationship between EBB participation and school attendance. School attendance rates were compared for students with high and low levels of participation in EBB to examine whether students who attended more days of EBB had better school attendance. To control for

⁴ The total number of students participating is not known because only students with parent permission are included on the roster. Assuming 85% of all students were on the roster, an estimated total of 389 students was used as the denominator for computing survey response rate.

differences in demographic characteristics of the groups, propensity scores based on students' gender, receipt of special education, ESOL, and FARMS services were computed and converted to quintiles, and used as covariates in the ANCOVA models (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1985). In addition, the attendance rate from the previous year was used as a covariate.

The ANCOVA findings were supplemented with the computation of effect sizes measured by Cohen's *d* (Cohen, 1988), so that the observed relationships could be judged in terms of their practical significance to educators (American Psychological Association, 2010; Kline, 2004). Appendix E describes the computation of effect sizes associated with the analytic procedures used in this evaluation.

Evaluation Question 3: How has the Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster Project contributed to developing partnerships and collaborations among school and county agency staff?

Data Sources and Instruments

The *school-based staff surveys* (described above) were used to gather information about participation by school-based staff in professional development opportunities offered by the project and the knowledge gained about county services. The survey response rate was 71%.

The *agency and MCPS project representatives' surveys* (described above) were used to gather perceptions from county agency and MCPS representatives about professional development opportunities provided by the KCWMC Project and ways that the agency and project representatives have collaborated and problem-solved to address issues that impact the community. The response rate was 59%.

Analysis of Data

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the responses from stakeholders, both school-based staff and agency representatives. Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed for themes and reported in broad categories, with some examples of comments included descriptively.

Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology

Strengths. To examine stakeholders' perceptions and experiences with the project, surveys were administered to both school-based staff and agency and project representatives to the project. The surveys were developed in collaboration with project staff to ensure the information captured would be relevant and useful for program improvement. The survey response rates were 71% from the school staff and 59% from the agency and project representatives.

Excel Beyond the Bell student data were analyzed to determine whether EBB participation was related to school attendance. EBB data was used only for students whose parent provided consent for use in the evaluation; most students in EBB had parental consent (85%), so the EBB data used for analysis in this report was likely representative of the data for all participants.

Limitations. An effort was made to report information about all activities and services coordinated by the KCWMC Project and the number of students or family members who participated. However, participation data were not available for all activities. Some providers of activities and services do not collect attendance/participation, and some activities and services did not have data available to share with evaluators.

Some of the surveys were completed by individuals who are currently involved with the planning and operation of the project, so their responses could have been self-serving. It was important to solicit input from agency and project representatives who were familiar with the history of the project and could describe the ongoing work of the project, but as a result, some responses may not have been objective.

Finally, for the most part in this report, implementation was not examined directly by the researchers. Instead, this evaluation relies on the reports of various stakeholders to describe the way the project has been implemented and is operating.

Results

Evaluation Question 1. How is the project being implemented? *What were the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding the Multi-Agency Team process, out-of-school-time activities, and project partnerships?*

Project stakeholders—both school-based staff and project representatives from MCPS and Montgomery County agencies—responded to surveys with their experiences of the implementation of the KCWMC Project. The characteristics of the respondents to the two surveys are described below, followed by summaries of their responses to survey questions about the components of the project.

Survey Respondents

School-based staff. Surveys were completed by 46 school-based staff, representing a 71% response rate. Table 1 shows the positions held by the respondents, the school levels where they were based, and the number of years working in a Kennedy Cluster or Watkins Mill Cluster school.

Table 1
 Characteristics of School-Based Staff Responding to Survey About
 KCWMC Project, Spring 2015
 N = 46

Characteristic	n	%	
Position	Administrator	6	13.0
	Counselor	24	52.2
	PPW or psychologist	9	19.5
	School-based Department of Recreation staff	7	15.2
School Level	Elementary	12	26.1
	Middle	15	32.6
	High	19	41.3
Years in Kennedy/ WM Cluster school	First year	17	37.0
	2, 3, or 4 years	15	32.6
	5 years or more	14	30.4

The largest number (over one half) of school-based respondents were counselors, and the largest number of respondents were based in high schools. For about one third (37%) of the respondents, 2014–2015 was their first year in a Kennedy Cluster/Watkins Mill Cluster school.

MCPS and agency project representatives. Surveys were completed by 22 project representatives, reflecting a 59% response rate, based on the number of representatives who were invited to complete a survey (N = 37). Surveys were completed by representatives from: MCPS; Montgomery County Health and Human Services; Montgomery County Police; Maryland State’s Attorney’s Office; and the Montgomery County Department of Recreation. Table 2 shows the project experience of the respondents.

Table 2
 Project Experience of MCPS and Agency Project Representatives Responding to Survey
 About KCWMC Project, Spring 2015
 N = 22

Experience with project	n	%	
Years working with KCWMC Project	Less than one year	6	27.3
	One year	4	18.2
	Three to five years	3	13.6
	Six to eight years	7	31.8
	No response	2	9.1
Number of Multi-Agency Team meetings attended	No meetings	3	13.6
	One to nine meetings	8	36.4
	10 – 19 meetings	2	9.1
	20 – 100 meetings	3	13.6
	About 100 or all meetings	5	22.7
No response	2	4.5	

The survey respondents were a mix of project representatives who had been involved with the project one year or fewer (46%) and those who had been involved for several years or more (45% reported involvement for three to eight years). Most had been to at least one Multi-Agency Team meeting (82%), and nearly one quarter had been to all or nearly all of the meetings (23%).

Perceptions of the Multi-Agency Team Process

School-based staff. School-based staff at both elementary and secondary levels were asked to respond to survey questions about the Multi-Agency Team process. Table 3 shows their responses.

Table 3
Response to Survey Questions About the Multi-Agency Team From School-Based Staff

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't Know	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
I have a good understanding of the process for referral to the Multi-Agency Team of the Kennedy Cluster/ Watkins Mill Cluster Program. (N=46)	24	52.2	20	43.5	2	4.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
The Multi-Agency Team in the Kennedy Cluster / Watkins Mill Cluster Program is an important support for our students' physical well-being. (N=46)	21	45.7	19	41.3	4	8.7	0	0.0	2	4.3
The Multi-Agency Team is an important support for our students' social and emotional well-being. (N=45)	25	55.6	16	35.6	2	4.4	0	0.0	2	4.4
The Multi-Agency Team helps families in our school meet their basic needs. (N=45)	21	46.7	21	46.7	1	2.2	0	0.0	2	4.4
The Multi-Agency Team helps families in our school become more stable in areas such as housing, employment, health, finances. (N=45)	20	44.4	19	42.2	1	2.2	1	2.2	4	8.9
The Multi-Agency Team has a positive effect on our students' school attendance. (N=45)	9	20.0	20	44.4	4	8.9	2	4.4	10	22.2
The Multi-Agency Team helps our school families become more involved in their children's education. (N=45)	12	26.7	19	42.2	5	11.1	2	4.4	7	15.6
The Multi-Agency Team provides improved access to county services for families in our school. (N=41)	20	48.5	17	41.5	1	2.4	0	0.0	3	7.3

The school-based staff were very positive in their responses to survey items about the Multi-Agency Team. More than 95% of the respondents reported that they have a good understanding of the Multi-Agency Team; over 90% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Multi-Agency Team is an important support for students’ social and emotional well-being, and that it helps families meet their basic needs.

Among all the school-based staff respondents, 61% or 28 staff members reported that they had referred a student or family to the Multi-Agency Team. In addition, staff members were asked if they had referred a student or family to an individual or agency associated with the KCWMC Project. Seventy-six percent ($n = 35$) of the respondents had made such a referral, including to the Care Coordinator, agency professional, and members of the Multi-Agency Team.

MCPS and agency project representatives. Project representatives were asked what is working best in the Multi-Agency Team process. Table 4 summarizes their responses to this open-ended question.

Table 4
Responses of MCPS and Agency Representatives to Survey Item Asking About Aspects Working Best in the Multi-Agency Team Process in the KCWMC Project
(N=18 respondents)

Category	Representative comments (paraphrased)
Collaboration ($n = 9$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives working together • The collaboration and better understanding about and between county government • The collaboration among team members and the “let’s help this family” attitude
Attention to families’ needs ($n = 5$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families feel they are heard and helped • Providing a holistic approach for assisting the families • Helping all children in the family
Access to services ($n = 5$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team brings the services and problem-solving to the family at the school • The ability of families to have direct access to multiple agencies simultaneously • Group exemplifies the “one stop” approach
Case management, follow-up ($n=4$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care coordinator is involved from beginning to end • Care coordinator ensures the family gets the help needed to be self-sufficient and successful • Families walk out with a plan for their needs

Note. Some respondents provided more than one comment and may be counted in more than one category.

Collaboration was noted most frequently by respondents ($n = 9$) as a positive aspect of the Multi-Agency Team process. Respondents commented on the ways the collaboration strengthens the service network in the community and has led to some positive policy changes. Other successful

aspects identified by agency representatives were attention to the families' needs, access to services, and case management and follow-up.

Project representatives also were asked how the Multi-Agency Team process could be improved. Fourteen of the 22 responding project representatives provided a response. Table 5 summarizes their comments.

Table 5
Responses of MCPS and Agency Project Representatives to Survey Item Asking How the Multi-Agency Team Process in the KCWMC Project Could Be Improved
(N=14 respondents)

Category	Representative comments (paraphrased)
More resources (<i>n</i> = 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More staff with dedicated time for the Multi-Agency Team • Expand the project to additional schools • More paid resources
Changes in process/procedures (<i>n</i> = 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take steps before the meeting to ensure parent's attendance; reduce down time waiting for participants • An electronic form that will allow input/feedback from siblings' counselors • Database capturing all services requested and completed
Added support, training (<i>n</i> = 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek involvement of an immigration advocacy group to join Multi-Agency Team on an as-needed basis to help deal with many children who are recent immigrants • Provide training to Multi-Agency Team in culturally-based, trauma-informed practice

The largest number of comments (*n* = 6) from the project representatives referred to the need for additional resources, noting that the project should be expanded to other schools and that additional staff is needed to follow up with families. Several procedural suggestions were made—two about reducing wait time in meetings by ensuring that parents attend and two about creating online forms and databases for records of services. Finally, respondents offered some suggestions to strengthen the effectiveness of the Multi-Agency Team by adding an immigration advocate and by providing culturally-based training for responding to trauma.

Project representatives were asked whether, in their opinion, some types of referrals are more likely to be helped by the Multi-Agency Team process and some are less likely to be helped. Twelve respondents offered answers, and some commonalities emerged. Issues identified by several respondents as more likely to be helped by the project were social service needs, including food (5 respondents), and mental health needs (3 respondents). Two respondents viewed student attendance and truancy as an issue most likely to be helped by the project. The issues less likely to be helped, according to several respondents, were truancy (6 respondents) and immigration concerns (4 respondents). Several respondents pointed out that all cases receive support for the needs presented, and that some issues require more time to resolve or show

progress. It should also be noted that two respondents viewed student attendance and truancy as an issue most likely to be helped by the project.

Perceptions of Out-of-School-Time Activities

Staff based in secondary schools were asked to respond to a series of questions about out-of-school-time activities in their schools. (Since most of the activities are held in middle and high schools, surveys for the elementary school-based staff did not include questions about the out-of-school-time activities. Also, surveys sent to PPWs and psychologists did not include questions about out-of-school-time activities since staff in those roles are likely to have little knowledge of these school-based activities.) Table 6 summarizes the responses of the school-based staff to questions about out-of-school-time activities. The surveys listed the activities that are coordinated under the KCWMC Project umbrella, including Excel Beyond the Bell, Teen Works, Rec Zone, and others, and directed the respondents to answer with reference to those activities.

Table 6
Response to Survey Questions About Out-of-School-Time Activities
From Middle and High School-Based Staff

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't Know	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Participation in out-of-school-time activities helps students become more engaged in school. (N=30)	9	30.0	14	46.7	2	6.7	0	0.0	5	16.7
Participation in out-of-school-time activities helps students succeed in their schoolwork. (N=30)	6	20.0	16	53.3	2	6.7	0	0.0	6	20.0
Out-of-school-time activities in our school are well-organized. (N=30)	4	13.3	17	56.7	1	3.3	0	0.0	8	26.7
Out-of school-time activities in our school are well-supervised. (N=29)	6	20.7	15	51.7	1	0	0	0.0	7	24.1
Enrollment/registration for out-of-school-time activities in our school can be done without difficulty. (N=30)	2	6.7	18	60.0	3	10.0	0	0.0	7	23.3
Participation in out-of-school-time activities is good at our school (sufficient numbers of students sign up for activities). (N=30)	4	13.3	17	56.7	3	10.0	0	0.0	6	20.0

Middle and high school staff were positive in their responses to survey items about out-of-school-time activities in their schools; respondents gave the highest ratings to the item

“Participation in out-of-school-time activities helps students become more engaged in school” (77%), and more than two thirds of the respondents agreed that participation in the out-of-school-time activities helps students succeed in their schoolwork (73%). School staff perceptions of the organization, supervision, enrollment process, and attendance at out-of-school-time activities also were favorable, with more than two thirds of the respondents responding positively.

Perceptions of Partnerships and Collaboration

Project representatives responded to a series of questions about their involvement in the KCWMC Project. Table 7 summarizes their responses.

Table 7
Responses of MCPS and Agency Project Representatives to Survey About
KCWMC Project, Spring 2015
N = 22

	Percent of respondents			
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Involvement in the Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster Project has increased my opportunities for developing partnerships with professionals in other agencies and organizations. (N=19)	68.4	31.6	0.0	0.0
The KCWMC Project has provided me with an opportunity for problem-solving at the county level, across agencies and organizations. (N=20)	60.0	35.0	5.0	0.0
I have shared my experiences in the KCWMC Project with colleagues in my agency or organization (refers to group/committee work only—not confidential work with Multi-Agency Team). (N=19)	68.4	26.3	0.0	5.3
Working with the KCWMC Project has helped me better understand the needs of our community members. (N=20)	75.0	10.0	15.0	0.0
I have increased my knowledge about county resources and services through participation in the KCWMC Project. (N=19)	68.4	15.8	15.8	0.0

All of the project representative respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the KCWMC Project has increased opportunities for developing partnerships. Ninety-five percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project has provided opportunities for problem solving at the county level, and more than 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the project has helped them understand the needs of community members and has increased their knowledge about county resources.

Project representatives were asked in the survey about how their involvement in the KCWMC Project has changed the way they work within their organization. Responses highlighted how the project works at multiple levels; the project representatives reported impacts at both the

organizational and individual level. At the organization level, six respondents reported that the project has provided an example of great multi-agency work, that the project is a model of collaboration and teamwork. At the individual level, seven respondents reported that involvement in the project has helped them become more informed about community resources and able to identify individuals within agencies who can assist with problem solving.

Feedback About the KCWMC Project

Both surveys—those administered to school-based staff and those administered to project representatives—included open-ended questions asking respondents to provide additional comments about the KCWMC Project. The responses of each group are summarized here.

School-based staff. School-based staff members were asked to name the most valuable aspects of the project and to identify areas of the project that may need improvement. Tables 8 and 9 summarize the main topics that emerged from responses to each of the questions and examples of comments within the topics.

Table 8
Responses of School-Based Staff to Survey Item Asking About Most Valuable Aspects
of the KCWMC Project
(N=35 respondents)

Category	Representative comments (paraphrased)
Access to services (n = 27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The abundance of resources to help out our neediest families • They are in the school—easy access for families • All the resources are at one place at one time • Parents can connect with agency directly to move quickly through the process when they are in need of services • Family can meet with people who have the ability to make decisions and get things moving for families faster
Collaboration (n = 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The KCWMC Project has created great relationships among agencies • The Multi-Agency Team works collaboratively to set in place a system of supports • The agencies work together
Follow-up (n = 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Care Coordinator has been wonderful; she tracks the cases and follows up to ensure that plans are implemented • Individual follow-up with families makes a greater impact

Note. Some respondents provided more than one comment and may be counted in more than one category.

Most of the school-based staff who responded to the survey question asking about the most valuable aspects of the project commented about the access to services that the project provides. Respondents noted both the range of resources that the project makes available, the efficiency of having them all together at one meeting, and the ability to make immediate decisions so that a family can begin the process for services more quickly. In addition, a few respondents noted the collaborative nature of the project and the value of the follow-up services provided by the Care Coordinators.

Twenty-two respondents provided comments on aspects of the project that may need improvement. Table 9 summarizes their responses.

Table 9
Responses of School-Based Staff to Survey Item Asking About Aspects
Needing to Be Improved in the KCWMC Project
(N=22 respondents)

Category	Representative comments (paraphrased)
Procedures (n = 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating family services—need notification that a sibling at another school has been referred • Add recreation/leisure activities to intake form • Meeting format—how can it be more comfortable for the referred? • Greater cooperation/coordination from MCPS offices
More resources /more families served (n = 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More resources for unaccompanied homeless youth who are undocumented • Increased resources and programs for exceptional needs • Resources for diverse groups • Capacity to serve more children and families • Some cases need more time
Follow-up (n = 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be more follow-up and follow-through • More information about how schools can follow up with students and families after the meeting; counselors willing to help follow up • Provide updates to the counselor
Training/PDO (n = 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate all school staff about the project and how to use it best • More relevant training; 4-hour presentation is too long

Note. Some respondents provided more than one comment and may be counted in more than one category.

Seven of the respondents suggested improvements concerning procedures. Six of the comments referred to the need for additional resources, either in general or for specific concerns. The remaining comments dealt with follow-up and training. Respondents commented about the need for coordination and communication, both in providing services and in follow-up.

MCPS and agency project representatives. The project representatives were asked in the survey to share their perceptions of the major challenges facing the KCWMC Project. Eleven respondents provided one or more comments. In addition, the respondents were asked to share their thoughts about how the challenges are being addressed; some made suggestions for action, and some made observations. Tables 10 and 11 summarize the responses.

Among the responding project representatives, the challenge most frequently identified was inadequate funding—six respondents commented that funding was needed to expand the project to additional clusters or to provide additional services or staff in the existing project (see Table 10). Respondents suggested additional training of PPWs and other school staff as a way to extend the reach of the project without additional funds (see Table 11).

Table 10
Responses of MCPS and Agency Project Representatives to Survey Item
Asking About Challenges Facing the KCWMC Project
(N=11 respondents)

Category	Representative comments (paraphrased)
Funding (n = 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to expand the program to additional clusters • Funding to support afterschool programs for elementary schools, parent community coordinators, and other needed resources in schools • Funding for additional staff
Service challenges (n = 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources in the county available for housing issues • Families not showing up for appointments or following through, cooperating • Children not wanting to go to school and parents who don't know how to deal with it
Communicating about the project (n = 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that school staff are aware of the benefits of the project • Communicating realistic goals

Note. Some respondents provided more than one comment.

Table 11
Responses of MCPS and Agency Project Representatives to Survey Item
Asking About Ways to Address Challenges Facing the KCWMC Project
(N=9 respondents)

Category	Representative comments (paraphrased)
Suggestions for program changes, additions (n = 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer parenting classes for families of students who are truant • Make the best use of existing resources; for example, the Wellness Center may provide immediate support for students; Linkages to Learning may provide case management services • Increase diversity on the Multi-Agency Team to raise the level of understanding of client needs
Expanding the project's reach (n = 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand training provided by the cluster project to PPWs in additional clusters • Offering multiple professional development opportunities for staff to learn about services and resources
Outside project influences (n = 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Council needs to understand and believe in the value of the project

Note. Some respondents provided more than one comment.

Additionally, project representatives were invited to share any other thoughts about the KCWMC Project. Six of the 22 respondents offered comments. Several respondents specifically recognized the dedication and commitment of the leadership and the staff of the project. The value of the KCWMC Project was described in several comments, such as these:

- “Without the project, families in need would not know about the many services the county has to offer. Because of the project, we are forming positive relationships with families... .”
- “I believe this is a very worthwhile program to assist families with their needs which will enhance the educational well-being of the children involved.”

Evaluation Question 2. To what extent did out-of-school-time activities and programs support students in Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster schools?

To address Evaluation Question 2, data were collected and analyzed to identify activities and programs in place at the cluster schools, examine rates of participation in the activities, and, when student level data were available, analyze student outcomes related to participation.

What activities were offered? How many students participated?

Table 12 lists the activities in place during the 2014–2015 school year in the Kennedy and Watkins Mill clusters, the number of schools where they were held, and, when data were available, the number of participants. A brief description of each of the activities and programs follows, along with additional information about participation, when data were available.

Linkages to Learning. Linkages to Learning (LTL) is a collaborative initiative among the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS), MCPS, and local non-profit agencies. The goal of LTL is to reduce the barriers to learning that are created by social, economic, health, and emotional challenges. The program provides prevention and early intervention services, including health, mental health, social services, and educational support, to improve the well-being of children and their families. Currently, LTL is located in 29 MCPS schools, including two elementary schools in the Kennedy and Watkins Mill clusters. During 2014–2015, 111 students in the two cluster schools received mental health or case management services through LTL. LTL also provides activities and services for the whole school community, such as after-school activities and parent support and adult education opportunities.

Early Childhood/Parent Café. Parent cafés were introduced during the 2014–2015 school year in the Kennedy Cluster to provide parenting support and education for families with young children. ChildLink, an information and referral service within MCDHHS, provided trained facilitators and hosts for a parent café held in a Kennedy Cluster elementary school; participants discussed challenges of parenting and ways that parents can take care of themselves. Twenty-two parents participated in the Kennedy Cluster Parent Café during 2014–2015.

Table 12
Activities and Programs in Kennedy and Watkins Mill Clusters Schools, 2014–2015,
by School Level

Activity	Number of schools	Total number of participants
<i>Elementary School Activities and Programs</i>		
Linkages to Learning	2 ES	111 ¹
Early Childhood/Parent Cafes	1 ES	22
<i>Middle School Activities and Programs</i>		
Excel Beyond the Bell	4 MS	777
Truancy Prevention Program	2 MS	36
<i>High School Activities and Programs</i>		
Rec Zone ²	1 HS	892
Police Explorer Post	2 HS	3
Teen Works ²	2 HS	30
Fun, Food, & Fitness ²	1 HS	48
Wellness Center	1 HS	393
<i>Activities and Programs Held in More Than One School Level</i>		
Family Markets	1 ES, 2 MS, 1 HS	17 markets held
Youth Advisory Committee ²	4 MS, 1 HS	37

Note. ES = elementary school; MS = middle school; HS = high school.

¹ Students reported as participating in Linkages to Learning were enrolled as mental health and/or case management clients. Participation in whole-school activities were not counted.

² Montgomery County Recreation Department provided participation data.

Truancy Prevention Program. The Truancy Prevention Program, sponsored by the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office, was held in five MCPS middle schools, including two Kennedy cluster and Watkins Mill cluster schools. During the 2014–2015 school year, 36 students from the two middle schools participated in the program—13 Grade 6 students; 13 Grade 7 students; and 10 Grade 8 students.

RecZone. RecZone, an after-school program held at Watkins Mill High School, provides an opportunity for students to participate in activities such as Latin Dance or Teen Cuisine, or to drop in and participate in self-directed activities. During the 2014–2015 school year, 892 students participated in RecZone at Watkins Mill High school.

Police Explorer Post. The Police Explorer program provides students with an opportunity to develop character with leadership skills, self-confidence, patience, cooperation, perseverance, discipline, and commitment and learn about law enforcement as a career choice. Explorers also can learn interpersonal skills such as team building, conflict resolution, and anger and stress management. During the 2014–2015 school year, three students from Kennedy and Watkins Mill High Schools participated.

TeenWorks. Held in both Kennedy and Watkins Mill High Schools, TeenWorks is Montgomery County Recreation’s workforce development initiative. High school students have the opportunity to develop skills while performing meaningful work and earning a paycheck. Employment opportunities include recreation and community outreach, non-profit and government apprenticeships, conservation and environmental science, work study positions, and other experiences. During the 2014–2015 summer and school year, 30 students from Kennedy and Watkins Mill High Schools participated in TeenWorks.

Wellness Center. The Wellness Center at Watkins Mill High School offers coordinated medical care, quality counseling, positive youth development, and health education experiences in a confidential and culturally sensitive manner. Services are provided onsite at no cost to all students attending Watkins Mill High School and their families. The health services team includes a nurse practitioner, pediatrician, registered nurse, mental health counselor, youth development counselors, and certified nursing assistants. During the 2014–2015 school year, 393 students and their families were served in the center.

Family Markets. Seventeen family market events were held in four schools in the Kennedy and Watkins Mill clusters during the 2014–2015 school year. Family markets offer students and families a chance to learn more about their school and community resources, while also providing an opportunity to pick up free, healthy food items provided by the Capital Area Food Bank. An estimated 9,025 community members participated in the 17 market events, where 171,000 pounds of food were provided for an estimated 2,176 households during the 2014–2015 school year.

Youth Advisory Committee. The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) was in place in ten MCPS schools, including four project middle schools and Watkins Mill High School, during 2014–2015. The YAC serves as a platform for students in MCPS to voice their thoughts and concerns about community and youth issues. The goal is for participants to establish a connection to their community while developing skills in advocacy, leadership, citizenship, and teambuilding. During the 2014–2015 school year, 37 students from the cluster schools participated on the YAC.

Fun, Food, & Fitness. Fun, Food, & Fitness is a free drop-in summer program for kids ages 18 and younger which combines access to healthy food with physical activity. The Montgomery County Department of Recreation offers the program in collaboration with MCPS Division of Food and Nutrition Services. The program was held at Kennedy High School during the summer of 2014 with 48 students participating.

Excel Beyond the Bell. Excel Beyond the Bell (EBB) is a comprehensive after-school enrichment opportunity offered at seven middle schools in MCPS, including the four middle schools in the Kennedy and Watkins Mill clusters. Students can explore new interests and build positive relationships with adults and peers; the activities provide an opportunity for students to increase their involvement with school and their community. The program is offered at no cost to families and includes access to healthy after-school snacks and transportation. EBB runs three

sessions during the school year: fall, winter, and spring. Each session is about eight weeks long, and activities are held two or three times each week.

Table 13 shows examples of EBB activities that were offered in the Kennedy and Watkins Mills clusters during 2014–2015 and the number of students who participated. Students could participate in more than one activity and in multiple sessions—the reported number of students participating is a total count (students who participated in more than one activity over more than one session are counted in each).

Table 13
EBB Activities Offered and Number of Participants in Kennedy Cluster/Watkins Mill Cluster
Middle Schools, 2014–2015

Type of EBB Activity	Examples of activities	Number participated ^a
Cooking/Nutrition	Young Chefs; Food & Fitness; Taste and Move; Let's Cook	381
Creative Arts	Murals; Arts & Crafts; Mixed Media Art; Hip Hop Dance; STEP Team; Improv Acting; West African Drumming	1,039
Leadership	Dream Girls; Young Men United; Olympiad; Cultural Awareness; Design Your Destiny	700
Physical Activity /Fitness	Yoga; Flag Football; Soccer; Teen Esteem; Beyond Basketball; Chess; Classroom Sports; Game-O-Rama	1,508
Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM)	Gadget Factory; Math Ninjas; The MakerSpace; Media TV Production; STEM Robotics	553

^a Students are counted over multiple sessions and multiple activities.

Was participation in out-of-school-time activities related to increased school attendance and student engagement?

One of the activities coordinated by the KCWMC Project—EBB—provided student-level participation data, allowing an analysis of the relationship between EBB participation and school attendance.

EBB was held in the four middle schools in the Kennedy and Watkins Mill clusters; Table 14 shows the demographic characteristics of the EBB participants in the four middle schools. For context, the demographic characteristics of all students in the four schools are shown also.

Table 14
 Characteristics of Students Participating in Excel Beyond the Bell and All Students in Four
 Kennedy and Watkins Mill Cluster Middle Schools, 2014–2015

Characteristics		EBB Participants in 4 Middle Schools (<i>N</i> = 777)		All Students in 4 Middle Schools (<i>N</i> = 3,405)*	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	395	50.8	1,838	54.0
	Female	382	49.2	1,567	46.0
Grade	6	342	44.0	1,203	35.3
	7	229	29.5	1,135	33.3
	8	206	26.5	1,067	31.3
Race/ ethnicity	Asian	70	9.0	310	9.1
	Black or African American	334	43.0	1,085	31.9
	Hispanic/Latino	294	37.8	1,596	46.9
	White	54	6.9	293	8.6
	Two or more races	25	3.2	118	3.5
Receipt of FARMS (current or previous)		610	78.5	2,674	78.5
Receipt of ESOL (current or previous)		382	49.1	1,771	52.0
Receipt of special education (current)		103	13.3	415	12.2

* This number includes *N*=777 EBB participants.

Grade 6 students participated in EBB in higher numbers than students in Grade 7 and Grade 8; their proportion in EBB was higher than in the whole school populations. In addition, a higher percentage of Black or African American students and a lower percentage of Hispanic/Latino students participated in EBB, compared to their representation in the school population. Other subgroups of student participants were represented in proportions similar to those in the school population.

Attendance. Attendance rates and unexcused absences for students participating in any number of EBB sessions during 2014–2015 and for all students in the four middle schools are shown in Table 15. For reference, one day's attendance represents about 0.5 % as reflected in the mean attendance rate. The mean attendance rate was slightly higher for the students enrolled in EBB than for all students in the four middle schools. Likewise, the mean number of unexcused absences was lower for the EBB participants than for all students in the four schools.

Table 15
Attendance Data for Students Participating in Excel Beyond the Bell and for
All Students in Four Kennedy and Watkins Mill Cluster Middle Schools

Measure	EBB Participants in 4 Middle Schools (<i>N</i> = 777)				All Students in 4 Middle Schools (<i>N</i> = 3,405)*			
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
2014–2015 attendance rate (% days attended)								
Grade 6	95.82	4.31	65.72	100.00	95.03	5.61	22.22	100.00
Grade 7	95.02	4.96	68.82	100.00	94.41	6.59	15.46	100.00
Grade 8	95.46	5.13	63.95	100.00	94.37	6.24	17.42	100.00
2014–2015 number of unexcused absences								
Grade 6	4.31	5.31	0.00	37.50	5.29	6.85	0.00	94.00
Grade 7	5.56	6.44	0.00	33.50	6.21	8.41	0.00	102.00
Grade 8	4.69	6.33	0.00	37.50	6.38	8.70	0.00	127.50

* This number includes *N*=777 EBB participants.

To explore whether the amount of EBB was related to outcomes of school year attendance, attendance measures were compared for students who had high levels and low levels of EBB participation. For each grade, the total number of days participated in EBB was used to divide the students into three groups of similar size. For the analysis, the top third (highest level of EBB participation) was compared with the bottom third (lowest level of EBB participation) in each of the grades. Thus, all the students in the analysis were enrolled in EBB but had different amounts of participation. Across the three grades, EBB participation ranged from 0 days (enrolled but did not attend) to 81 days. This grouping strategy allowed comparisons among students with different levels of EBB participation, but was not confounded by factors related to voluntary enrollment in an out-of-school time activity.

Table 16 displays the adjusted means for attendance rates for the two groups of students—high participation and low participation—for each of the three grades. The means were adjusted for students' demographic characteristics (using propensity score quintiles) and for the previous year attendance rate.

Table 16
Mean Attendance Rate for Students in Excel Beyond the Bell
by Level of Participation and Grade Level

School attendance rate (% days attended)	Students with high EBB participation ^a		Students with low EBB participation ^a		Effect of EBB participation level			
	<i>n</i>	<i>Adjusted mean^b</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Adjusted mean^b</i>	<i>Mean difference</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Effect size (d)</i>
Grade 6*	111	96.38	112	94.77	1.61	.41	.006	.32
Grade 7	72	94.89	62	95.03	-0.14	.44	.822	-.02
Grade 8	71	95.93	67	94.92	1.01	.40	.078	.21

^a Participation levels were based on high and low thirds of each grade group; cutoffs were as follows: Grade 6 (range 0–81 days)—Low participation < 9 days, High participation > 18 days; Grade 7 (range 0–71 days)—Low participation < 6 days, High participation > 16 days; Grade 8 (range 0–66 days)—Low participation < 6 days, High participation > 12 days.

^b Mean adjusted for propensity score quintile (computed with gender, FARMS, ESOL, and special education) and previous year attendance rate.

* $p < .05$

The mean attendance rate was significantly related to the level of EBB participation for Grade 6 students ($F=7.59$, $df=3$, 223, $p = .006$). The percentage point difference between the high participators and low participators was 1.61, which represents more than two and one-half days. The effect size was $d = .32$, reflecting a difference of practical significance in education. Mean attendance rate was not statistically significantly related to the level of EBB participation in Grade 7 or Grade 8, although in Grade 8 the difference between high EBB participators and low EBB participators was large enough to be of practical significance ($d = .21$).

Table 17 shows the mean number of unexcused absences for the two EBB participation groups in each of the grades. Again, the means were adjusted for students' demographic characteristics (using propensity score quintiles) and for the previous year attendance rate.

Table 17
Mean Unexcused Absences for Students in Excel Beyond the Bell
by Level of Participation and Grade Level

Mean number unexcused absences	Students with high EBB participation ^a		Students with low EBB participation ^a		Effect of EBB participation level			
	<i>n</i>	<i>Adjusted mean^b</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Adjusted mean^b</i>	<i>Mean difference</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Effect size (d)</i>
Grade 6	111	4.06	112	5.24	1.18	.52	.116	.21
Grade 7	72	5.81	62	5.32	0.48	.60	.565	.06
Grade 8 *	71	4.29	67	6.14	1.85	.57	.025	.24

^a Participation levels were based on high and low thirds of each grade group; cutoffs were as follows: Grade 6 (range 0–81 days)—Low participation < 9 days, High participation > 18 days; Grade 7 (range 0–71 days)—Low participation < 6 days, High participation > 16 days; Grade 8 (range 0–66 days)—Low participation < 6 days, High participation > 12 days.

^b Mean adjusted for propensity score quintile (computed with gender, FARMS, ESOL, and special education) and previous year attendance rate.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Mean unexcused absences were significantly related to the level of EBB participation in Grade 8 ($F = 5.14$, $df=3, 138$, $p = .025$). The difference between the high participators and low participators was 1.85 days, indicating that on average, the high EBB participation group had 1.85 fewer unexcused absences than the low EBB participation group. The effect size was $d = .24$, reflecting a difference of practical significance in education. Mean unexcused absences were not statistically significantly related to the level of EBB participation in Grade 6 or Grade 7, although in Grade 6 the difference between high EBB participators and low EBB participators (1.18 days) was large enough to be of practical significance ($d = .21$).

Taken together, the analyses of the relationship between EBB participation and school attendance measures provided evidence that a higher level of participation in EBB was associated with better attendance rates and fewer unexcused absences for students in Grade 6 and Grade 8.

Student engagement. A subset of the students participating in EBB ($N = 244$) completed surveys reporting on ways the EBB program has helped them, such as making positive choices and feeling a sense of belonging. The survey was administered by EBB staff at the end of the spring 2015 session to a convenience sample of students in a variety of activities in all four of the cluster schools. Table 18 reports the average percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the items in the scale (listed below each survey scale). Students responded by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree) to each of the survey items, preceded by this introduction: “Coming to Excel Beyond the Bell and participating in program activities has helped me to...”.

To calculate the school’s scale score, the percentage of students agreeing or strongly agreeing was computed for each item; then percentages for all items in the scale were averaged to compute the school’s scale score in terms of average percent agreeing. To compute the scale score across the four cluster schools, the mean of school scale scores (weighted using the number of students responding) was computed.

Table 18
 Mean Percentage of Students Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to
 Items in Five Scales on Excel Beyond the Bell Survey, Spring 2015
 N = 244

Survey Scale	%
Sense of belonging	88.8
I belong.	
My ideas count.	
People really listen to me.	
I'm successful.	
I have a comfortable place to hang out.	
I matter.	
If I didn't show up, someone would notice I was not around.	
I can really be myself.	
I have a friend who care about me.	
There are adults who care about me.	
Sense of self	85.7
Feel better about myself.	
Feel I have more control over things that happen to me.	
Feel that I can make more of a difference.	
Learn I can do things I didn't think I could do before.	
Feel better about my future.	
Feel that I am better at handling whatever comes my way.	
Positive core values	84.7
I care more about other people.	
I care more about the feelings of other people.	
I am better at standing up for what I believe.	
I tell the truth more often even when it is hard.	
Positive Life Choices	83.0
Better say “no” to things I know are wrong.	
Stay out of trouble.	
Stay away from violence and fighting.	
Academic Attitudes & Behaviors	77.6
Participate more in class activities.	
Become more interested in going to school.	
Care more about my school.	
Get along better with my classmates.	
Get along better with my teachers.	

Note. Survey was developed and administered by EBB; school-level data were provided to evaluators by EBB and Collaboration Council. Only school-level scale scores (not item scores) were provided.

More than three quarters of the responding students agreed, on average, with survey items across all of the scales. The scale with the highest agreement was Sense of belonging (89%), which included statements such as “My ideas count,” “I have a comfortable place to hang out,” and “There are adults who care about me.” Overall, responses to the EBB student survey indicated that the participation in EBB had a positive effect on student engagement and attitudes.

Evaluation Question 3. How has the KCWMC Project contributed to developing partnerships and collaborations among school and county agency staff?

School-based staff and school and agency project representatives provided feedback focused on ways stakeholders have worked together, such as through professional development opportunities and collaborative problem solving.

KCWMC Project Professional Development

School-based staff. Over two thirds of school-based staff respondents (n = 31; 67%) reported that they had attended a professional development opportunity (PDO) given by the KCWMC Project; ten (22%) reported that they had attended a PDO provided by the recreation department about out-of-school time activities. The specific PDO activities attended by the respondents are reported in Table 19.

Table 19
Professional Development Opportunities Attended by School-Based Staff
N = 46

	<i>Number attended</i>	<i>%</i>
Training for counselors about non-profits	10	21.7
County agency training (4 hours) for counselors, PPWs, and principals	18	39.1
Multi-Agency Team training: what it is and how to make referrals; provided to each school, each school PTA, and to non-profits	15	32.6
Training by police and state's attorney's office for parents	3	6.5
Training for counselors on expectations for recommendation	11	23.9
Principals' training	1	4.3

The training opportunities attended by the largest number of responding school-based staff were the county agency training (39%) and the Multi-Agency Team training (33%).

Staff members who had attended a PDO related to the KCWMC Project responded to survey questions about the training. Table 20 summarizes their responses.

Table 20
School-Based Staff Responses to Survey Questions about Professional Development Opportunities

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
The PDO provided information about how to contact service providers directly if needed for a possible referral. (N=31)	10	32.3	21	67.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
The PDO helped me feel comfortable referring a student and/or family member to a service provider in our community. (N=30)	10	33.3	18	60.0	1	3.3	1	3.3
I gained knowledge and information about the services provided by the agencies and organizations participating in the Multi-Agency Team. (N=32)	9	28.1	20	62.5	2	6.3	1	3.1
The PDO helped me understand the Multi-Agency Team process. (N=32)	10	31.3	18	56.3	4	12.5	0	0.0
I would be interested in attending an additional PDO session by the Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster Project to learn more about services available in our community. (N=32)	3	9.4	22	68.8	4	12.5	3	9.4

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the PDO provided information about how to contact service providers if needed, and over 90% of respondents reported that the PDO helped them feel more comfortable referring a student or family to a community service provider (93%) and that they gained knowledge about the services provided by agencies participating in the Multi-Agency Team (91%).

MCPS and agency project representatives. Of the 22 project representatives responding to the survey, 16 (73%) had attended at least one professional development/training provided by the KCWMC Project. Most of the respondents indicated that they had attended the professional development opportunity as a trainer or as an agency representative. Table 21 shows the types of training offered by the project and the number of the responding project representatives who participated.

Table 21
Professional Development Opportunities Attended by MCPS and Agency Representatives
N = 22

<i>Professional Development Opportunities</i>	<i>Number attended</i>
Training for counselors about non-profits	8
Training for parents about non-profits	4
County agency training (4 hours) for counselors, PPWs, and principals	11
Multi-Agency Team training: County government training about available services provided by different agencies and departments (for example, special needs housing, income supports, truancy review); provided at school or agency	12
Parent training—5-part series conducted by MCPS Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships	3
Training by police and state’s attorney’s office for parents	4
Training for counselors on expectations for recommendations to the Multi-Agency Team	8
Training by recreation department on working with kids in out-of-school-time activities	3
Other: Training about race and legacy of racism (2); Out-of-school-time Network conference (1)	3

MCPS and agency representatives also offered ideas for other training opportunities that would be worthwhile for the KCWMC Project to provide. The respondents suggested training opportunities both for staff and for parents in the school communities. Suggestions included:

Training for staff

- Training for teachers on identifying children appropriate for the program
- Training for teachers about the benefits of the project
- Training in culturally based, trauma-informed practice
- How to work with families that have multiple barriers
- How to work with resistant clients
- Additional training about the agencies and services they provide
- Training on immigration help for recently arrived children

Training for parents

- Neighborhood trainings on immigration issues with experts on immigration
- Neighborhood training with community organizations on opportunities/services offered to community members, such as food pantries, financial support, tutoring, mentoring, etc.
- Financial literacy training for parents
- Parenting classes
- Training about how mental health issues affect a child’s behavior
- Training about warning signs of drug use

Collaboration Among Schools and Agencies

Through their survey responses, MCPS and agency project representatives reported examples of policy and procedural changes that were made as a result of the collaborative work in the project. Changes impacting the larger community included:

- Interpreters of a specific dialect of Somalia were added to the MCPS language line, making this service available to all Somali families with children in MCPS.
- Summer lunch program was created.
- The process for vision and hearing screenings by the Health Department was changed so that schools with the highest rates of students eligible for FARMS are screened first instead of in random order.
- Fun, Food, and Fitness sites were established in close proximity to families in need in the Kennedy cluster.
- A cyber-safety program was developed at a cluster school as a result of a Multi-Agency Team case involving bullying and cyber bullying.

The project representatives also described partnerships that have been formed through work on the project to address community or school issues. Examples included:

- KCWMC Project has developed a partnership with Screening and Assessment Services for Children and Adolescents in order to better serve children with substance issues.
- The State's Attorney's Office has developed a good working relationship with the Child Support Enforcement Office to assist parents in their efforts to receive their ordered support.
- The Family Food Markets were created in partnership with the Capital Area Food Bank.
- Kennedy Cluster Watkins Mill Cluster Project has developed a partnership with the National Center for Children and Families to provide housing for some of the students served in the project.
- A school in the project partnered with the State's Attorney's Office to develop a program to address bullying.
- A partnership with Neediest Kids was formed to acquire beds for a family in the project.
- Through a partnership with the recreation department, a basketball league was formed at an elementary school in the KCWMC Project.

Summary and Discussion

The overarching goal of the KCWMC Project is to remove barriers to school engagement and student success. The project supports students and families in the two clusters by linking them with direct services and by providing activities and opportunities at the school and community level. This report focused mainly on the latter means of support. By the measures examined in this study—qualitative and quantitative—the project is having a positive impact in these two school cluster communities.

Feedback from school-based staff and project representatives indicated that the opportunities provided by the KCWMC Project benefit the cluster communities in a range of ways. School-based staff reported that the Multi-Agency Team is an important support for students and their families, that out-of-school-time activities help students become more engaged with school, and that professional development opportunities help school staff learn about community resources and how to link students and families with needed services. Project representatives described ways that collaboration in the KCWMC Project has led to program and policy changes that are benefitting students and families throughout the community. Access to services was named the most valuable aspect of the project by school-based staff, and the collaborative nature of the project was viewed by school staff and project representatives as a major strength. Suggestions for improvements included the need for additional resources, additional trainings, and some procedural changes.

A range of out-of-school-time activities were in place in the Kennedy and Watkins Mill cluster schools, with hundreds of students participating. In addition, Family Markets were held in six of the cluster schools, benefiting hundreds of families in the community. Statistical analysis of student participation in Excel Beyond the Bell and school attendance revealed that participation in EBB was associated with better attendance rates and fewer unexcused absences for Grade 6 and Grade 8 students. Many of the out-of-school-time activities are not unique to the Kennedy and Watkins Mill clusters. However, the value and strength of the cluster project is its capacity—through school-agency collaboration—to identify and understand the needs in the community and implement the services and activities that will best meet those needs.

Further study of the Multi-Agency Team process and outcomes will be addressed in a second report, scheduled for completion in December 2016. The current report, focusing on implementation of the project and examination of two components of the program—out-of-school-time activities and partnerships—provides an overview of the operation of the project in the cluster schools. As the evaluation proceeds, additional information will be analyzed and reported, particularly with reference to the Multi-Agency Team and the students and families with whom it works.

Recommendations

- Plan and provide additional staff training sessions, with input from agency representatives. The expertise within the KCWMC Project, as well as relationships with additional community resources, positions the cluster project to meet important professional development needs within the school community. Survey respondents identified a number of specific training needs, including:
 - Training in culturally based, trauma-informed practice
 - How to work with families that have multiple barriers
 - How to work with resistant clients
 - Training on immigration help for recently arrived children
- Plan and provide training sessions for parents and family members in the cluster communities. Survey respondents identified a number of specific training needs, including immigration issues, opportunities and services in the community, financial literacy, mental health and drug issues, and truancy.
- Explore ways to encourage more Hispanic/Latino students to participate in EBB. Hispanic/Latino students are underrepresented in EBB enrollment, compared to their representation in the populations of the schools in the project clusters. Solicit feedback from students about activities of interest; reach out to parents to ensure they understand EBB and its benefits for students.
- Develop a centralized system of program-level record-keeping to improve tracking and coordination of services and activities in cluster schools. Currently, program data reside within individual programs, but a central overview of services and programs in place also may be helpful for planning.
- Explore ways to improve the efficiency of the Multi-Agency Team meetings, particularly to ensure that participants are present at the scheduled time. Additional reminder calls or e-mails may be needed.
- Consider development of electronic forms and a database to record intake information, referred services, and follow-up. Create a process for notifying and receiving input from siblings' counselors (with parent consent).

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Appendix A

Table A-1
Schools in the Kennedy Cluster and Watkins Mill Cluster Project by School Year

	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–2016
Elementary Schools								
Bel Pre	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Brookhaven								X
Daly ^a								
Georgian Forest	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Glenallan				X	X	X	X	X
Glen Haven								X
South Lake							X	X
Stedwick							X	X
Strathmore	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Watkins Mill							X	X
Whetstone							X	X
Middle Schools								
Argyle	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lee				X	X	X	X	X
Neelsville							X	X
Montgomery Village							X	X
High Schools								
Kennedy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Watkins Mill							X	X

^a Students at Daly ES who had siblings at Neelsville MS were included in the KCWMC Project in 2015–2016.

Appendix B

Process for Referral to Multi-Agency Team

The process of referring a student to the Multi-Agency Team involves the following steps:

- A school staff member completes a referral form for the student (see Attachment B-1). In some cases, a provider outside of school may initiate a referral by contacting the student's counselor and completing a referral form.
- The student's counselor reviews the referral for suitability for the Multi-Agency Team.
- The principal reviews and signs the referral form.
- The counselor contacts the parents and explains the program, requests parent consent.
- The counselor gives the needs questionnaire to the parent to complete.
- When the parental consent form is signed and the needs questionnaire is completed, the care coordinator calls the family and schedules the referral for a team meeting.

During the meeting, action plans and recommendations by the Multi-Agency Team are recorded on the Client Action Form (Attachment B-2). The care coordinator follows up with the family after the team meeting to facilitate contact with referral services and to support follow-through with recommended plans.

CONFIDENTIAL

**WATKINS MILL HIGH SCHOOL CLUSTER PROJECT
FAMILY INTAKE INFORMATION
PART IV**

Student's Info: _____
Last
First
MI

Address: _____
Street Address
Apartment/Unit #
City
State
ZIP Code

	Last Name	First Name	MI	DOB	Social Security #	Sex (Circle)	Ethnicity (Circle)	Race (Circle)	Grade	SID #	School
Parent/ Guardian #1						M F	Hisp/Lat Non H/L	AI As B NH/PI W	N/A	N/A	N/A
Parent/ Guardian #2						M F	Hisp/Lat Non H/L	AI As B NH/PI W	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sibling 1						M F	Hisp/Lat Non H/L	AI As B NH/PI W			
Sibling 2						M F	Hisp/Lat Non H/L	AI As B NH/PI W			
Sibling 3						M F	Hisp/Lat Non H/L	AI As B NH/PI W			
Sibling 4						M F	Hisp/Lat Non H/L	AI As B NH/PI W			

CONFIDENTIAL

WATKINS MILL HIGH SCHOOL CLUSTER PROJECT
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION
PART V

My signature below represents my consent to participate in the Watkins Mill Project and gives permission to the Project Service Providers to use and share confidential information about the above-named children and me associated with the provision of benefits and services. It has been explained to me, in a language I understand, that I am consenting for my child and my family to participate in a project that will provide coordinated services to us that may involve Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery County (MC) departments, Maryland State (MD) agencies, and local non-profit organizations. This means my family will work with officials from government agencies that will coordinate resources to complement the educational services my child receives. I am aware that I can obtain more detailed information about the individual participants by reading the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Watkins Mill Project that will be made available to me upon request. It has been explained that the intended purpose of this project is to jointly provide services in my child's school, home and community that will help my child and my family and improve my child's education.

This consent to participate will be kept by the Project managers in a confidential file that is separate from my child's school records.

By signing this consent form I agree to allow the participating agencies to accept a copy of this form as a valid consent to share information. I will not be told each time my information is shared unless I specifically ask to be told. This consent is valid for a period of twelve months. This consent may be revoked by me in writing at any time, and such revocation will prevent future disclosure to the extent that information has not already been released. Revocation will stop Service Providers from sharing information after they know that my consent has been withdrawn. It will not, however, prevent the use of information that was shared before I withdrew my consent.

The Agencies participating in the Project that will be authorized to obtain access to your information on a need-to-know basis for the purpose of providing services to your family are:

- Montgomery County Office of the County Executive
- Montgomery County Council Office
- Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
- Montgomery County Department of Recreation
- Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- Montgomery County Office of the State's Attorney Montgomery
- County Department of Police
- Montgomery County Public Schools
- Montgomery County Board of Education Montgomery County
- Regional Services Centers Montgomery County Collaboration Council
- Montgomery County Department of Libraries Montgomery County
- Interagency Coordinating Board Department of Juvenile Services

I allow MCPS to contact me in the future regarding my participation with the project: Yes No

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Printed Name _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Email Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell /Other Phone _____

Witness' Signature _____ Agency _____

Witness' Printed Name _____ Date _____

DHHS 06/08

Needs Questionnaire

Please check services that you or someone in your family needs.

Date: _____

STAFF USE ONLY		
	Needs	Referred To:
Financial Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Burial Assistance		
<input type="checkbox"/> Cash Assistance (TCA -TDAP)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Assistance		
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Stamps		
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Prescription Assistance		
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing – Eviction or Foreclosure Assistance		
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing – Homeless Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing – Moving Help or Security Deposit		
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing – Rental Assistance		
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Assistance – Coverage for Adults		
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Assistance – Coverage for Children and Families		
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Finances and Budgeting Assistance		
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities Assistance		
Health Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol/Drug Treatment		
<input type="checkbox"/> Cancer Screening and Treatment		
<input type="checkbox"/> Birth Control/		
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Care for Adults		
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Care for Child		
<input type="checkbox"/> Dental Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> HIV/STD Testing		
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Services – Adult		
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Services – Child		
<input type="checkbox"/> Immunizations (vaccinations)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy/Prenatal Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Vision/Hearing Services		

STAFF USE ONLY		
	Needs	Referred To
Family Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Care – Help Finding Child Care		
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Care – Help Paying for Care		
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Support Payments		
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling (need someone to talk with)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Day Care - Adult		
<input type="checkbox"/> Disability Support Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence		
<input type="checkbox"/> Gang Prevention		
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Abuse or Neglect – Adult		
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Abuse or Neglect – Child		
<input type="checkbox"/> Services for Children ages 0-5 years – Early Childhood		
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Information		
<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Crime and Sexual Assault		
Other Services		
<input type="checkbox"/> Clothing		
<input type="checkbox"/> Furniture		
<input type="checkbox"/> Employment – non TCA		
<input type="checkbox"/> Immigration		
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal		
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other :		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
For Office Use Only: _____		
HHS Worker/Phone _____		

If you would like more information before applying for services, please call the DHHS information and Referral line, 240-777-1245.

Intake Summary/Referral Notes:	
---------------------------------------	--

I understand this information may be shared for referral or management purposes. DHHS staff may call me for follow-up Purpose(s) at

(phone #) _____ and leave a message: on voice mail Y N or with a person Y N

Customer Name (please print) _____ Customer Signature _____

**B-2
Project Client Action Form**

CLIENT ACTION FORM	
Mayra Rondon-Tineo, Care Coordinator Kennedy Cluster Project Direct No.: (240) 777-1449 777-1661 Cell No.: (240) 277-7964 Mayra.Rondon@montgomerycountymd.gov	Zulma Medrano-Lopez, Care Coordinator Watkins Mill Cluster Project Direct No.: (240) Cell No.: (240) 328-7526 Zulma.Medrano-Lopez@montgomerycountymd.gov

SERVICE AREA INFORMATION

Student's First & Last Name:	Multi-A Meeting Date:
Student's Home Address:	School Year:
Medical Assistance No.:	Student ID No.:
Parent's Name:	Parent's Contact Info.:
School Name:	School Counselor's Name:

ACTION ITEMS	DUE DATE		
LIST OF COMMITMENTS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	AGENCY	STATUS

FOLLOW-UP # 1 Project Date: _____ Contact Date: _____ Phone Meeting

LIST OF ITEMS from Multi-A- -PROGRESS	Followed through?	NOTES
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No	

	No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Ask permission for call from MCPS research office: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Best Contact Number:		
CASE EVALUATION UPDATE <input type="checkbox"/> 3 month review and/or <input type="checkbox"/> 6 month review		
Completed by:		Case Status:

Appendix C

MCPS Elementary, Middle, and High Schools and Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships

- Provide space for the Multi-Agency Team to meet and facilitate the participation of appropriate school staff in the meetings for coordinating services for in-school supports to students and families
- Provide feedback and work as an active treatment team member through staff whose students are part of the project
- Provide educational testing where needed as appropriate
- Provide programs and services for engaging families and students
- Provide crisis intervention and counseling
- Provide translation services when appropriate
- Provide transportation services to families when available
- Provide data collection services and access to data where appropriate

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

- Reach out to the family by engaging in the home and community
- Screen for public assistance needs and make referrals based on needs
- Provide parenting skills training in the home and in the school
- Provide workshop and training services to help families with home and education needs
- Make referrals for services as needed for individual and family services
- Provide crisis intervention for students and families
- Act as liaison with parents and teachers on behalf of the student
- Provide translation services where needed
- Provide public assistance such as housing, medical assistance, etc.
- Screen for mental health care, medical health care, and substance abuse needs

Police/ State's Attorney's Office

- Provide support to the community outreach efforts of the Multi-Agency Team
- Help to identify families and students in need of support networks that can be provided by the project resources
- Participate on the Multi-Agency Team where appropriate or necessary
- Provide information to the other stakeholders about community issues, criminal activities or threats to families, victims, or students involved with the project, to the extent permitted by law
- Assist victim families and victim students to minimize the impact and effect of criminal activity on their lives
- Ensure that services offered through the project are consistent with services provided to any juvenile offenders, victims, or families of offenders and victims

- Operate the Truancy Prevention Program, a nonpunitive, incentive-based, and voluntary early intervention program
- Sponsor Montgomery County Police Explorer Post 1986, whose mission is to provide a meaningful learning environment for students interested in law enforcement as a career and opportunities for those who desire to serve the community

Department of Juvenile Services

- Provide appropriate services to juvenile offenders
- Participate as partners to support outreach efforts of the Multi-Agency Team
- Recommend and develop treatment service plans for juvenile offenders who utilize project services

The Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families brings together public and private service providers to address the needs of Montgomery County, Maryland's children under the age of 18 and their families. Designated as a Local Management Board by the state of Maryland, the Montgomery County Collaboration Council's purpose is to be a catalyst so that agencies and other groups can collaborate to achieve positive results in the community. Comprised of more than 350 public and private agencies, faith-based organizations, families, elected officials, businesses, and community advocates, the Council assesses community needs, sets priorities, targets resources, and oversees the delivery of services. Together, these groups have developed *The Children's Agenda*, a blueprint to assure that funding and strategies improve lives and futures. This blueprint acts as a guide to assist partnerships in nurturing a community where children are safe, healthy, successful in school, prepared for life, and supported by a caring family and neighborhood (Collaboration Council, 2015).

Montgomery County Department of Recreation operates after-school and summer programs for middle and high school students. The department's Positive Youth Development framework includes a school-based middle school and high school initiative (RecZone, Rec Extra, EBB, Teen Works, Youth Advisory Committee, etc.) serving students between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., ensuring young people are safe, healthy, and connected during the hours when they would otherwise be unsupervised, likely to engage in risky behavior, and possibly become a victim or take part in a crime. The department's after-school programs also serve hot meals to all participants. The department's summer initiatives (Expanded Learning Opportunities [Summer EBB]; Teen Works; Fun, Food, and Fitness nutrition sites) work to reduce "idleness" and partners with schools and local nonprofit youth service providers to ensure young people remain safe, healthy, and connected during summer months. The programs aim at helping young people develop friendship skills, independence, teamwork, family citizenship, competence, interest to explore, responsibility, problem solving, and affinity for nature.

Appendix D

EBB Student Survey

Students responded to the following survey items by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree) to each item preceded by an introduction referring to EBB:

<i>Coming to Excel Beyond the Bell and participating in program activities has helped me to...</i>
1. Participate more in class activities.
2. Become more interested in going to school.
3. Care more about my school.
4. Get along better with my classmates.
5. Get along better with my teachers.
6. Better say “no” to things I know are wrong.
7. Stay out of trouble.
8. Stay away from violence and fighting.
9. Feel better about myself.
10. Feel I have more control over things that happen to me.
11. Feel that I can make more of a difference.
12. Learn I can do things I didn’t think I could do before.
13. Feel better about my future.
14. Feel that I am better at handling whatever comes my way.
<i>Because I came to Excel Beyond the Bell and participated in program activities...</i>
15. I care more about other people.
16. I care more about the feelings of other people.
17. I am better at standing up for what I believe.
18. I tell the truth more often even when it is hard.
<i>At Excel Beyond the Bell, I FEEL that...</i>
19. I belong.
20. My ideas count.
21. People really listen to me.
22. I'm successful.

23. I have a comfortable place to hang out.
24. I matter.
25. If I didn't show up, someone would notice I was not around.
26. I can really be myself.
27. I have friends who care about me.
28. There are adults who care about me.

To calculate the school's scale score, the percentage of students agreeing or strongly agreeing was computed for each item; then, percentages for all items in the scale were averaged to compute the school's scale score in terms of average percent agreeing.

To compute the scale score across the four cluster schools, the weighted value of the school scale scores (using the number of students responding) was averaged.

Appendix E

Calculation of Effect Sizes

Effect sizes for comparing groups on continuous outcome measures (e.g., means). Effect sizes were estimated for differences between means with the standardized mean difference statistic, or Cohen's d (Cohen, 1988). The formula for Cohen's d is:

$$\frac{\text{mean}_{\text{treatment}} - \text{mean}_{\text{comparison}}}{\text{pooled standard deviation of outcome measure}}$$

In this study, the treatment group is students with high EBB participation levels, and the comparison group is students with low EBB participation levels.

Cohen (1988) provides these guidelines for interpretation: $d = .20$ is considered a small effect; $d = .50$ is considered a medium effect; $d = .80$ is considered a large effect.