WEC Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative

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Milwaukee Partnership Schools

Year 8 (2022-23) Evaluation Report

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About the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative

The Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) is housed at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. WEC's team of evaluators supports youth-serving organizations and initiatives through culturally responsive and rigorous program evaluation. Learn more at http://www.wec.wceruw.org.

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Copyright Information

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Section 1

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC), housed within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is pleased to present this report summarizing Year 8 of the Partnership Schools initiative, covering the 2022-23 academic year. The Partnership initiative involves a collaborative effort among Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), City Year Milwaukee, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee (BGCGM), UW-Milwaukee, and external funders (John and Tashia Morgridge) to provide coordinated supports and resources to improve outcomes for students at four MPS elementary schools. Three sites (Carver, Mitchell, and Rogers) have been part of the Partnership initiative since its beginning (the 2015-16 school year), while Clarke joined during Year 3 (the 2017-18 school year).

Following on the heels of the pandemic (which relegated MPS to virtual instruction for the last portion of 2019-20 and essentially all of 2020-21) and the district's efforts to return to normal operations during 2021-22, key findings highlighted below in our Year 8 report include a mix of familiar themes from previous years along with ongoing effects of the pandemic. Familiar themes we highlight in this year's report include a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration in Partnership sites, stakeholders' continued deep appreciation for the flexible set of supports and resources that the Partnership initiative makes available, and ongoing concerns around staffing, communication, and role definition. On a very positive note, stakeholders across all four sites unanimously continue to praise the teamwork and collaboration that exists across staff from MPS and partner organizations as the Partnership initiative reaches a high level of maturity and familiarity in its eighth year. Stakeholders also very clearly affirm that the additional staff, programming, and financial resources provided by the Partnership are helping to improve the lives and educational experiences of students, and that these four sites are incredibly fortunate to have these supports in a manner that provides flexibility.

Conversely, we also heard (and see in the data) ongoing concerns about getting and keeping staff in key positions, for both MPS and partner organizations, since the Partnership initiative depends so much on strong working relationships and staff knowledge of students' needs. This includes both turnover and staffing shortages across a wide range of roles in Partnership sites, from MPS teachers to City Year corps members, SPARK tutors, and afterschool staff. Several key positions funded by Partnership support have either been vacant and/or filled by four and sometimes even five different individuals in recent years, making it difficult to establish and sustain cohesive working relationships. Educator and staff shortages extend far beyond the Partnership sites, of course, but represent a distinct challenge for an initiative that relies so heavily on relationships, effective communication across staff and partner organizations, and the ability to protect the time of key staff (such as the SEL implementation teacher and academic interventionist) to focus on the duties that their roles were created for, rather than being re-directed to fill other roles such as long-term substitutes and test proctors. We also heard a good deal from stakeholders about a broader set of challenges confronting public education in general (and perhaps especially in Milwaukee), such as the rising mental health needs of students and staff, unstable funding tied to enrollment declines, and a policy environment characterized by distrust and resentment.

In terms of outcome data, we continue to observe bright spots that include generally positive perceptions of school climate and culture on the part of staff and students, strong student growth rates for Carver and Clarke on the state Report Card, and positive associations between 8th grade ST Math participation and 9th grade math course outcomes. There are also ongoing areas of concern in the data, including student enrollment numbers that have declined by 15-30 percent across the Partnership sites compared to pre-pandemic levels, attendance rates that have yet to return to their pre-pandemic thresholds, and persistently low (sometimes single-digit) rates of proficiency on MPS benchmark assessments (STAR) and the state Forward assessment.

Reviewing data across the years, it is difficult to find much evidence thus far of sustained, across-the-board improvement in student engagement and academic performance in Partnership sites, at least in terms of the limited set of outcome measures we review annually for this report. It must be noted, however, that the lingering and delayed effects of the pandemic make it very difficult to assess the true impact of the initiative beyond the generally positive anecdotal evidence and stakeholder perceptions we have summarized. Year 8 (2022-23) marked the second year of mostly normal operations for MPS following nearly 18 months of virtual instruction and significant isolation for many MPS students. We continued to hear from teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders this year about the many ways in which substantial numbers of students, particularly in the lower grades, who were already behind were still "catching up," both academically and socially, from virtual instruction and isolation. In last year's report, we described how MPS STAR assessment data showed that students in Partnership schools, and across the district in general, lost around a year's worth of academic growth in both Reading and Math at most grade levels, which was consistent with findings from other urban districts around the country. Attendance rates, similarly, have been down substantially compared to pre-pandemic years, with more students in Partnership sites having attendance rates of 90 percent or lower relative to previous years. Efforts to get students caught up, of course, have been made more difficult by staffing challenges (turnover and shortages) and students' mental health issues, both of which were already challenging prior to the pandemic and have only gotten worse.

Years of research on school reform efforts suggest that it often takes five or more years to adequately assess the impact of significant school-based initiatives, but the multiple layers of disruption created by the pandemic have led in some ways to the 2021-22 school year being thought of as a "starting over" period for assessing progress in Partnership sites. While most outcome data do not yet show the level of sustained, across-the-board improvement that was envisioned, it is possible these measures may have looked even worse had the Partnership initiative not been present. In summary, our view is that it will likely take several more years to assess how successfully the four Partnership sites recover from the effects of the pandemic.

Section 2

Introduction

Evaluation Questions

As with prior evaluations of the Partnership Schools initiative, our Year 8 (2022-23) report is organized around three key themes (with each informing a set of sub-questions):

1.

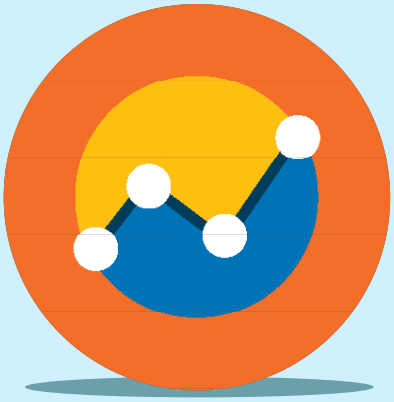
Fidelity of Implementation/ Program Participation

What are the key components of the Partnership initiative (including the different types of programming, staffing, and other supports provided through the grant), how have they changed over the course of the initiative, and at what level of fidelity (including student participation levels) were they implemented during the 2022-23 school year?

2.

Stakeholder Perceptions

How do key stakeholders (from both MPS and partner organizations) involved in the Partnership initiative perceive progress during the 2022-23 school year, including successes, challenges, and suggestions for improvement? Given the number of different organizations and types of programming supported by the Partnership initiative, to what extent do key stakeholders believe that effective coordination and communication is occurring, both within and across school sites and partner organizations? To what extent are Partnership organizations and individual program components devoting attention to the issue of sustainability?



3.

Outcomes

To what extent are changes in key outcomes being observed at Partnership sites, including (but not limited to) improvements in school climate, student engagement, and academic performance? Are students receiving services under individual components of the initiative showing increased performance on relevant outcomes compared to those not receiving such services?

Data Sources and Methodology

As in prior years' evaluation reports, data sources used in the writing of the 2022-23 Partnership Schools evaluation fall into two main categories (qualitative and quantitative), as described below.

Qualitative Data: Interviews and Focus Groups with Key Stakeholders

In-person site visits to each of the four Partnership sites, which resumed in 2021-22 following two years of virtual data collection due to the pandemic, occurred again during April/May 2023 as the primary source of data to inform Evaluation Question 2 (Stakeholder Perceptions). Site visits featured individual interviews with the following stakeholders (a full list of stakeholder interview questions is available upon request):

- Principal and (where relevant) Assistant Principal
- Academic intervention teacher
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation teacher
- City Year Milwaukee Impact Manager
- Boys & Girls Club Manager
- SPARK Program Manager
- SPARK Family Engagement Coordinator

In addition to individual interviews, we are pleased again this year to incorporate teacher voice from each of the four Partnership sites via in-person focus groups conducted as part of our site visits. More than 25 teachers across the four sites shared their perspectives on how individual components of the Partnership initiative have been implemented during Year 8. A full list of teacher focus group questions is available upon request.

Quantitative Data: Collection and Analysis

We augment the qualitative data again this year with analysis of quantitative data from MPS and partner organizations to inform Evaluation Questions 1 and 3. Quantitative data include the following:

- MPS data:
  - Student demographics/enrollment
  - Student attendance
  - Student disciplinary records
  - Second Step lesson progress reports
  - STAR and Brigance assessment results
  - 9th grade transcripts
  - Spatial-Temporal (ST) Math records
  - Essentials of School Culture and Climate (ESCC) survey results
- BGCGM data:
  - SPARK tutoring records
  - SPARK family engagement records
  - Afterschool attendance records
- City Year data:
  - Focus list intervention records

Data files received from MPS and partner organizations were examined initially for completeness, and then linked to other data sets for analysis. Analyses used to describe fidelity of implementation (Evaluation Question 1) and outcomes (Evaluation Question 3) used the same general methodology for cleaning and matching as in prior years. Analyses of program participation used official Third Friday enrollment records as a base sample of students. This allowed for easy linking (based on MPS student IDs) to other district data files. In order to evaluate the impact of Partnership-supported programming, we again restricted the outcome analysis sample to students who participated in programming by keeping only students who remained in the same school for the entire year, based on Third Friday of September and May enrollment records.

We revisit in this year's report the important question of whether the Partnership initiative may have helped to mitigate COVID-related learning losses that were summarized in the Year 7 (2021-22) report. For this analysis, we compare a treatment sample (students in Partnership schools) to a control group of students not enrolled at Partnership sites who are similar in terms of key factors such as prior achievement and demographic characteristics, but with statistical controls applied for prior academic performance. This approach compares the Spring STAR scores of both groups of students (treatment and control) during 2021-22 while controlling for the Fall STAR scores of both groups. This difference in Spring STAR scores between Partnership and control students shows the estimated impact of the Partnership on STAR Reading and Math growth between Fall 2021-22 and Spring of 2021-22, which is the period immediately following COVID-related learning losses.

The methodological framework used to identify the control sample involved a two-stage matching process. During the first stage, Partnership schools were matched to other (non-Partnership) MPS sites through a procedure known as "binning" based on characteristics such as enrollment size, student demographics, academic achievement, and academic growth. Following identification of these similar schools,[1] the second stage utilized a statistical procedure called propensity score matching to identify similar students within comparison schools based on prior achievement scores and demographics. In addition, we also matched on assessment language in Math (as Spanish and English STAR scores are not equated).[2] After matching, characteristics of Partnership and comparison students were examined for suitable initial (baseline) equivalence between the treatment and control groups.

From the matched sample of Partnership and non-Partnership students across two cohorts, we conducted a multivariate regression with Spring STAR test score at the end of the growth period (2021-22) as the outcome variable of interest, while controlling for starting grade level, student demographics, and student test scores at the beginning of the growth period in the Fall. While some of these characteristics were also used for matching students, we included them again in the regression analysis for double robustness. Students who were in Partnership schools for only part of the time period, or switched between Partnership and comparison schools, were dropped. A technical appendix addressing this analysis in more detail is available upon request.

1 Comparison schools for the analysis included Carson Academy, Doerfler, Greenfield, LaFollette, Lancaster, Longfellow, Thoreau, Townsend, and Vieau.

2 In order to match MPS assessment policies on appropriate languages for assessing students, our analysis only used Math Spanish scores for English Learner (EL) students in grades 1-5.

Limitations and Caveats

Several limitations and caveats we have noted in prior years' reports bear repeating again with the Year 8 report as relates to data and methodology. A first is the issue of "initiative overlap," which refers to the continued presence of other programs and initiatives in the four Partnership sites that have at least somewhat similar objectives. Some of these we are aware of (such as Carver's involvement with the "5 in I" Collaborative), but almost certainly there are others in existence that we are not familiar with. This "initiative overlap" makes it difficult for our evaluation to disentangle the effects of one set of supports (provided under the Partnership initiative) from the effects of supports provided through other programs. This means that claims around causality are not warranted, as outcomes may have changed at Partnership sites during the same time this initiative has existed (2015-16 through the present) for reasons that are unrelated to Partnership activities or funding.

Additional limitations and caveats include the fact that for some analyses, MPS academic intervention data lack "dosage" information. This means that while the data show which students received interventions, we do not always know how often these interventions occurred, nor how long they lasted. Our outcome analyses are also restricted to full-year students (i.e., those continuously enrolled between Third Friday counts in September and May), in order to minimize the impact of student mobility (which schools typically have limited control over). Finally, we acknowledge that there may be ongoing, longer-term impacts of the pandemic that are not fully revealed in the data we have obtained and analyzed for this report.

Section 3

Findings

Findings

Key findings from Year 8 of the Partnership Schools initiative, covering the 2022-23 school year, are summarized in this section. Findings are organized in accordance with the three guiding evaluation questions described above (fidelity of implementation/program participation, stakeholder perceptions, and outcomes).

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Selected characteristics of student enrollment and demographics in each Partnership site as of the beginning (third Friday) of the 2022-23 school year are shown in Table 1 below, along with comparisons to MPS and statewide enrollment. **Enrollment at all four sites is down substantially from pre-COVID levels, even more so than for MPS and Wisconsin overall. Each of the Partnership sites enrolls almost exclusively students of color who are from lower-income families**; two schools (Mitchell and Rogers) have predominantly Hispanic/Latinx student populations which include substantial numbers of English Learners while the two others (Carver and Clarke) enroll almost exclusively Black students but essentially no English Learners.

Table 1: Selected Student Enrollment and Demographic Data

For Partnership Sites, MPS, and Wisconsin for 2022-23 (with % Change in Enrollment)**

SITE	TOTAL ENROLLMENT**	% BLACK	% HISPANIC/ LATINX	% WHITE	% OTHER RACE/ ETHNICITY	% FRPL	% EL	% SPED
Carver	351 (-28%)	92%	3%	0%	5%	96%	0%	18%
Clarke	192 (-28%)	96%	3%	0%	1%	95%	0%	20%
Mitchell	589 (-13%)	17%	76%	2%	5%	92%	46%	25%
Rogers	529 (-18%)	6%	89%	2%	3%	89%	40%	18%
MPS	67,500 (-10%)	50%	28%	9%	13%	83%	14%	19%
Wisconsin	822,804 (-4%)	9%	14%	67%	10%	41%	6%	15%

* Abbreviations are as follows: FRPL=Free/Reduced Price Lunch; EL=English Learner; SpEd=Special Education

** Parentheses show the percent decrease in enrollment from 2019-20 to 2022-23.

Source: DPI WISEdash Public Portal (https://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov/Dashboard/dashboard/22275).

Staffing and Program Supports/Participation

We focus in the next section on staffing and programmatic supports that the Partnership grant provides for the four participating sites. This includes a description of the major components of support provided to each school, their level of implementation during the 2022-23 school year (and in prior years, as relevant), and levels of student participation to help characterize the "reach" of the initiative. Also included, where available, are comparisons of actual to intended participation levels, as well as comparisons of job duties across sites for key staff roles.

Given the central role that key staff funded either partially or completely by Partnership funds, and their ability to form effective working relationships with each other to ensure student success, play in the success of the initiative, we begin in Table 2 by showing the staffing history at each site since the first year of the grant (2015-16 for Carver, Mitchell, and Rogers and 2018-19 for Clarke). This includes how many different staff, including position vacancies for part or all of a year, have participated by role, site, and year. Most of the positions shown in Table 2 are funded at least partially by Partnership dollars, although we also include the principal role due to its obvious importance. The potential range in number of staff filling a particular role at Carver, Mitchell, and Rogers over the length of the Partnership initiative ranges from 1-8, while at Clarke the range is 1-5.

What emerges from this look at staffing history is a somewhat mixed picture of continuity. **On the one hand, there has been a high degree of stability in several key roles, either across all four sites collectively and/or at individual sites**. Most notably, the principal role has been highly stable, with each building having the same leader for the past five years at a minimum. This is an exceptional level of stability for the principalship in general, and for MPS in particular. Other key positions, such as the SPARK Family Engagement Coordinator at Carver, the SPARK Program Manager at Mitchell, and the BGCGM Success Academy Academic Coordinator at Rogers, have also had the same person in this role across the duration of the initiative. **Conversely, the staffing history for other positions shows a much higher rate of turnover and vacancy, with several positions having been filled by five or more staff (or being vacant) over the history of the Partnership initiative. Clarke in particular has had high rates of turnover and vacancy for numerous positions, although each site has at least one position that has had four or more different staff or vacancies**.

It is important to note that staff turnover rates tend to be higher in high-poverty schools, and that zero percent turnover is clearly not a realistic goal for any school. Our intent in showing Table 2 is not to imply that staff who are unhappy in their role, or not a good fit, should be encouraged to stay strictly for the sake of continuity, as bringing on new staff can certainly be a useful way of injecting new ideas and energy into a school community. We have also been told that MPS district policy may prohibit school-to-school transfers for certain staff positions from occurring within a school year, and that this has both made it challenging for Partnership sites to fill mid-year departures and resulted in vacancies in key Partnership-funded positions. The point from this discussion is that key stakeholders (from both MPS and partner organizations) have consistently emphasized how important it is that staff build trust, establish familiarity with each other's routines and procedures, and develop effective modes of communication amongst themselves in order to support student needs. Accomplishing these goals becomes unquestionably more challenging when frequent turnover in key staff roles occurs.

Table 2: Milwaukee Partnership Schools Staffing History for Key Roles by School, Role, and Year

SCHOOL	POSITION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	Principal	Staff 1	Staff 2						
	Academic Interventionist	Staff 1				Staff 2			
	SEL Interventionist	Staff 1		Staff 2		Staff 3	Staff 4	Staff 5	
	BGCGM Club Manager	Staff 1							
	CY Impact Manager	Staff 1	Staff 2			Staff 3	Staff 4		
	SPARK Program Managers	Staff 1	Staff 2						Staff 3
	SPARK Family Engagement Coordinator	Staff 1							
Clarke	Principal	Not a Partnership Site			Staff 1				
	Academic Interventionist				Staff 1	Vacant	Staff 2	Staff 3/ Vacant*	Staff 4
	SEL Interventionist				Staff 1	Staff 2		Vacant	Staff 3/ Vacant**
	BGCGM Club Manager				Staff 1				Staff 2
	CY Impact Manager				Staff 1			Staff 2	
	SPARK Program Manager				Staff 1			Staff 2	Staff 3 and 4***
	SPARK Family Engagement Coordinator				Staff 1		Staff 2	Staff 3	Staff 4
Mitchell	Principal	Staff 1	Staff 2						
	Academic Interventionist	Staff 1	Staff 2		Staff 3	Staff 4			Staff 5
	SEL Interventionist	Staff 1			Staff 2		Staff 3		
	BGCGM Club Manager	Staff 1			Staff 2				
	CY Impact Manager	Staff 1	Staff 2		Staff 3				Staff 4
	SPARK Program Manager	Staff 1							
	SPARK Family Engagement Coordinator	Staff 1				Staff 2			
Rogers	Principal	Staff 1							
	Academic Interventionist	Staff 1		Staff 2		Staff 3			
	SEL Interventionist	Staff 1				Vacant	Staff 2		
	BGCGM Success Academy Academic Coordinator	Staff 1	Staff 2						
	BGCGM Club Manager	Staff 1		Staff 2	Staff 3		Staff 4		
	CY Impact Manager	Staff 1		Staff 2				Staff 3	Staff 4
	SPARK Program Manager	Staff 1		Staff 2					
	SPARK Family Engagement Coordinator	Staff 1					Staff 2		Staff 3

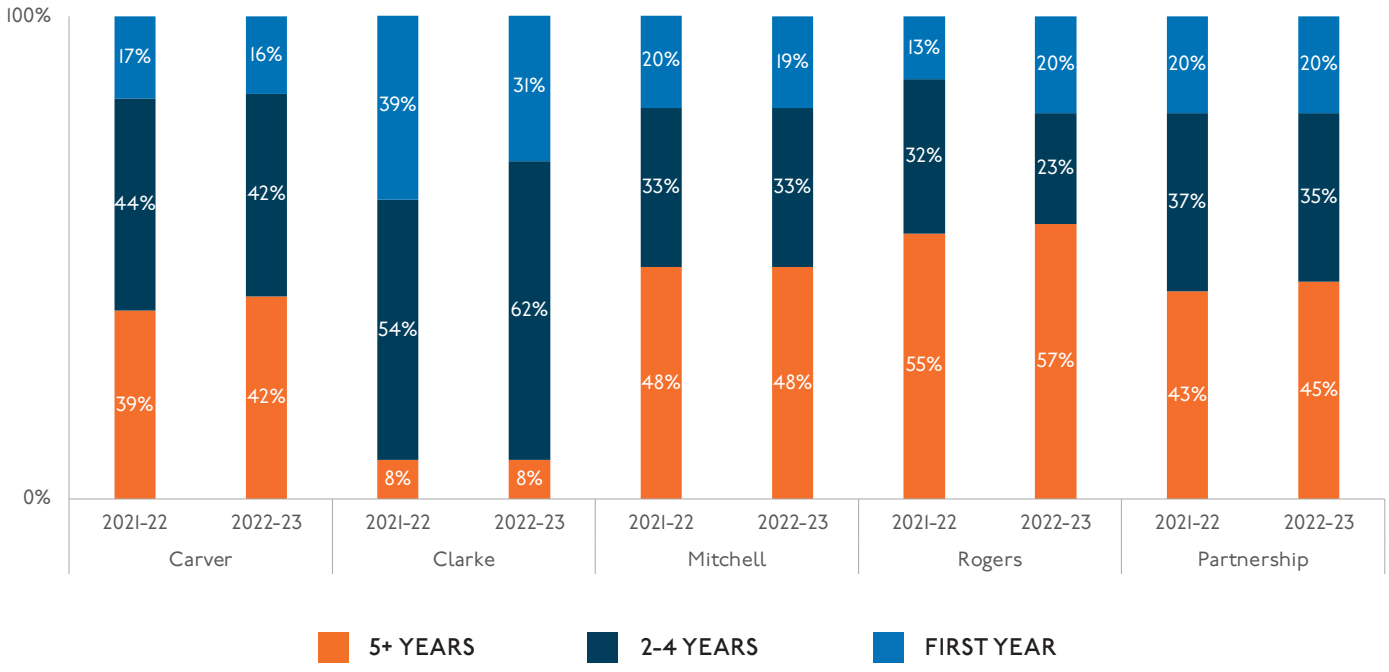
* Academic Interventionist position at Clarke was vacant during spring semester of 2021-22.

** SEL Interventionist position at Clarke was vacant during spring semester of 2022-23.

*** Two different staff filled the SPARK Program Manager role at Clarke during 2022-23.

Figure I provides additional data on staff continuity within Partnership sites, showing the distribution of classroom teachers (most of whom are not funded by Partnership dollars) by tenure within their respective schools. Specifically, we show categories of tenure for teachers who had full-time (100 percent) teaching assignments in 2022-23 and any level of full-time equivalent (FTE) in prior years. Teacher tenure is divided into three categories: first year in the school, two to four years of tenure in the building, and five or more years of tenure in the building. We also include data from 2021-22 for comparison purposes. **The share of full-time teachers across all Partnership sites combined who were in their first year of teaching in 2022-23 was identical to 2021-22 (20 percent in both years), although Clarke continues to have a much higher share of first-year teachers (and much lower share of teachers with 5+ years of experience) than the other three sites.** Rogers and Mitchell continue to have the highest share of more experienced teachers (those with five or more years of experience in the building), while Clarke has a much lower share of teachers who have been in the building for 5+ years.

Figure I: Teacher Tenure by School, 2021-22 and 2022-23



For 2022-23 data, 100% FTE in 2022-23, any FTE in prior years; for 2021-22 data, 100% FTE in 2021-22, any FTE in prior years.

Source: DPI public school all staff data files (https://publicstaffreports.dpi.wi.gov/PubStaffReport/Public/PublicReport/AllStaffReport).

MPS Academic Interventionists

As in prior years, each of the four Partnership sites received funding in 2022-23 to support a 1.0 FTE academic interventionist. Looking at this role across the four sites historically (as shown in Table 2), we observe a high degree of turnover, with Mitchell having five different individuals in this key position, four at Clarke (including vacancies in both 2019-20 and 2021-22), three at Rogers, and two at Carver. Specific roles that academic interventionists play continue to vary across sites, although core duties include a combination of (a) working directly with targeted students (either individually or in small groups) in reading and/or mathematics; and (b) providing support to classroom teachers through instructional coaching, walkthroughs, mentoring, and professional development. As in prior years, stakeholders expressed appreciation during 2022-23 for cross-site collaboration opportunities between academic interventionists and other staff, especially the regular meetings of the coaching cohort, which consists of academic interventionists, SEL implementation teachers, and other staff.

Academic interventionists' work in 2022-23 continued to include a mix of direct work with both students and teachers. Examples of work with students included one-on-one interventions, small group interventions, and in-class academic support. Academic interventionists noted that this typically took up anywhere from one-third to half of their time, with some variation across sites. Supports provided to teachers by academic interventionists included instructional coaching, curriculum review, lesson plan checks, observations and walkthroughs, providing professional development, and reviewing data. Academic interventionists noted that this typically took up anywhere from one-quarter to one-third of their time. Other activities that academic interventionists reported working on included assisting with ST Math, working with administration, sharing and analyzing data, working as a testing coordinator, and support for SEL activities.

Several of these "other duties as assigned" roles – particularly the testing coordinator role – continue to be sources of frustration for academic interventionists, as described in the Stakeholder Perceptions section below. Everyone understands that standardized testing plays a role in monitoring student progress (and is required under federal, state, and district policies). Multiple stakeholders (including academic interventionists) shared with us again this year, however, their frustration with the "scope creep" that test administration has created by steadily eroding the time they have available to perform their intended duties.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Implementation Teachers

Partnership funding also continued in Year 8 to support a full-time Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation teacher at each site. Turnover for this role has been particularly high at Carver (as seen in Table 2), with five different individuals filling this key position. At Clarke and Mitchell, three different individuals have filled this position (including vacancies at Clarke in 2021-22 and 2022-23), and Rogers has had two SEL implementation teachers (with a vacancy in 2019-20).

The role of the SEL implementation teacher continued to vary somewhat in 2022-23 across sites, although a common set of duties include a mix of direct work with students in need of extra SEL support (either individually or in small groups) and SEL-focused support for classroom teachers via the Second Step curriculum. Specific supports SEL teachers provided for students include leading Social Academic Instructional Groups (SAIG) or other small groups for students with high SEL needs, implementing a check-in/check-out (CICO) system, having one-on-one behavioral interventions, small group counseling, facilitating restorative circles, and mindfulness sessions. Supports SEL teachers provide for teachers included coaching (formal and informal), assisting in classrooms, and Second Step implementation.

One useful measure of Second Step implementation is completion rates for the intended number of lessons in a year, which varies by grade level. Table 3 shows lesson completion data, and here we observe that **across Partnership sites combined, approximately 80 percent of all intended lessons were completed**. Carver and Rogers had slightly higher completion rates while Clarke and Mitchell had slightly lower.

Table 3: Second Step Lesson Completion

by Partnership Site for 2022-23

SCHOOL	CLASSROOMS	TOTAL LESSONS COMPLETED	AVERAGE LESSONS COMPLETED	PERCENTAGE OF INTENDED LESSONS COMPLETED
Carver	11	208	18.9	85%
Clarke	10	178	17.8	78%
Mitchell	24	413	17.2	76%
Rogers	21	403	19.2	84%
Partnership Total	66	1202	18.2	80%

Source: 2022-23 Second Step lesson progress reports.

SPARK Early Literacy and Family Engagement

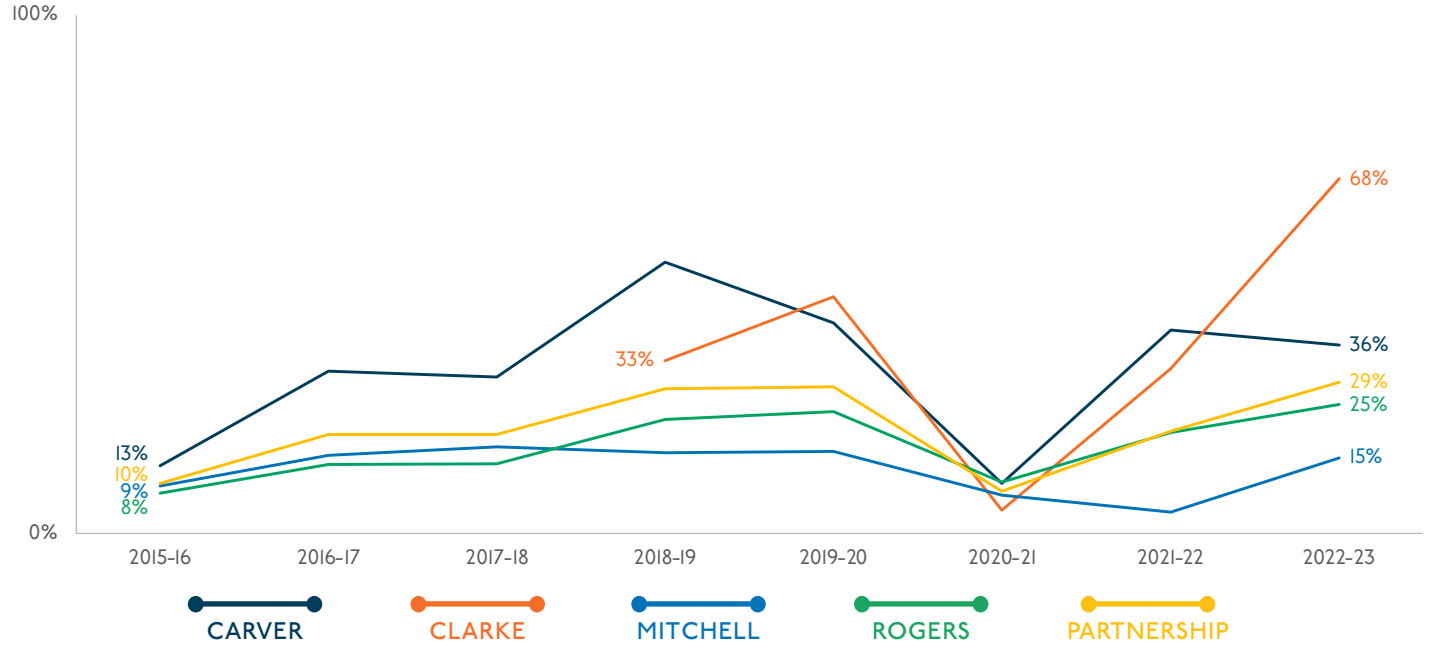
Partnership funding also continues to help support implementation of SPARK Early Literacy tutoring and family engagement, provided through the Boys & Girls Club. SPARK tutoring is provided to students in grades K-3, and is designed to improve students' reading by increasing foundational reading skills, comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and emotional well-being. SPARK also employs Family Engagement Coordinators at each site who reach out to students' families on a regular basis to share resources and updates on their child's SPARK progress. SPARK was already operating in all four Partnership sites for at least one year prior to the formal launch of the Partnership initiative in 2015-16. The SPARK management team consists of a Director (1.0 FTE) overseeing all four sites plus a licensed teacher who serves as SPARK Program Managers (1.0 FTE), a full-time Family Engagement Coordinator (1.0), and up to eight part-time tutors at each site. Continuity among SPARK Program Managers and Family Engagement Coordinators has been strong at Carver, Mitchell, and Rogers, although higher rates of turnover have occurred at Clarke in recent years (as shown previously in Table 2).

Implementation of SPARK tutoring looks very similar at each site, with lower-performing students in grades K-3 identified for tutoring support at the beginning of the year based on STAR Reading or Early Literacy assessments and/or teacher or interventionist recommendations. Tutors continued to work with students in a one-on-one format in 2022-23, and at least some of the sites continued the practice of having at least one virtual tutor to meet the needs of students.

Student participation trends in SPARK tutoring over time are shown in Figure 2. Since SPARK focuses on grades K-3, participation rates are calculated based on enrollment for these grade levels only at each site. **Across all sites combined, almost 30 percent of students in grades K-3 received SPARK tutoring in 2022-23, continuing the rebound from 2020-21 (when all tutoring sessions were held online), and returning to pre-pandemic levels**. SPARK participation rates continue to be highest at Carver and Clarke, which may be a function of these two sites (a) being much smaller than Mitchell and Rogers; and (b) having very few English Learner students, who SPARK is not currently able to serve at any of the Partnership sites due to a lack of bilingual tutors.

Figure 2: SPARK Participation

Grades K-3 by Partnership Site for 2015-16 through 2022-23



Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 MPS Third Friday enrollment data and BGCGM SPARK participation data.

Table 4: Average Number of SPARK Sessions

by Partnership Site for 2015-16 through 2022-23

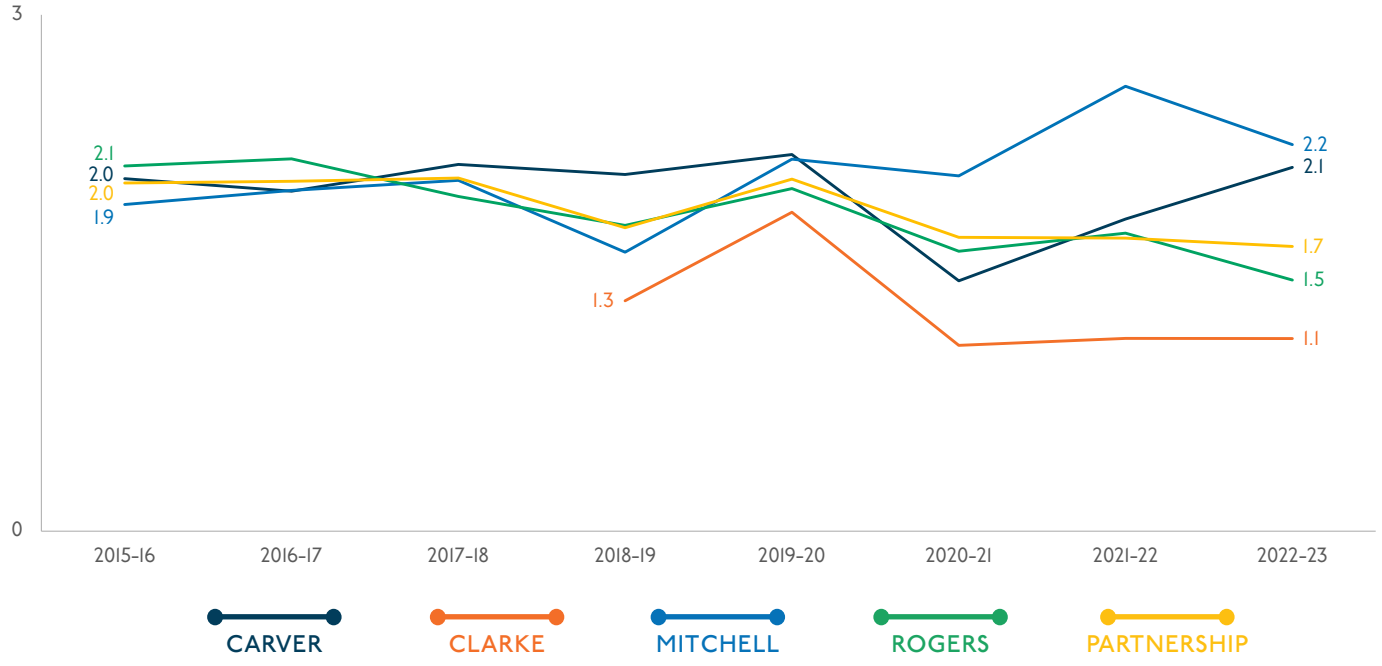
SCHOOL	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	55	53	55	48	34	27	49	58
Clarke	n/a	n/a	n/a	33	32	14	22	32
Mitchell	57	55	52	47	30	43	47	50
Rogers	65	73	55	45	34	26	36	33
Partnership	59	59	54	44	33	30	38	42

Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 BGCGM SPARK participation data.

Table 4 and Figure 3 provide measures of SPARK tutoring "dosage," as measured by the average number of tutoring sessions across the entire year and the average number of sessions per week, respectively. **Across all four sites combined, the average number of sessions for the entire school year was 42 (a slight increase over previous years), with Carver and Mitchell having substantially higher per-student SPARK session counts than Clarke and Rogers. The average of 42 sessions for the year equates to 1.7 sessions per week in 2022-23, which is consistent with data from recent years (although well below the stated SPARK program target of three sessions each week).**

Figure 3: Average SPARK Sessions per Week

by Partnership Site for 2015-16 through 2022-23



Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 BGCGM SPARK participation data.

A new analysis we include in this year's report looks at the impact of SPARK participation on student growth on the STAR Reading assessment in Partnership sites. This analysis is reported in the Outcomes section below.

SPARK also engages with families of students receiving tutoring. Table 5 summarizes family engagement activities provided through SPARK at each Partnership site in 2021-22 and 2022-23, based on records maintained by SPARK staff. **Across all four sites combined, SPARK staff in 2022-23 conducted nearly 1,200 family contacts (which included virtual meetings, phone conversations, text messages or emails that were replied to, etc.) and more than 5,700 instances of family outreach (email newsletters, resources dropped off at homes, etc.), with 407 individuals attending a family event. It is encouraging to see increases across all three categories from the previous year**.

Table 5: SPARK Family Engagement Activities by Type

by Partnership Site for 2021-22 and 2022-23

	FAMILY CONTACTS		FAMILY OUTREACH		FAMILY EVENT ATTENDANCE	
SCHOOL	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	80	230	628	2274	17	70
Clarke	9	164	662	1338	0	42
Mitchell	332	451	613	794	56	116
Rogers	388	389	580	1329	16	179
Partnership Total	809	1234	2483	5735	89	407

Source: 2021-22 and 2022-23 SPARK family engagement data.

City Year Milwaukee

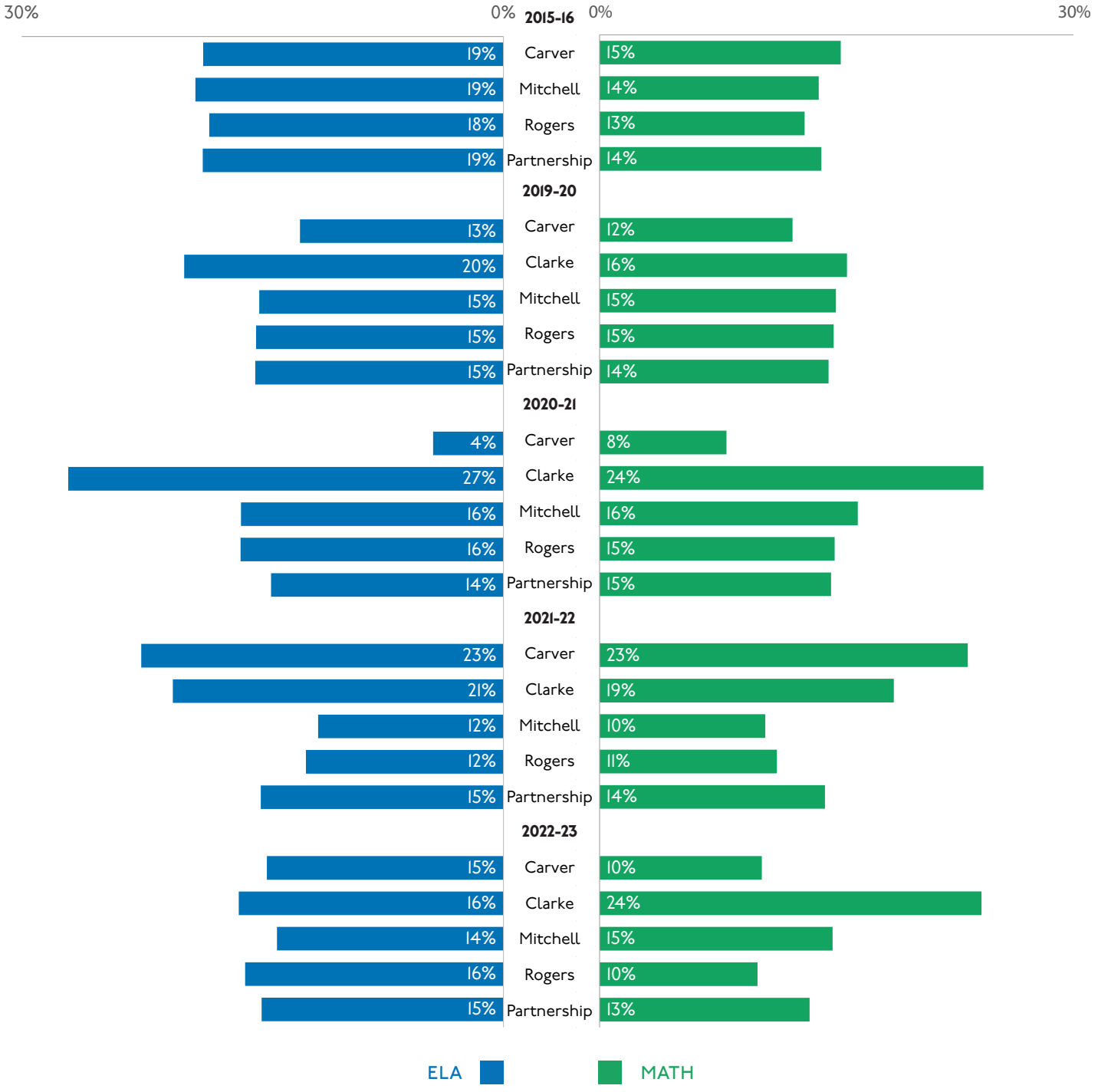
City Year Inc. has continued to recruit, train, and place AmeriCorps members (ACM)(who are typically recent high school or college graduates, ages 17-25) to serve full-time as "student success coaches" that provide individual, small group, and classroom support to students in elementary and middle schools in Milwaukee and other cities across the country. In Milwaukee, City Year's work focuses on supporting grades 3-8. The Partnership initiative, as in prior years, funded an Impact Manager (1.0 FTE), Impact Director (0.25), Senior Impact Director (0.12), Service Director (0.25), Training & Evaluation Manager (0.25), and 8-15 corps members (ACMs) at each site. The actual number of ACMs supporting each site has varied from year to year, varies across sites, and sometimes fluctuates during the school year due to attrition.

The day-to-day work that City Year engages in consists of ACMs working in conjunction with their Impact Manager, Impact Director, and the teachers whose classrooms they support to create "focus lists" of students who need extra support with English Language Arts (ELA), Math, attendance, and behavior. ACMs are generally paired with one classroom teacher and support individual focus list students in that teacher's classroom, in addition to providing whole-class support (and in some cases, assisting with afterschool activities conducted by BGCGM). After focus lists are prepared in the fall, ACMs begin providing interventions for focus list students in at least three different ways: pull-out, small group sessions, and one-on-one tutoring. Students generally remain on focus lists for the entire year unless they leave the school, and student progress is tracked using data such as STAR scores or ACMs' evaluations of progress.

One measure of the "reach" of City Year's work in Partnership sites is shown in the figures below, which provide the proportion of students at each site who have been on focus lists for ELA and Math (Figure 4) and for attendance and behavior (Figure 5) over time. Data from 2020-21 are not directly comparable to other years, since the work of ACMs was limited to virtual support for the entire year. **Across all four Partnership sites combined, ELA and Math focus list participation during 2022-23 was generally consistent with prior years. Counts of students on focus lists are clearly influenced by the number of ACMs that City Year is able to recruit, and we note here (as explained in the Stakeholder Perceptions section below) that recruitment has been an ongoing challenge in recent years**. The data also show the return of behavior focus lists at all sites and attendance focus lists at Mitchell, which had been paused during COVID.

Figure 4: Participation on ELA and Math City Year Milwaukee Focus Lists

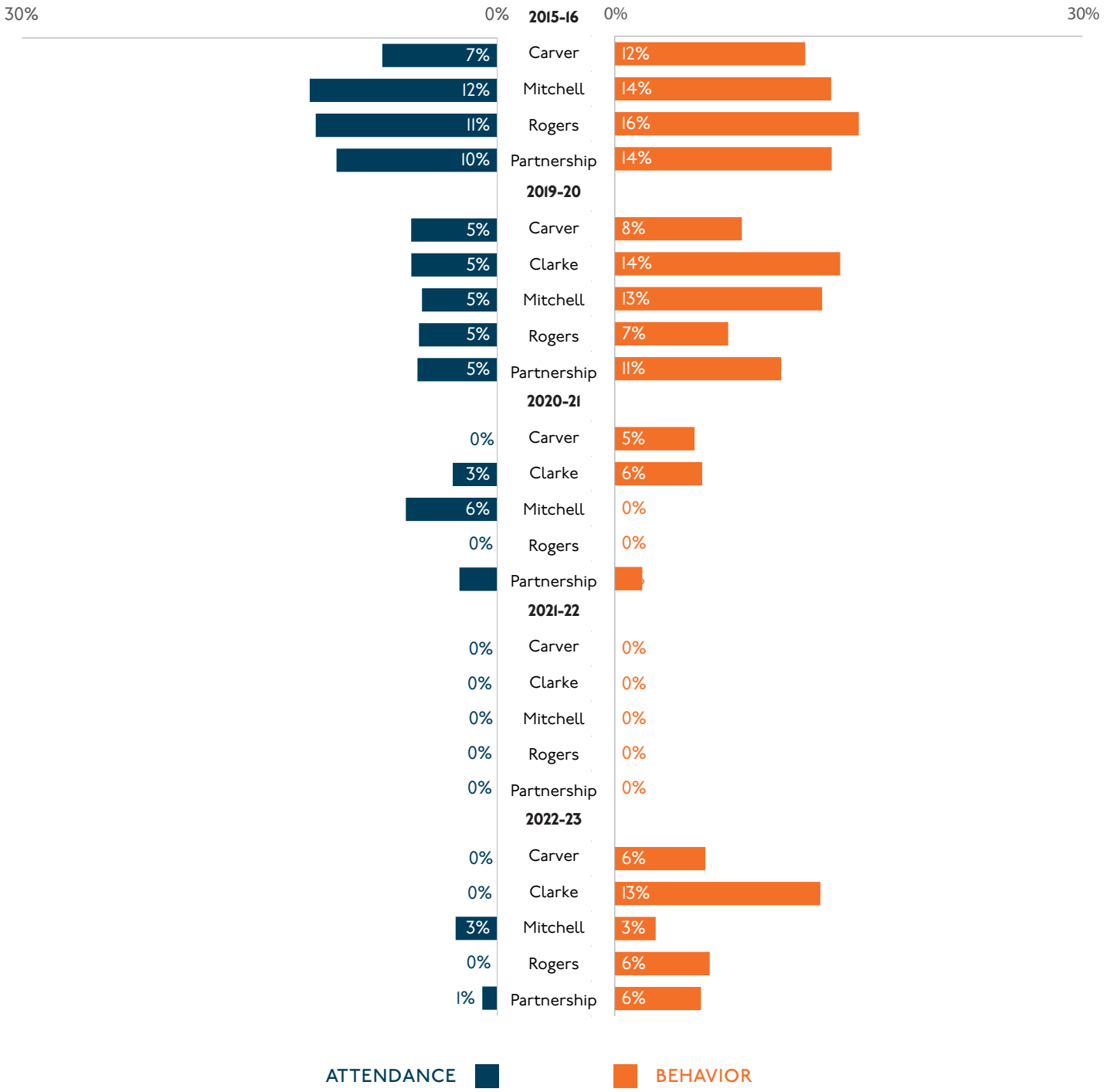
by Partnership Site for 2015-16 and 2019-20 through 2022-23



Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 MPS Third Friday enrollment data and City Year Milwaukee participation data.

Figure 5: Participation on Attendance and Behavior City Year Milwaukee Focus Lists

by Partnership Site for 2015-16 and 2019-20 through 2022-23



Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 MPS Third Friday enrollment data and City Year Milwaukee participation data.

Table 6 provides additional insight on the work of City Year in Partnership sites by showing the average number of interventions received by students on the different types of focus lists at each school in recent years. Average numbers of interventions provided in 2022-23 across all four sites combined were similar for ELA and up slightly for Math compared to 2021-22, with all sites (as noted above) reinstating the use of behavior focus lists and Mitchell resuming its attendance focus list. **Across all lists and sites, the average number of interventions remains lower than pre-pandemic levels, likely reflecting smaller numbers of ACMs due to ongoing recruiting challenges**.

Table 6: Average Number of City Year Milwaukee Interventions per Student

by Partnership Site and by Focus List for 2015-16 through 2022-23

SCHOOL	SUBJECT / TOPIC	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	ELA	49	46	49	24	13	5	11	15
	Math	36	38	33	32	13	1	12	13
	Attendance	11	17	18	21	10	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Behavior	16	15	14	34	12	1	n/a	9
Clarke	ELA	n/a	n/a	n/a	30	22	<1	17	15
	Math	n/a	n/a	n/a	30	22	<1	13	15
	Attendance	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	17	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Behavior	n/a	n/a	n/a	24	10	n/a	n/a	13
Mitchell	ELA	36	37	39	36	24	23	36	21
	Math	34	37	39	31	22	n/a	23	25
	Attendance	21	30	34	15	7	n/a	n/a	4
	Behavior	20	27	35	10	6	n/a	n/a	5
Rogers	ELA	34	39	42	41	21	3	10	23
	Math	30	35	35	29	22	5	9	29
	Attendance	27	15	30	12	10	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Behavior	21	16	33	31	15	n/a	n/a	39
Partnership	ELA	40	41	42	34	21	11	20	19
	Math	33	37	36	30	20	2	15	21
	Attendance	21	24	28	15	10	n/a	n/a	4
	Behavior	19	20	28	20	9	1	n/a	18

Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 City Year Milwaukee participation data.

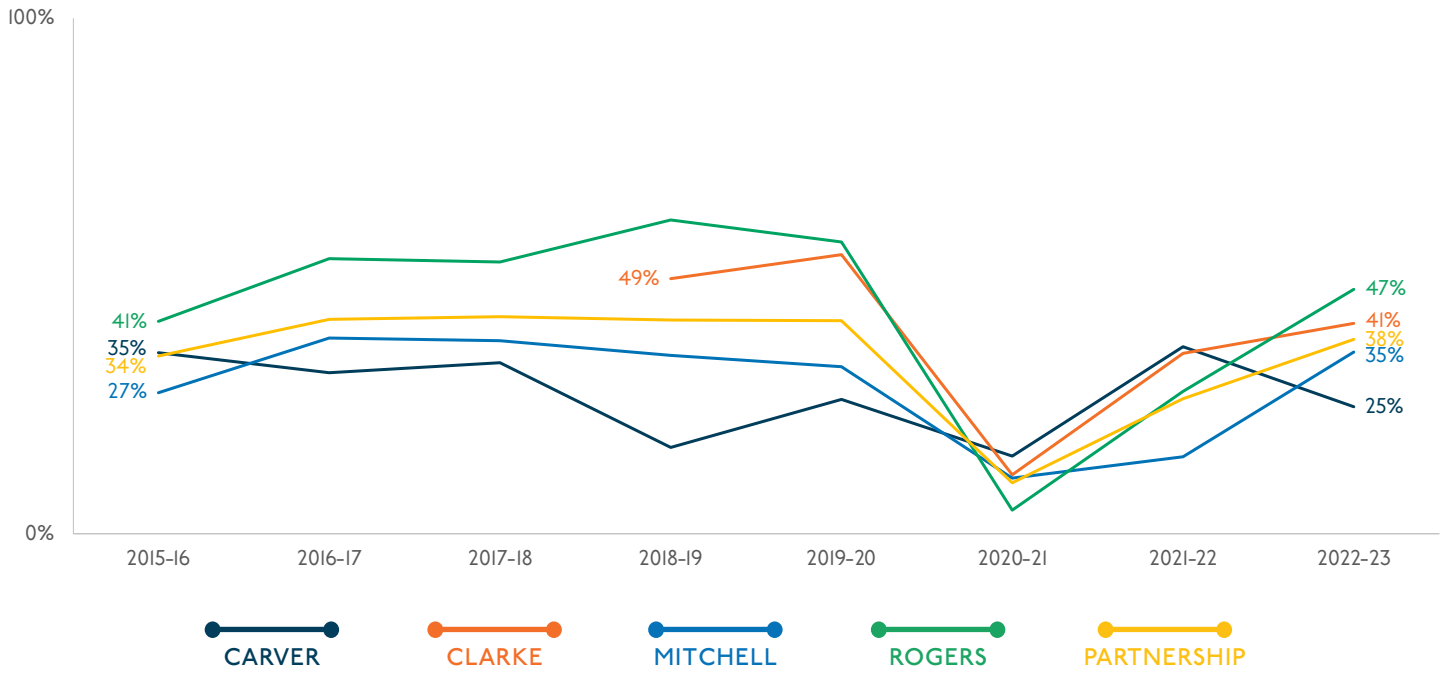
Boys & Girls Club Afterschool

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee (BGCGM) continued to provide a key component of the Partnership initiative during the 2022-23 school year through its afterschool care and academic support program. As in prior years, MPS received federal funding in 2022-23 through the Community Learning Center (CLC) initiative to provide out-of-school time programming at approximately 35 sites across the district, including at the four Partnership sites. Partnership support augments federal funds by supporting a 1.0 FTE Club Manager, 0.25 FTE Program Manager, 0.15 FTE Academic Coordinator, 3.5 FTE Program Staff, and 0.4 FTE security at each site, along with student transportation. We noted previously in Table 2 that the Club Manager role has been relatively stable in terms of low turnover in recent years at three of the Partnership sites (Carver, Clarke, and Mitchell), although Rogers has had four different staff filling this role.

Percentages of students at each Partnership site that participated in afterschool at least once during 2022-23 and previous years are shown in Figure 6. **Across all four Partnership sites combined, almost 40 percent of students attended afterschool at least once during 2022-23, nearly a return to pre-pandemic participation levels**. Participation rates in afterschool were slightly higher at Rogers and Clarke.

Figure 6: Participation in Boys & Girls Club Afterschool

Percentage of K-8 Students Attending Afterschool 1+ Times by Partnership Site for 2015-16 through 2022-23



Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 MPS Third Friday enrollment data and BGCGM afterschool data.

The average number of days students have attended afterschool in Partnership sites each year is shown in Table 7 below. **On average, students across all four Partnership sites combined attended 77 days in 2022-23, representing a slight decrease from 2021-22 and a somewhat lower figure compared to pre-pandemic years. Clarke had a substantially higher average afterschool attendance rate in 2022-23 compared to other Partnership sites**.

Table 7: Average Days of Boys and Girls Club Attendance

by Partnership Site for 2015-16 through 2022-23

SCHOOL	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	66	65	79	86	57	27	77	77
Clarke	n/a	n/a	n/a	130	94	45	86	131
Mitchell	103	84	85	102	76	62	98	82
Rogers	101	101	112	96	70	10	83	57
Partnership	92	88	96	103	74	40	85	77

Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 BGCGM afterschool data.

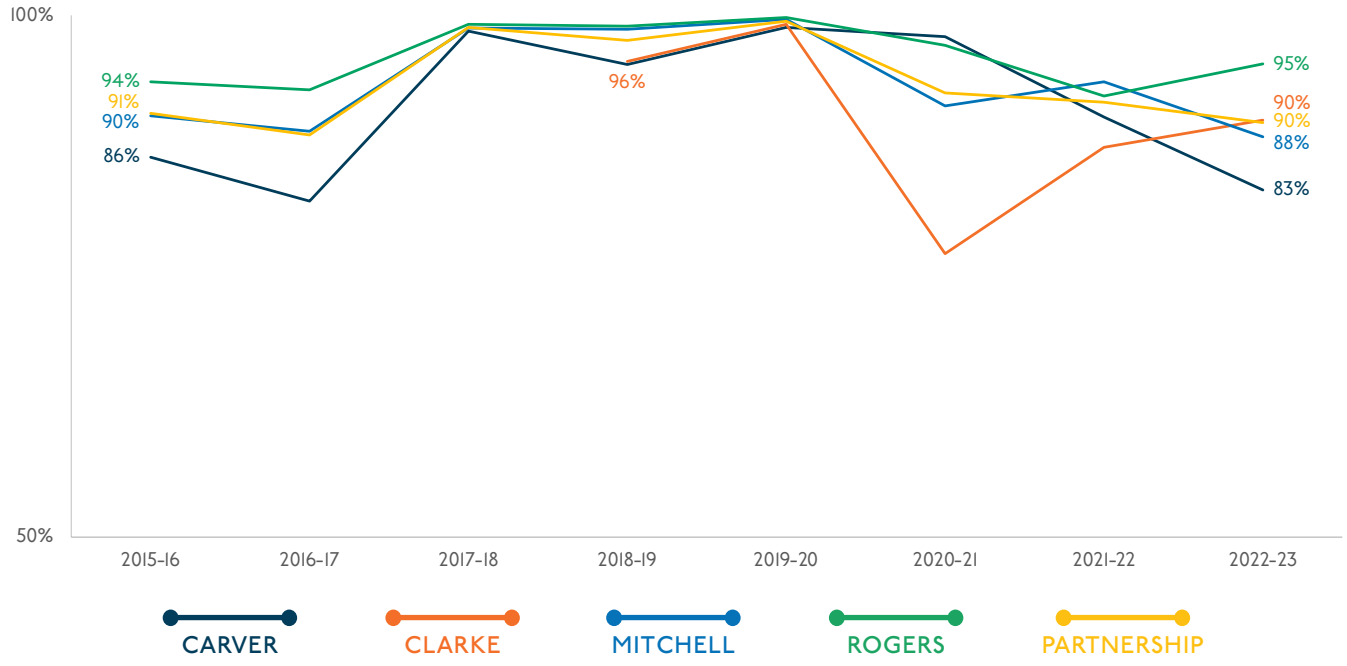
ST Math

Partnership funding also helped support implementation of the ST Math interactive computer program, which improves students' mathematical skills and conceptual awareness, again during the 2022-23 school year at all four sites as a Tier I intervention (available to all students). Specifically, each Partnership site receives funding for ST Math user licenses, staff training, and Chromebooks for students to access the program during the school day. Students also use ST Math during afterschool (ideally for 60-90 minutes each week) and are encouraged to use the program from home as well.

Several measures of ST Math participation are shown in figures and tables below, both for individual schools as well as across all sites combined. Figure 7 shows the percentage of students with at least one ST Math login each year. **Given its status as a Tier I intervention (core instruction) at Partnership sites, we would hope and expect to see all students using ST Math, and we indeed observe participation rates around 90 percent for 2022-23 across all four sites combined**. ST Math participation rates do vary somewhat by site, however, with higher rates at Rogers, a pronounced COVID effect at Clarke (but less so at other sites) in 2020-21, and continued decreases over the past several years at Carver for reasons that are unclear.

Figure 7: ST Math Participation

Percentage of Students Accessing ST Math by Partnership Site for 2015-16 through 2022-23

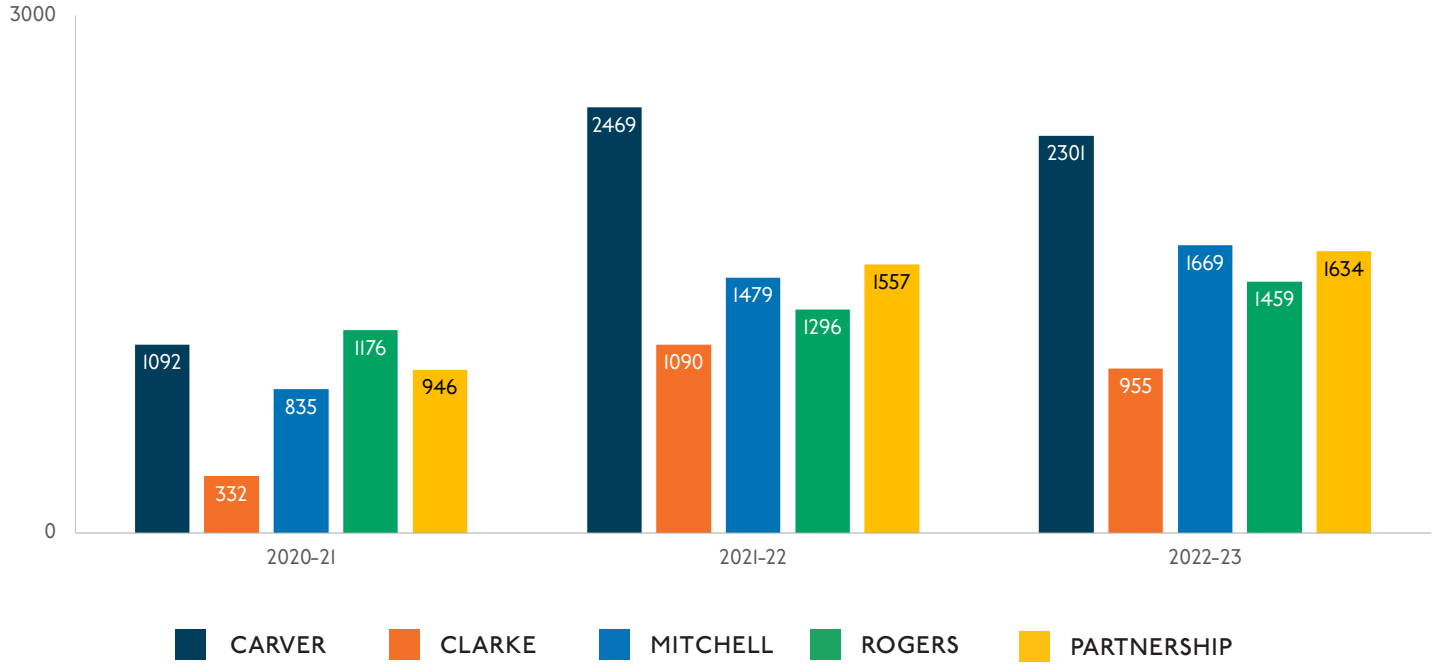


Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 MPS Third Friday enrollment data and ST Math data.

Figure 8 and Tables 8 & 9 provide complementary indicators of the ST Math progress that students in Partnership sites have made in recent years, although we restrict this analysis to 2020-21 and beyond since ST Math guidelines have changed over time. From 2015-16 through 2019-20, ST Math progress was measured by the amount of progression through the program's syllabus, but starting in 2020-21 the metric switched to number of puzzles completed. For grades K-1, 100 percent ST Math "completion" for the year (which very few students would be expected to reach) is equivalent to 2,500 completed puzzles, while in grades 2-8 the 100 percent completion figure is equivalent to 3,000 completed puzzles. Figure 8 shows the average number of puzzles completed by site, with Partnership students on average completing 1,634 puzzles in 2022-23 (representing a slight increase over 2021-22). Carver students have had substantially higher average puzzle completion rates compared to other Partnership sites for the past two years.

Figure 8: ST Math Average Puzzle Completion

by Partnership Site for 2020-21 through 2022-23



Source: 2020-21 through 2022-23 ST Math data.

In addition to the 100 percent completion thresholds (1,800 puzzles for grades K-1 and 2,200 for grades 2-8), ST Math has a recommended goal for students to complete at least 800 puzzles in order to see academic benefits. Table 8 shows the percentage of students at each site meeting this benchmark *by individual grade level for the most recent year (2022-23) only*. Across all sites and grades, 75 percent of students in Partnership sites met the 800-puzzle goal, with varying rates by grade level (particularly high for Grade 2, for example, and lower in the middle grades) and by school (very high at Carver, low at Clarke, and in the middle for Mitchell and Rogers).

Table 9, by comparison, shows the percentage of students completing 800 or more puzzles *over time and by grade span (elementary vs. middle)*. Here we observe that data for 2022-23 across all sites are generally similar to 2021-22 (and up substantially from the COVID-impacted year of 2020-21), with slight differences across schools and grade levels. At Clarke, for example, 2022-23 data show a substantial decrease in the percentage of elementary (K-5) students reaching the 800-puzzle benchmark compared to 2021-22. **We continue to observe strong associations between ST Math participation among 8th graders and how they perform in 9th grade Math classes the following year, as reviewed below in the Outcomes section, which leads us to again recommend that Partnership sites continue to prioritize high levels of student participation and progress in ST Math**.

Table 8: Percentage of Students Completing 800+ ST Math Puzzles

by Grade and Partnership Site for 2022-23

SCHOOL	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	OVERALL
Carver	80%	93%	97%	94%	89%	100%	90%	95%	88%	92%
Clarke	0%	53%	60%	24%	50%	33%	67%	53%	65%	46%
Mitchell	93%	71%	91%	75%	84%	96%	59%	42%	54%	72%
Rogers	80%	82%	100%	61%	73%	70%	85%	83%	64%	77%
Partnership	75%	76%	92%	67%	78%	78%	75%	68%	65%	75%

Source: 2022-23 ST Math data.

Table 9: Percentage of Students Completing 800+ ST Math Puzzles

By Grade Group and Partnership Site for 2020-21 through 2022-23

SCHOOL	GRADE GROUP	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	Elementary	36%	82%	92%
	Middle	64%	93%	91%
	Overall	47%	87%	92%
Clarke	Elementary	16%	58%	37%
	Middle	4%	59%	62%
	Overall	12%	58%	46%
Mitchell	Elementary	51%	90%	85%
	Middle	12%	60%	51%
	Overall	35%	78%	72%
Rogers	Elementary	60%	77%	77%
	Middle	35%	69%	78%
	Overall	50%	74%	77%
Partnership	Elementary	46%	80%	78%
	Middle	31%	70%	69%
	Overall	40%	76%	75%

Source: 2020-21 through 2022-23 ST Math data.

Stakeholder Perceptions

As in prior years' reports, we collected and summarize below the perspectives of key stakeholders who participated in individual interviews and focus groups during our site visits to each of the four Partnership schools. Findings below are based on interviews and focus groups with key staff from each site conducted in April and May 2023, including the following key stakeholders:

- Principal and (where relevant) Assistant Principal
- Academic intervention teacher
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation teacher
- City Year Inc. Impact Manager
- Boys and Girls Club Site Manager
- SPARK Program Manager
- SPARK Family Engagement Coordinator
- Teachers (in focus groups)

We begin the stakeholder perceptions section below with high-level observations that cut across roles and schools, and then summarize perceptions that are specific to key staff positions and programs supported by Partnership funding. This includes, where available and relevant, direct quotes from stakeholders to illustrate key themes that surfaced during interviews and focus groups. We also attempt, in quoting stakeholders, to strike an appropriate balance between describing the role each quoted person plays (i.e., which staff position they fill) while preserving the anonymity that we pledged before starting each interview or focus group. For this reason, we generally avoid listing the school where quoted stakeholders are employed, with the exception of the first theme, where it is necessary to differentiate the variation in school experiences in 2022-23.

Overall Perceptions

Five key themes emerged from stakeholder perceptions during the 2022-23 school year:

- Continuity
- Appreciation for Partnership supports and resources
- Data use and student growth
- Ongoing challenges in communication and staffing
- New challenges related to influx of new students

Continuity

With 2022-23 marking the eighth year of the Partnership initiative in MPS (at three of the sites), it is perhaps not surprising (but still noteworthy) that **numerous stakeholders commented on advantages that the program's continuity brings**. One participant noted how they "…really appreciate the stability that the Partnership grant provides us," while at another school, the principal said they were "more focused now" with all their experience with Partnership. Another stakeholder described how they felt "…fortunate to have all the partners together for so long…we all are good at working with each other, hearing each other, and we're all here to do what's best for kids," and that "this year our biggest strength is all the pieces of the puzzle coming together."

Stakeholders also observed that the longevity and continuity of the Partnership initiative have strengthened relationships across staff, with one noting that "…every year, the relationships are getting stronger and stronger. Really understanding the dynamics of why we're here [and] what we're trying to accomplish have been a highlight for me." Teachers have benefited from continuity, with a principal describing how "…the teachers have really gotten accustomed to how we operate, how we look at the needs that our students have." The longevity of the initiative also works in students' favor, as one teacher explained that "…the programs we use, they've seen since they're little…[it's] more consistent, which helps them, because they know what to expect."

Participants also referenced the flexibility that the Partnership initiative affords the four sites, particularly in terms of how each site has discretion in using its funding to support school-specific priorities. One stakeholder noted that "…I appreciate the Partnership. Without all those government guidelines… it allows you to be really flexible. What you think is best for kids and what's proven to work with kids. We're able to utilize funds to support that." Another described the value of being flexible with staffing, sharing that "…It's nice to have that flexibility and additional staff to support those classrooms, because otherwise, sometimes those teachers are overwhelmed, calling in sick all the time. But if they know they have that individual coming, it won't be so bad, I got this." Stakeholders also expressed appreciation for how the funds allow schools to try different strategies with students. This included an expanded focus on gathering more student voice at Rogers, while Carver staff talked about planning an event in which teachers would pick a topic they know well and have students move around the building to learn from those teachers based on their interests. Carver also works with an external coach and funds after-school meetings so that teachers do not have to spend time during the school day out of their classrooms. Mitchell staff spoke of successes implementing social-emotional learning, touting the use of a "peace room" which students can use to calm themselves down.

Appreciation for Partnership Supports and Resources

Another primary theme emerging from stakeholder perceptions in 2022-23, and one which has been consistently cited in prior years' reports, is an **overall deep sense of appreciation for the supports (funding, staff, and resources) provided by the grant, based on a strong belief that these resources continue to play a key role in helping impact student engagement, achievement, and school culture**. As one principal succinctly noted, "…it's great. I wish it would last forever," while another stakeholder described appreciation for resources they "…wouldn't have without [the Partnership]."

Beyond an overall sense of appreciation, stakeholders also discussed specific supports the initiative provides and how they have used these resources. **Partnership funding allowed staff at one site, for example, to "…upgrade some rooms with furniture and desks, [and] purchase some books…[we are] not short with electronics because of the grant, and our [computer] lab will be updated with program funds."** At another site, a stakeholder noted that "… the resources that get provided to our classrooms help a lot – manipulatives [and] learning games really help to engage students in learning. They forget that they're learning sometimes, which is always a good thing. If they're having fun, they're more willing." Schools have also provided field trips and hosted family and community events using Partnership funds.

Partnership funding also has the obvious and very tangible impact of allowing individual school sites, as well as the initiative overall, to hire and support staff in a manner that would otherwise not be possible. **This includes the much-appreciated work of Mary Kasten (MPS) and Rachel Lander (UW-Milwaukee) across sites, who were described by stakeholders as being "…really that valuable because they can keep us on track" and "…very good at working with the different schools, different personalities, different principals to support the learning and behaviors at each school**. [They] help [us] be more intentional, but within each school's framework." Another participant described how "…**the mandatory Coaching Cohort has been a terrific PD [opportunity] for me this year. The things I learned through Paige [Richards]'s tutelage have assisted me greatly in my encounters with adults."**

At the individual building level, we also heard a great deal from stakeholders, as in prior years, about specific supports the Partnership initiative provides that directly impact staff. As one principal noted, "…when you have from the Partnership another educator, paraprofessionals, SPARK, [and] the afterschool space, that's powerful. The Partnership has really allowed us to provide that for our school community." Similarly, another participant noted that "…teachers really rely on the Boys & Girls Club and SPARK in their room, [to allow for] more instruction tailored to those in the room, [which is] very helpful to every teacher…" Funds also allow schools to create dedicated time for teachers and compensate them for doing extra work; one principal discussed how the funding "…provides them opportunities to plan, brainstorm, [and for us to] compensate them, so that they realize what this work really is. We're seeing a difference in terms of how teachers approach the work. They're more intentional, thoughtful when they plan." A teacher, similarly, described compensation received through the grant: "Outside of school, every now and again we get offers to either plan from home or plan in the building, and get some extra compensation. I know Partnership [funding] does provide that to us." Another teacher specifically spoke about how funding helps with retention: "[The Partnership] goes to why we [teachers] have been here so long, and helps with teacher sustainability."

Stakeholders also described how Partnership funds impact students in addition to staff. The following anecdote from a building-level stakeholder provides an illustrative example:

> "We have one student…we're like, he's going to be the focus student. We've really seen a difference… with attitude, we've seen a difference with his progress, his confidence, his desire to come in and learn. I attribute that to us all saying, what are you doing with [student] this week? What's the incentive this week? Oh my gosh, you were so good at reading this book, go read it to [the SEL interventionist] today. The village, it's working. To see the impact it can make…and to have all those pieces in place and have the communication, that's so vital. To see what a difference it's made for him."

We also note that while most staff appear to be aware of the supports the Partnership initiative provides, schools may still need to occasionally remind staff about the resources they receive. A principal noted, for example, that "…I think sometimes we as the leaders just dive into the PD and fail to mention [that] we're doing this based off of Partnership funding, or the reason why we're moving it here is because of Partnership." The principal went on to discuss the need to inform new staff in particular, describing the need to ask "…Is there anyone new on that team? [If so, we need] a different type of onboarding for them as to what the Partnership actually is." Another teacher described a similar sentiment: "I want to know more – [whether] this is from the Partnership." A newer teacher suggested having a "refresher:" "This is what a SPARK lesson looks like…this is what City Year's main focus [areas] are. Something like that to get a better understanding. Because I think I would just wonder, are there things that people could have helped me with that I'm not aware that they're a part of?"

Data Use and Student Growth

Following on the heels of our Year 7 (2021-22) report, which identified many challenges related to MPS students returning to school following the COVID-19 pandemic, we heard a great deal in our Year 8 report about how Partnership sites are using funding to continue their efforts to help students regain lost ground. One specific form this took in 2022-23 was in staff devoting time to reviewing data for tracking student growth. A principal at one school noted that "…what's really helpful right now is we're showing significant progress in student growth…And I do believe it's attributed to the extra pieces that we have in place [via the Partnership] and being able to dive into the data and doing data chats after school and grade level team meetings." Participants discussed ways in which partners and teams collaborated to review data, with one principal relating that "…[partners] meet and talk about the data, see who is doing well, who needs more. [We've] had to work more collaboratively and understand what each partner was doing…" A staff member at a different school had a similar observation, saying "…we're honing in on specific students as opposed to years in the past where we've just shot out data and it's like okay, now what are we going to do with this data? I feel like now that we have specific students that us and the SEL and the After-School Manager and City Year can all talk about and figure out…what are the next steps?" Teachers saw this as well, with one noting that students "…get more representation, they get more opportunities for learning, and it's supplementing what's already going on in the classroom. So it's definitely critical to closing the achievement gap."

Ongoing and New Challenges

In prior years' reports, we have highlighted two ongoing challenges that stakeholders from Partnership schools have described: staffing and communication. We provide a brief update on these two issues, as well as a new one, as described by stakeholders during interviews and focus groups this year.

Staffing: We present above, in Table 2 and Figure 1, data showing turnover among key Partnership-funded positions and the distribution of classroom teachers by experience level, respectively. These data continue to show that turnover remains a challenge, and stakeholders validated this concern in their comments. One stakeholder described how their school "…had teachers that have left mid-year and we haven't been able to fill those positions … even though we have those [Partnership] resources and they are definitely helping us make strides with our kids, the problem is these strides are more challenging in certain places because they have lost their teacher." The impacts of turnover are clearly exacerbated by ongoing shortages of educators, which of course is not unique to Partnership sites. Numerous stakeholders referenced educator shortages, in fact, as an area of concern, and described how **shortages pull staff away from their regular responsibilities. One participant described "… lots of staffing issues this year…numerous new teachers, chronic shortage of subs, lots of staff absence**. We needed to re-deploy our SST most of the year to cover a long-term absence." Staff shortages also have a direct impact on communication and collaboration, as we discuss below; one stakeholder noted that "…Not only has it hit MPS, but it's also hit Boys & Girls Club, City Year, even SPARK. Once we are able to establish all those individuals, the communication, the collaboration, the planning time, we will definitely improve."

Communication: In this year's focus groups and interviews, we heard somewhat mixed sentiments regarding communication and collaboration. Some felt these were areas of strength, while others said that these were still challenging and/or presented suggestions for improvement. On the positive side, one stakeholder described how the "…Partnership has allowed for more collaboration," and that "…this year, everybody is vibing very well together, supportive of one another." Participants discussed the benefits (or possible benefits) of partner-teacher conferences (PTCs), with one saying that "…between all of us, the PTC meetings once a month continue to be successful…" and another suggesting that "….the most beneficial would be having those PTCs with the teachers actually having a set time to talk. Okay, let's talk about this student behavior."

Not all staff believed that communication and collaboration at their sites was strong and/or improving, however. One noted that "…there could be some improvement when it comes to really working together," while another identified "…communication between all of the partners" as a challenge. Other participants offered specific thoughts and suggestions, with one describing the challenge related to "…the transparency of what everyone is doing" and another noting that "we have that carved-out [meeting] time once a month, but in between we could work [more effectively] on strengthening our partnership between the programs and the school."

Influx of New Students

A mostly new challenge identified by several stakeholders this year was how to deal with the arrival of new students throughout the course of the school year, and particularly toward the end of the school year. We describe this as a "mostly new" challenge because while it had come up previously (by one or two stakeholders), we definitely heard more about it this year. In essence, the issue is that **stakeholders describe a continuous influx of new students arriving throughout the year for various reasons**, including one stakeholder describing how "…come January, a lot of families might lose housing. Other times other students are being removed from other schools due to behaviors. We received a huge mid-year influx due to behavior choices." Numerous stakeholders believed that the choice-heavy school environment in Milwaukee plays a role in increasing movement of students, and that students who arrive later in the school year often (but not always) have behavioral issues. One described, for example, how "….in November and through March, [we] get new students from closed charters and choice schools. All of these transfers generally have behavior problems." Another noted that "…we don't have that choice" [not to accept new students], and "…so all we can do is just be prepared for that, to have people in place, communicate that with the classroom teachers."

We note that while "addressing" student mobility may not be something that the Partnership initiative (nor anyone else, for that matter) can do, we offer the suggestion that the schools review data and meet to discuss potential ways in which Partnership supports (especially in terms of staffing and professional development) might help schools better address this challenge. One school described, for example, how it is already leveraging staff to help address new student mobility, by holding an assembly for these students: "…we show them how we roll. That does change your culture. Here's what we do. Here's how we do it. I have faith in you, you can have this new start. We are going to work together to help create some success for you." Addressing the challenge of new students is of obvious importance for school staff, as we recall a teacher reporting how "…staff is burning out. With getting so many new kids … That's draining on a teacher."

Component-Specific Perceptions

The previous section described high-level stakeholder perceptions that cut across different components of the Partnership initiative. We turn next to stakeholder perceptions that are specific to individual components of the initiative.

SEL Intervention Teachers and SEL Supports

SEL intervention teachers at three of the Partnership sites continued during Year 8 to provide much-appreciated and varied forms of direct support to both students and teachers. The SEL teacher role has witnessed substantial turnover at Carver in particular, and at Clarke the position was vacant during the second half of the 2022-23 school year, but three sites (Carver, Mitchell, and Rogers) had the same person in this role in 2022-23 as in 2021-22. These staff described to us how they continue to collaborate with administrative teams and classroom teachers to fill gaps and support students' SEL needs, as well as to provide teachers with SEL tools and strategies – although we note again this year, as in years past, that the structure of what SEL teachers do on a daily basis varies across buildings.

SEL teachers again reported supporting students in a wide variety of ways. Frequently-mentioned types of support include providing one-to-one interventions with students, giving students breaks from the classroom when needed, conducting restorative circles, and facilitating school assemblies with rewards for students. **Importantly, SEL teachers described a lot of work they do with students as "unplanned" interventions which are provided on as-needed basis**. For example, one SEL teacher said, "If I'm walking down the hall and see a student in crisis, I will a lot of times step up and try to handle that situation."

To do their jobs effectively, SEL teachers again described the importance of establishing trust and building relationships with students. One noted that "...I walk around in a couple of rooms, make contact with every single student," while an administrator at another school stated that "...In [the] midst of our everyday observation, **we're seeing stronger relationships between children and staff members, and I do attribute that to the SEL interventionist. We have that extra individual, so there's more powerful relationships that can take place."** Classroom teachers also noted the importance of having SEL teachers work with students in a way that the teachers themselves are not always able to: **"My kids actively seek her (the SEL teacher) out because she's going to understand what they're saying. They don't want to talk to me because I'm there all the time. She's been great in helping with that type of stuff."** Another SEL teacher noted the ways in which she is able to build relationships with students: "If you can relate to [students] as much as possible, I think that goes a long way. I think that helps out tremendously, especially with the relationships. And I mean that goes with the trust too. Like, I trust you, you know. I know I could come and talk to you, and things of that nature."

SEL teachers also described additional ways they support classroom teachers, including helping facilitate Second Step, providing morning meeting support, and offering ideas for behavior management and relationship development. One described utilizing "teacher walk-throughs with an SEL focus:"

> "I go in, and rather than saying things like, 'try to do this in reading, try to do that in math,' I focus more on how the room is arranged, do the students have all the supplies that they need, how are we talking to students, what are the procedures, are the procedures being practiced... those types of things, to help the climate in the classroom and the relationships with the teachers and the students in the building. As a result of that, a lot of times I will run across students who are in need, and so that's a good thing. I'm helping teachers and helping students at the same time."

Stakeholders identified several areas of success as relates to the SEL teacher role this year. Commonly-mentioned successes included improvement in school climate and culture, positive results from restorative circles, and improvement with classroom behavior teacher entries ("Teachers are better documenting classroom behaviors as they deal with them. They are also using more SEL type interventions when they work with students to improve their behavior in the classroom"). Overall, **stakeholders commented on ways in which the SEL teachers are able to provide invaluable support to teachers and other staff by taking care of students' SEL needs**. As one SEL teacher described, "...When I'm able to assist a student in distress and get them back into class with an action plan for the future and the promise to check in on them later, it's a win-win. Students and teachers alike are less stressed, both are happier and focused, and the school benefits because learning can take place."

In fulfilling their many and varied duties, one challenge with the SEL teacher position we have noted in previous years continues to be maintaining clear boundaries within the role. **SEL teachers reported engaging in a variety of duties not related specifically to their position, such as monitoring hallways and test proctoring, often due to staffing shortages**. As in prior years, it also appears that having somewhat unclear parameters for the position has led to classroom teachers not having clear expectations for what the SEL teachers should be helping with. As one teacher described, "What should [the SEL teachers'] job be?... I feel like it's a lot of office work. Sending this reminder, this reminder, teacher of the month, student of the month. Good things, but you're not office staff." We also heard some degree of disconnect between how classroom teachers viewed the SEL teacher role and how the SEL teachers described their own role. This may be due to SEL teachers focusing on different grades/classrooms across different buildings (which means that some teachers may be unaware of SEL interventionists' specific areas of focus), but it may be beneficial to create a broad, common understanding of what is expected from SEL teachers.

Stakeholders also shared suggestions for improvement related to the SEL teacher role. One SEL teacher suggested "having a 5- or 10-minute slot in a staff meeting once a month" to talk to teachers about personal learning plan notes and Second Step. It was also suggested that it would be helpful to have two SELs per building (one to cover K-5 and one to cover middle school), and to have a bilingual SEL teacher. Teachers also recommended having the SEL teacher come in and teach a lesson on occasion: "Some things we talk about relating to emotions and behaviors... sometimes it's nice when someone else that's not the classroom teacher comes in to teach it. [Students] take it more seriously. But that's not something I've ever seen done, that I've always wanted to happen. In that role, I feel like that should be a part of it." Also, similar to last school year, SEL teachers reported limited collaboration time with SEL teachers at other sites, and would like more opportunities to collaborate outside their school buildings.

Academic Interventionists

Stakeholders across Partnership sites described how the academic interventionist position continued to play a key role during Year 8 in working directly with teachers and students. **As with the SEL teacher role, the academic interventionist role has a set of duties that are more or less common across sites as well as duties that are specific to each site's needs**. Primary job responsibilities common to the academic interventionist role include collaborating with other staff, providing academic interventions to students, and coaching teachers. Other roles they play include being the testing coordinator, helping with morning meetings, working on the school improvement planning (SIP) process, conducting restorative circles for students, analyzing data, filling in for absent teachers, and working on new curriculum. As in prior years, academic interventionists generally work with specific grade levels in each site, although these vary across sites.

With respect to the collaboration part of their portfolio, academic interventionists described again this year how they work with classroom teachers (modeling lessons, giving feedback on observations, providing them with resources), Boys & Girls Club directors, SPARK coordinators, and City Year corps members. **Academic interventionists also spoke highly of the Partnership coaching cohort sessions (facilitated by Paige Richards) in which they were able to collaborate with other interventionists**. These monthly sessions were described as dedicated time to meet other academic interventionists across the district and get training on reading intervention programs, with one academic interventionist noting that at the coaching cohort sessions, "…we have time to talk about challenges together, expectations, ideas that have been successful… for example, how to set up restorative sessions."

One positive change from prior years as relates to the academic interventionist role was noted specifically for grade-level meetings at Carver. The academic interventionist reported that these meetings, whose existence is due to the Partnership,

> "…allow us to dig into the curriculum and work with each other, so the regular education teacher is meeting with the special education teacher and they're co-planning, and we're looking at student work and we're comparing to the other rooms and constantly assessing what we're doing. If we didn't have those meetings and if I didn't have that time to coach, it would never be aligned. Not only do they practice with me, not only do I see it and give feedback, but then they're also with their peers asking for the same thing."

Other successes and highlights pertaining to academic interventionists' work at Partnership sites this school year included their role in creating a "full circle" effect of interventions. As one interventionist described:

> "**I think the feedback I give teachers has the greatest impact on students because I'm able to see the full circle**. I know what the district expects in terms of the subject area and in terms of assessments…I also have other tools that teachers haven't really thought about or ways to tweak what they are doing. Even though I'm spending a lot of time coaching them, that in turn is affecting students because they are getting the most effective teaching and assessment practices. And then we do see that growth when they take standardized assessments."

Academic interventionists were described as making positive connections with students and establishing credibility with classroom teachers. They provide "another set of hands" in the classroom to help boost students' academic performance, with one academic interventionist describing how "…For example, [with] guided reading groups…when I go in there, I'm that third body, because there's the teacher, the para, and then me. Now there's three teachers in that classroom supporting the students. The ratio of student to teacher is a lot less…[I'm] able to support that teacher in that way and provide smaller group instruction and more intense interventions." An administrator also noted how the academic interventionist plays a key role guiding meetings after school for grade level teams, which were described as being "very structured and teachers knowing what to expect…and then [the academic interventionist] is following back up by coaching in the classroom."

As in prior years, stakeholders listed several challenges associated with the academic interventionist position, including role definition, finding time to work with teachers, and an inability to cover all grades. **A frequently-mentioned challenge reported by academic interventionists was being pulled from their primary duties (coaching teachers and working with students) to act as a substitute teacher and/or to cover testing responsibilities**. One reported that (at the time of our visit) "…This whole month is Forward testing, so now I'm pulled out of the classroom to do that for a whole month. Now I'm breaking [my] routine with the teacher, because the teacher was relying on me to be in the classroom, and the students as well." Several academic interventionists also mentioned struggling to find and protect time for coaching teachers, with one noting that "…we don't have enough structured time set aside" for this role.

Academic interventionists also reported that they sometimes struggle with covering all grades and students appropriately. Sometimes, this was due to role and/or time overlap with other staff, as one interventionist described: "[Another interventionist] could be with 2nd grade doing the same thing that I'm trying to work with, a teacher or students, and then we have the SEL interventionist coming in doing the same thing, and then we have the AGR and SST." In other instances, the struggle with "coverage" had more to do with scheduling. An interventionist at one site noted that "…We need to make one coherent schedule, not change it. We also have AGR – if AGR is focusing on those classes, maybe academic interventionists don't need to. Or are they double-dipping, and the higher grades get nothing? It needs to be fair for the students, not the teachers." To help address these challenges with role definition and scheduling, several academic interventionists noted that a basic job description which contains some definition of intended roles could be helpful.

ST Math

We also heard from stakeholders again this year about how ST Math continues to be a useful tool for enhancing students' mathematics success in both classroom (as a Tier I resource) and afterschool settings. Several successes related to ST Math were cited, including students making strong connections between ST Math and their classwork and/or STAR test material. Another reported success was higher-achieving students' ability to assist struggling peers on ST Math; as one teacher noted, "… all of the kids are really good about helping. It [ST Math] can actually foster the compassion piece that is so hard to try and get in a classroom." **Stakeholders also pointed to students' familiarity with ST Math from having utilized it for many years. One teacher described how "…The kids don't get tired of it because they are so familiar with it. It's a comfort. They come in with anxiety, and they're like all right, I know this one."** As in past years, stakeholders continued to utilize creative incentives for students as motivation to work on ST Math. One academic interventionist shared how ST Math motivates their students: "ST Math is still a big, big push for kids, and we turned it into rewards and competitions, and they love hearing that. They are super competitive with it."

In terms of challenges associated with ST Math, several stakeholders noted that while the longevity and consistency of the program provides students with a level of comfort and familiarity, some may feel "burnt out" with it, especially those that attend Boys & Girls Club afterschool. ST Math is a requirement for afterschool students in at least two Partnership sites, although the specific time and frequency spent on it varies. Another challenge associated with ST Math was the program's difficulty for some students who are far below grade level, with the amount of required reading creating challenges for struggling readers and English Learners (although we note that one 8th grade teacher would like more reading with ST Math to more closely mimic standardized tests). Recommendations for improvement from teachers included additional accommodations for special education students (including allowing teachers to access what students can access) and the ability to adjust the goals and puzzle requirements based on students' grade levels.

City Year Milwaukee

Stakeholders at Partnership sites continued in Year 8 to express great appreciation for having the support of City Year corps members (ACMs) in their classrooms and buildings. ACMs continue to work with students from individual classrooms on "focus lists" at various times during the school day, including interventions which should be daily and last anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes. Students are selected for focus lists, as in prior years, based on attendance, STAR scores, and conversations with partner teachers. ACMs also help support schoolwide efforts such as SEL work, behavior interventions, making positive phone calls and attendance phone calls on behalf of teachers, participating in parent-teacher conferences, and supporting afterschool programming. **One teacher noted that ACMs "...really feel like part of the school at this point. I think we really do need them...they're very key to what we're doing." Another teacher shared that "...this is the first time for me working with City Year. It's very nice. She does SEL groups, intervention groups, pulls students who are struggling with math lessons. It's nice to have an extra set of hands. I've never had a para in my classroom, I at least have City Year."**

City Year site managers at each Partnership school also described, as in prior years, several challenges associated with their work. **Staffing levels, while better than in past years (especially during COVID), continue to be an issue, with sites in general either starting the year not fully staffed and/or having ACMs leave during the year**. One manager explained that "...We had eight to start, lost one, then we got a mid-year, and then another quit...[so we] lost two and gained one." Managers also shared that uncertainty about the role of ACMs – as one manager noted, "...they aren't teachers and they aren't students" – and a robust job market (with many employers hiring) have hindered recruitment. The range of experience and preparedness that ACMs have can also be challenging; one manager described how "...ACMs are sometimes fresh out of high school, and some of [the students they work with] are easily into high school math... [sometimes] they struggle to teach these concepts to the kids."

In addition to staffing issues, City Year managers shared that they have difficulty finding dedicated space for ACMs to hold interventions, as well as office space to fit all of their ACMs. Scheduling is another constant challenge, particularly in finding time to collaborate with classroom teachers. One manager shared that "…teachers don't have time after school, and that is when City Year has time. [We're] trying not to step on toes, but [we] need data pieces to bring to their supervisors, so there are some challenges." Role definition and boundaries are another ongoing challenge, with one manager noting that ACMs need to be intentional about their work so that they do not end up "babysitting."

Building from the successes and challenges noted above, suggestions offered by stakeholders regarding City Year centered around improved communications, both between managers and ACMs as well as between CMs and classroom teachers. Managers mentioned wanting to have more communication with managers at other schools to discuss best practices, what worked well, and what did not work well during the year. Managers also suggested that having a monthly presence at the morning meetings might also help build a stronger connection with ACMs. For ACMs, a stronger onboarding process was recommended so that new recruits do not struggle as much at the beginning of the school year. Participants mentioned that onboarding should include restorative circle training as well as academic training, such as refreshers about how to teach algebra. These suggestions were offered in the spirit of improving ACMs' *experience* as well as their *impact*; as one stakeholder observed, "…I would love for ACMs and teachers…to feel like they can have a little more two-way feedback and talk more consistently about what's going well. If the communication is mostly happening through me, and then I have to relay it back, I just don't think it's as effective, and it makes trust more challenging."

Boys & Girls Club Afterschool Programming

Consistent with prior years, afterschool programming for students in Partnership sites (as well as more than 30 other MPS sites) was provided during Year 8 by the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee. Stakeholders expressed appreciation for children having a safe place to go after school and during selected days when MPS is not in session. **Afterschool provides an environment where "kids can be kids," in the words of one stakeholder, who went on to explain how it "…allows them to still be kids, because if they went home, they would be making dinner, taking care of the little people, helping them with their homework… [rather than] letting kids still be 12 or 13 or 14** and not having to step into that role because their parents are at work and that responsibility a lot of times falls on them."

Also identified as a strength of afterschool programming is the fact that some afterschool staff also work in the same site during the regular school day, which helps with communication and creates a strong level of familiarity between students and staff. One stakeholder described how "…there's a lot of day school staff that also work for CLC afterschool, and I think that really helps keep the bridge going [in terms of] expectations and rules." Other afterschool strengths noted by stakeholders included improved family engagement compared to years past (particularly during COVID), with family members contributing as employees, volunteers, and participants for events such as family nights. Staffing was also reported to be stronger than in years past, with one school reporting nearly twice as many afterschool staff this past year. Afterschool staff also shared that they were able to offer increased programming this year, including art therapy, use of a computer lab, a wood shop class, designing t-shirts, and karate – all of which were available due to Partnership support.

Challenges associated with afterschool programming, as in prior years, were cited most often in terms of communication, particularly where fewer afterschool staff work at the school during the regular school day. Stakeholders at one site noted that there had been a "huge communication breakdown" between regular school staff and afterschool staff, with the former expressing concern about the level of services being offered. Transportation is another ongoing challenge (not just for afterschool but also for the regular school day), as is scheduling (particularly in finding time for afterschool and day-school staff to collaborate around academic goals). Behavior issues at afterschool were identified by stakeholders at one site in particular, with various stakeholders reporting "...lots of fighting, bullying, [and] homework not getting done," and a school staff member sharing that "...some parents who are unable to pick their kids up right after school prefer to keep them home for the day, rather than sending them to CLC." We note that these concerns around behavior were raised just for this single site, and mostly just for the recently-completed (2022-23) school year.

In terms of suggestions and recommendations going forward, having more time dedicated for staff networking and collaboration (both within and across afterschool sites) would be beneficial. This includes collaboration across the different organizations involved in the Partnership initiative (MPS, BGCGM, and City Year). One stakeholder identified Mitchell as "having one of the best collaboration pieces I've seen," sharing that "...I went to one of their family nights, and every single partner [organization] was there. It was SPARK leading the activities for the parents, they had their CLC coordinator, they had the community liaison there, they had teachers in the building, the afterschool staff, City Year. They all were leading different activities. The families came in to see all of the pieces that happens throughout the building. That I would like to see mimicked here, or across the board. I don't know if everyone else is doing that, but I'd never seen that before." Afterschool staff also mentioned that it would be helpful to have mental health counseling available for themselves, as one site (Rogers) reported success with this offering.

SPARK

Stakeholders reported that SPARK programming continues to feature 1:1 tutoring that occurs 2-3 days each week for approximately 30 minutes. During this time, tutors work with students practicing site words, spelling, and listening to students read aloud; if time permits, tutors also read aloud to students. Sessions are scripted and follow a pre-determined lesson plan. Assessment continues to be a big part of guiding the work, with one SPARK Program Manager sharing that "...we assess everything, and then if they already know a concept, we can just skip over that and continue on with the things that they don't know." Students just below grade-level performance continue to be the target population for SPARK, with some exceptions depending on the needs of the school. A Program Manager explained that "...The program is designed to bring the kids right over the edge that are on the edge. But most of our students are lower than that because that's what the school has." While there are some virtual sessions still occurring (a legacy of COVID), most sessions are in person.

SPARK Program Managers noted that they were generally pleased to have more tutors in place this year, which they attributed to improved recruitment efforts that brought in a good mix of college students, retirees, and parents. In addition, one school (Rogers) has a partnership with UW-Milwaukee which allows students to do their fieldwork and observations at the school and tutor while they are there. Other successes noted by stakeholders shared include strong student engagement ("The kids who get to go are always so excited...they always come back with a fun prize. They're always engaged and on task when they're there"), student academic growth ("we've seen lots of growth among students with sight words, moving up in levels of learning"), and strong family engagement ("more parents are realizing what our program is [and] are so thankful").

Communication was also cited as an area of strength for SPARK during Year 8, with SPARK managers reporting that they connect regularly with their colleagues at other sites to hear about how things have been going. One manager described how "...I call on [another school] all the time to get clarifications of things, to talk about what they're doing, if we're doing something similar. There's always emails, and we meet regularly in person to share things that are going on." Another manager shared more generally how communication supports the work they are doing, noting that "...I feel like we're in a loop where everyone has the same respect level, so they'll get back to you and let you know what they can. So it's been easy to share information in that aspect."

In terms of challenges with SPARK, several stakeholders noted that **tutor and student attendance remained issues but were not as significant as in the past**. Tutors were largely praised for their work, with one manager noting that "...They [tutors] all have a really good grasp of what a lesson is supposed to look like, which makes it easier for them to adapt to specific students." Time is always a challenge for tutors, and managers noted that having more than 30 minutes with students would help students make greater progress. This is particularly true given SPARK's role in helping students catch up to grade level work following COVID; one manager shared the belief that "...It's unbelievably critical that these kids who are for the most part a year plus behind, and now with post-COVID moving forward we have a lot of ground to catch up...giving these kids that additional one-on-one tutoring session is key to continuing the growth that we have seen in the classroom."

Suggestions offered by stakeholders for SPARK moving forward included recruiting and providing more bilingual tutoring support as well as having regular meeting times built into teacher schedules (as they evidently had been prior to the pandemic). Stakeholders would also like to see expanded efforts to collaborate across sites, with many sites (for example) having success organizing family events every other month.

Outcomes

We turn next to summarizing selected outcomes related to student engagement and academic performance in Partnership sites, including the following:

- School climate and culture (MPS climate survey)
- Student engagement:
  - Attendance
  - Behavior
  - Student stability rate
- Student academic performance:
  - STAR attainment in Math and Reading
  - COVID learning recovery and Partnership impact
  - Selected metrics from the State Report Card
  - SPARK performance
  - ST Math performance

School Climate and Culture

The MPS Essentials of School Climate and Culture (ESCC) survey has been administered to staff and students (in grades 4-12) each spring for nearly a decade, not including a COVID-related pause during the 2020-21 school year. The survey is adapted from the University of Chicago's longstanding 5Essentials survey, and measures stakeholder perceptions in five key areas (domains) which have been shown in prior research to be correlated with high levels of school performance:

- Effective Leadership
- Involved Families
- Supportive Environment
- Collaborative Teachers
- Ambitious Instruction

ESCC results are reported by UW-Milwaukee (working in conjunction with MPS) for schools that meet requirements for minimum response rates (typically 50 percent of potential respondents). We note, however, that survey results can be influenced both by *how many* and *which* people respond, particularly when results are being compared across time. In other words, respondents at a particular school (students and staff) change from year to year, so ESCC results should be interpreted with caution – and in fact we note that as a general rule, results for many questions show considerable variability from year to year. Table 10 shows ESCC response rates for the four Partnership sites in recent years, with response rates of at least 60 percent participation for both students and staff in most years other than among students at Clarke.

Table 10: ESCC Response Rates

By School, Role, and Year

		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	Students Elementary	83%	83%	n/a	n/a	n/a	71%	72%
	Students Middle	85%	82%	67%	n/a	34%	79%	78%
	Staff	66%	78%	70%	60%	n/a	80%	81%
Clarke	Students Elementary	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Students Middle	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	80%	n/a	n/a
	Staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	60%	54%	69%	68%
Mitchell	Students Elementary	64%	84%	n/a	83%	n/a	78%	75%
	Students Middle	53%	78%	56%	76%	67%	66%	69%
	Staff	70%	83%	64%	62%	41%	61%	64%
Rogers	Students Elementary	17%	89%	70%	92%	n/a	82%	66%
	Students Middle	75%	84%	75%	86%	n/a	85%	61%
	Staff	78%	61%	72%	79%	83%	69%	69%

ESCC was not given in 2020-21 due to the pandemic.

Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 ESCC Survey Reports (https://essentialsofschools.com/).

Table II - Table 14 below show results for each of the four Partnership sites for a selected set of ESCC questions that we have tracked over time because they are both useful measures of climate and culture in Partnership sites and are well-aligned with the goals and activities of the Partnership initiative. All figures below reflect the percentage of respondents who expressed positive sentiment about each question in each year, which is calculated somewhat differently depending on the wording of the question. For most questions, positive sentiment is in a "positive" direction; for example, for the question that reads "Staff at this school work hard to build trusting relationships with parents," positive sentiment is the percentage of respondents who selected as their response either "strongly agree" or "agree." For other questions, positive sentiment is in a "negative" direction, such as with the question that reads "many special programs come and go at this school," where positive sentiment is the percentage of respondents who answered either "strongly disagree" or "disagree."

Carver ESCC data (Table II) show a mix of year-to-year fluctuation and stability in stakeholder perceptions around key components of school climate and culture. Staff generally have favorable impressions of their own efforts to communicate and build relationships with families, and most look forward to working each day. Conversely, staff feel less responsible for helping ensure that all children learn, and feel that many special programs tend to come and go (an ongoing challenge that we have described in the past as "initiative churn"). We also note that only about half of middle grades students at Carver believe that their peers feel it is important to come to school each day, which provides some degree of validation for ongoing challenges with actual attendance data (at Carver and across MPS in general) that we describe in more detail below.

Table II: Selected ESCC Data for Carver

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23
Domain: Effective Leaders							
Many special programs come and go at this school.	68%	41%	52%	50%	n/a	68%	47%
Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it's working.	90%	71%	88%	64%	n/a	90%	60%
We have so many different programs in this school that I can't keep track of them all.	56%	63%	71%	86%	n/a	56%	66%
Domain: Involved Families							
Staff at this school work hard to build trusting relationships with parents.	88%	82%	76%	75%	n/a	88%	81%
Teachers work closely with parents to meet students' needs.	57%	58%	63%	75%	n/a	57%	68%
This school regularly communicates with parents about how they can help their children learn.	91%	72%	83%	81%	n/a	91%	75%
Domain: Supportive Environment (Grades 4-5 students)							
How many students in your school feel it is important to come to school every day?	82%	77%	n/a	n/a	n/a	82%	67%
Domain: Supportive Environment (Grades 6-8 students)							
How many students in your school feel it is important to come to school every day?	62%	60%	56%	56%	54%	62%	53%
Domain: Collaborative Staff							
How many staff in this school take responsibility for improving the school?	69%	36%	67%	48%	n/a	69%	49%
How many staff in this school feel responsible that all students learn?	88%	55%	72%	59%	n/a	88%	69%
I wouldn't want to work in any other school.	50%	47%	62%	38%	n/a	50%	52%
I would recommend this school to parents seeking a place for their child.	66%	35%	71%	35%	n/a	66%	50%
I usually look forward to each working day at this school.	84%	58%	77%	65%	n/a	84%	84%

ESCC was not given in 2020-21 due to the pandemic.
Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 ESCC Survey Reports (https://essentialsofschools.com/).

Climate survey data for Clarke (Table 12) are somewhat less informative due to low participation rates among students, while staff perceptions are somewhat mixed. On the one hand, Clarke staff feel that the school does a good job building relationships and communicating with families, although a smaller share of staff (at least for 2022-23) feel that their colleagues take responsibility for improving the school and would recommend Clarke to other families.

Table 12: Selected ESCC Data for Clarke

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23
Domain: Effective Leaders							
Many special programs come and go at this school.	30%	n/a	33%	13%	18%	30%	30%
Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it's working.	82%	n/a	62%	50%	27%	82%	86%
We have so many different programs in this school that I can't keep track of them all.	61%	n/a	62%	29%	36%	61%	74%
Domain: Involved Families							
Staff at this school work hard to build trusting relationships with parents.	93%	n/a	93%	82%	82%	93%	95%
Teachers work closely with parents to meet students' needs.	59%	n/a	52%	47%	45%	59%	62%
This school regularly communicates with parents about how they can help their children learn.	93%	n/a	90%	76%	64%	93%	86%
Domain: Supportive Environment (Grades 4-5 students)							
How many students in your school feel it is important to come to school every day?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Domain: Supportive Environment (Grades 6-8 students)							
How many students in your school feel it is important to come to school every day?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Domain: Collaborative Staff							
How many staff in this school take responsibility for improving the school?	86%	n/a	61%	48%	40%	86%	45%
How many staff in this school feel responsible that all students learn?	86%	n/a	79%	85%	70%	86%	62%
I wouldn't want to work in any other school.	64%	n/a	54%	31%	32%	64%	59%
I would recommend this school to parents seeking a place for their child.	78%	n/a	46%	38%	27%	78%	43%
I usually look forward to each working day at this school.	74%	n/a	75%	58%	50%	74%	73%

ESCC was not given in 2020-21 due to the pandemic.

Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 ESCC Survey Reports (https://essentialsofschools.com/).

Mitchell climate survey data (Table 13) indicate that staff generally give the school high marks for building relationships and communicating effectively with families, with somewhat lower percentages of staff believing that they and their colleagues take responsibility for improving the school. Student perceptions around the importance of attendance suggest that students at both the elementary and middle grades perceive a modest commitment on the part of their peers to attending school regularly.

Table 13: Selected ESCC Data for Mitchell

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23
Domain: Effective Leaders							
Many special programs come and go at this school.	30%	36%	43%	33%	59%	30%	43%
Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it's working.	48%	61%	66%	59%	78%	48%	56%
We have so many different programs in this school that I can't keep track of them all.	41%	43%	63%	57%	74%	41%	60%
Domain: Involved Families							
Staff at this school work hard to build trusting relationships with parents.	71%	80%	80%	71%	92%	71%	85%
Teachers work closely with parents to meet students' needs.	49%	61%	74%	66%	80%	49%	68%
This school regularly communicates with parents about how they can help their children learn.	76%	72%	82%	77%	88%	76%	87%
Domain: Supportive Environment (Grades 4-5 students)							
How many students in your school feel it is important to come to school every day?	69%	73%	n/a	61%	70%	54%	65%
Domain: Supportive Environment (Grades 6-8 students)							
How many students in your school feel it is important to come to school every day?	62%	55%	62%	56%	54%	62%	53%
Domain: Collaborative Staff							
How many staff in this school take responsibility for improving the school?	55%	58%	62%	63%	70%	55%	40%
How many staff in this school feel responsible that all students learn?	81%	69%	74%	75%	73%	81%	58%
I wouldn't want to work in any other school.	29%	45%	56%	60%	72%	29%	40%
I would recommend this school to parents seeking a place for their child.	39%	47%	56%	67%	84%	39%	52%
I usually look forward to each working day at this school.	62%	76%	78%	75%	82%	62%	60%

ESCC was not given in 2020-21 due to the pandemic.

Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 ESCC Survey Reports (https://essentialsofschools.com/).

Climate survey data from Rogers (Table 14) show high rates of staff support: school staff believe (as was the case for the other Partnership sites) that their school does a good job communicating and building relationships with families. More so than the other sites, however, Rogers staff believe that their colleagues take responsibility for improving the school and helping all students learn, and would recommend their school to other families. Rogers students, conversely, have somewhat tepid views of their peers' commitment to attending school on a daily basis, with only about half of students in both grade spans (elementary and middle) believing that their peers feel daily attendance is important.

Table 14: Selected ESCC Data for Rogers

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23
Domain: Effective Leaders							
Many special programs come and go at this school.	35%	n/a	47%	50%	41%	35%	38%
Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it's working.	71%	n/a	77%	67%	69%	71%	90%
We have so many different programs in this school that I can't keep track of them all.	38%	n/a	38%	53%	54%	38%	48%
Domain: Involved Families							
Staff at this school work hard to build trusting relationships with parents.	85%	n/a	91%	81%	87%	85%	95%
Teachers work closely with parents to meet students' needs.	76%	n/a	70%	70%	77%	75%	84%
This school regularly communicates with parents about how they can help their children learn.	81%	n/a	94%	84%	100%	81%	98%
Domain: Supportive Environment (Grades 4-5 students)							
How many students in your school feel it is important to come to school every day?	68%	71%	69%	66%	65%	73%	50%
Domain: Supportive Environment (Grades 6-8 students)							
How many students in your school feel it is important to come to school every day?	62%	60%	56%	56%	54%	62%	47%
Domain: Collaborative Staff							
How many staff in this school take responsibility for improving the school?	66%	n/a	70%	65%	63%	66%	78%
How many staff in this school feel responsible that all students learn?	84%	n/a	86%	89%	81%	84%	95%
I wouldn't want to work in any other school.	70%	n/a	75%	77%	68%	70%	78%
I would recommend this school to parents seeking a place for their child.	81%	n/a	86%	86%	81%	81%	88%
I usually look forward to each working day at this school.	87%	n/a	86%	84%	80%	87%	85%

ESCC was not given in 2020-21 due to the pandemic.

Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 ESCC Survey Reports (https://essentialsofschools.com/).

Student Engagement

Student Stability

The year-to-year (spring to fall) rate of return among students, which we refer to as the stability rate at Partnership sites, provides one useful indicator of "customer satisfaction" that we have reported in previous years. Specifically, the stability measure as reported below is defined as the percentage of students enrolled at a particular school at the end of the 2021-22 school year who were both (a) eligible to return to that same school the following fall (e.g., excluding students that would usually be expected to attend other schools, such as those completing the highest grade level in a building); and (b) actually did return the following fall.

We see from Table 15 below **that 79 percent of students across all Partnership sites combined who were eligible to return for the start of the 2022-23 school year actually did so.** This figure is slightly lower than for MPS non-Partnership sites (80%) for 2022-23, and similar to the stability rate for Partnership sites the previous year (79%), The unusually high 90 percent stability rate between the end of 2019-20 and start of 2020-21 may be due to the fact that instruction was virtual across MPS at that time, which presumably created less motivation for students to seek a transfer to a different school. Stability rates continue to be somewhat higher at Mitchell and Rogers than for Carver and Clarke; in the latter case, this may be attributable to Carver not being a neighborhood school (with most students bused in from across the district).

Table 15: Student Stability Rate

by Partnership Site

SCHOOL	2015-16 TO 2016-17	2016-17 TO 2017-18	2017-18 TO 2018-19	2018-19 TO 2019-20	2019-20 TO 2020-21	2020-21 TO 2021-22	2021-22 TO 2022-23
Carver	73%	65%	71%	69%	89%	71%	71%
Clarke	n/a	n/a	n/a	62%	86%	70%	64%
Mitchell	83%	85%	83%	81%	90%	80%	83%
Rogers	89%	87%	92%	88%	92%	89%	86%
Partnership	83%	80%	83%	78%	90%	79%	79%
Non-Partnership K-8	80%	81%	80%	77%	87%	81%	80%

2019-20 to 2020-21 reflects data for Winter to Fall instead of Spring to Fall, due to COVID interruption.

Non-Partnership schools are limited to K-8 schools and do not include Clarke in any year. In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

Source: 2015-16 through 2022-23 MPS Third Friday enrollment data.

Attendance

Attendance data for 2022-23 and prior years are summarized in the tables and graphs below, although it is useful to note that these data are not entirely comparable across years. Attendance data for the 2019-20 school year, for example, are limited to September-February since all MPS schools went virtual for the remainder of that year (March-June). Attendance definitions also changed for 2020-21 due to the pandemic and virtual instruction. Guidance from DPI allowed districts to count students as attending school during virtual instruction if their teachers had any interaction with them (which could have included participating in a class via a virtual platform like Google Meet, submitting an assignment electronically, or corresponding with teachers or classmates).

Attendance rates across all four Partnership sites combined for 2022-23 (84.9%) increased compared to 2021-22 (82.7%), but were lower than for MPS non-Partnership sites combined in grades K-8 (87.4%) and remain well below pre-pandemic levels (Table 16). Clarke attendance improved 7 percentage points from the prior year but was well below the other three Partnership sites.

Table 16: Student Attendance Rate

by Partnership Site for 2014-15 through 2022-23

SITE	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	88.1%	90.8%	87.5%	87.7%	87.9%	87.2%	93.2%	80.1%	82.6%
Clarke	90.3%	89.9%	87.1%	84.6%	83.9%	86.6%	74.1%	69.8%	76.8%
Mitchell	91.3%	91.5%	90.2%	91.0%	89.9%	92.3%	92.7%	85.0%	84.9%
Rogers	92.9%	93.6%	93.1%	93.7%	93.1%	93.4%	92.3%	86.5%	88.8%
Partnership	91.2%	92.2%	90.6%	91.2%	90.7%	91.9%	90.4%	82.7%	84.9%
Non-Partnership K-8	92.4%	92.9%	92.1%	91.6%	91.1%	90.1%	89.5%	85.6%	87.4%

2019-20 reflects data for September through February, due to COVID interruption. Clarke data prior to joining the Partnership are shown for context. Non-Partnership totals exclude Clarke in all years.

In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

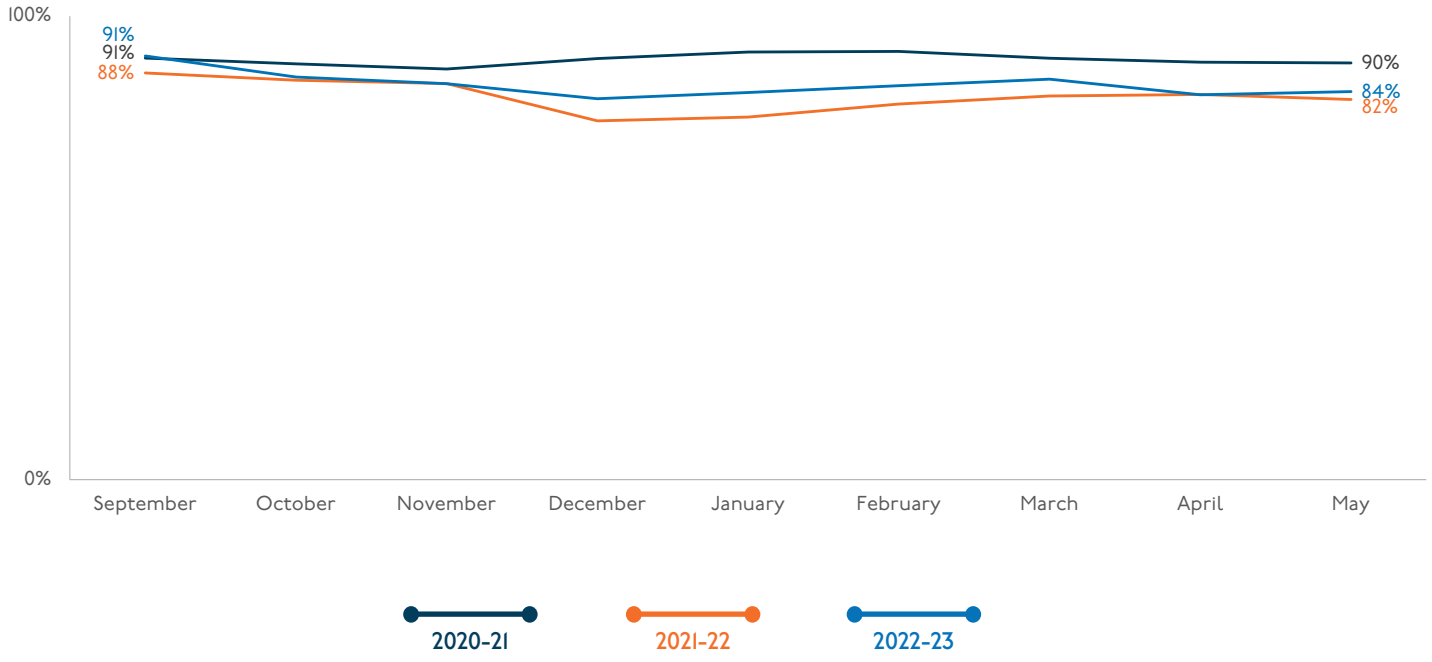
Source: 2014-15 through 2022-23 MPS attendance data.

Figures 9 and 10 below compare attendance rates by month in recent years across all Partnership and non-Partnership sites combined, respectively. Here we see that monthly attendance trends in 2021-22 and 2022-23 were similar: in both years, decreases are observed as fall semester progresses, followed by a slight increase as spring semester begins and remaining largely stable for the rest of the year. Attendance for 2020-21 is generally higher than the other two years, although students primarily attended virtual school during that year. Patterns were similar for non-Partnership sites.

Figures 11 - 14 show monthly attendance data for each Partnership site individually for 2022-23 and the two prior years. Here we observe several differences across sites. At Carver (Figure 11), attendance rates for 2022-23 were more stable across months than in the previous year. Clarke (Figure 12) had higher attendance in each month relative to 2021-22. At Mitchell (Figure 13), attendance declined slightly between November and December, as occurred at other sites, before recovering somewhat in February through May, while at Rogers (Figure 14) attendance remained relatively stable throughout the year.

Figure 9: Monthly Student Attendance Rate for Partnership Sites Combined

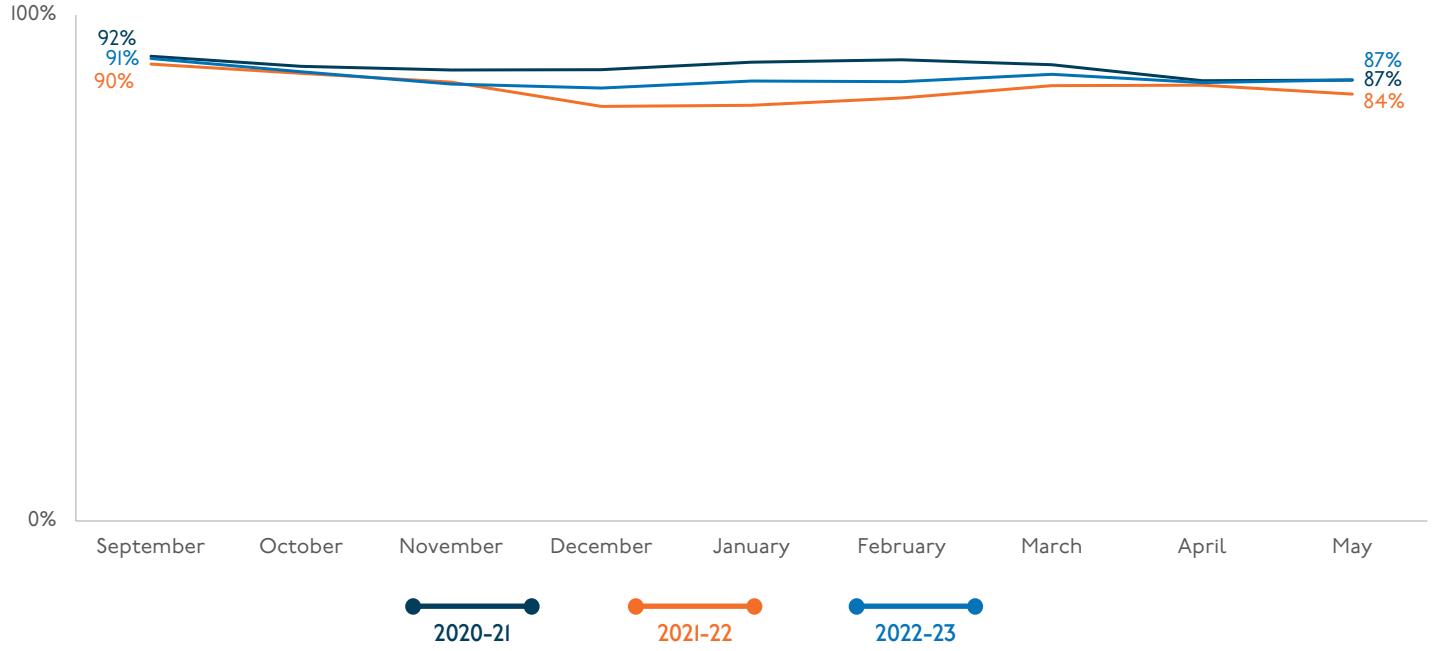
for 2020-21 through 2022-23



Source: 2020-21 through 2022-23 MPS attendance data.

Figure 10: Monthly Student Attendance Rate for Non-Partnership Sites

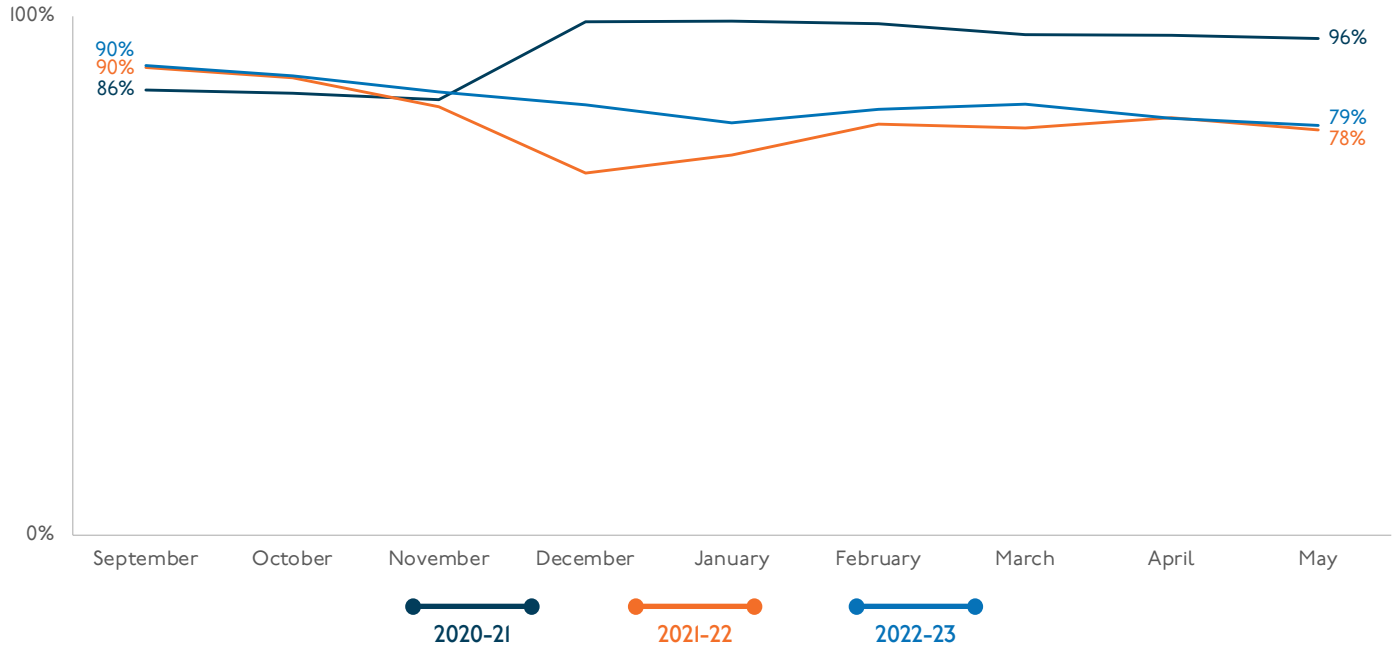
for 2020-21 through 2022-23



Source: 2020-21 through 2022-23 MPS attendance data.

Figure 11: Monthly Student Attendance Rate for Carver

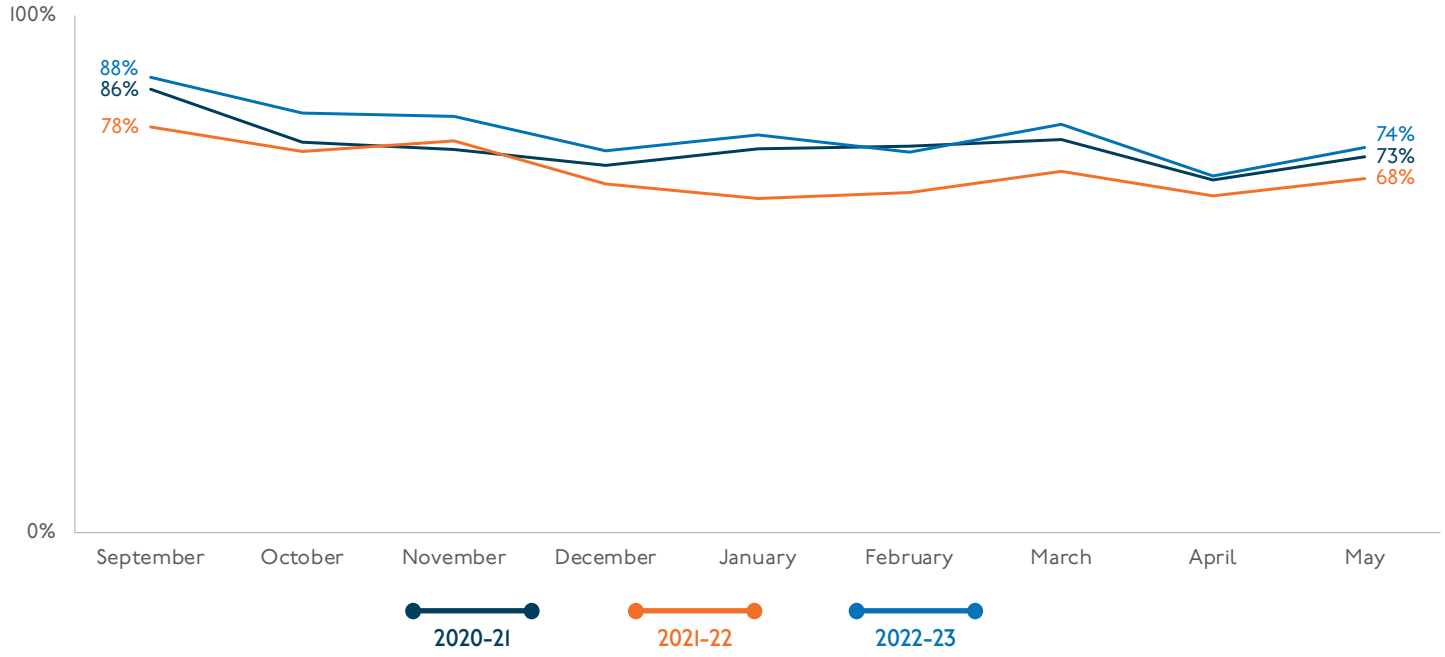
for 2020-21 through 2022-23



Source: 2020-21 through 2022-23 MPS attendance data.

Figure 12: Monthly Student Attendance Rate for Clarke

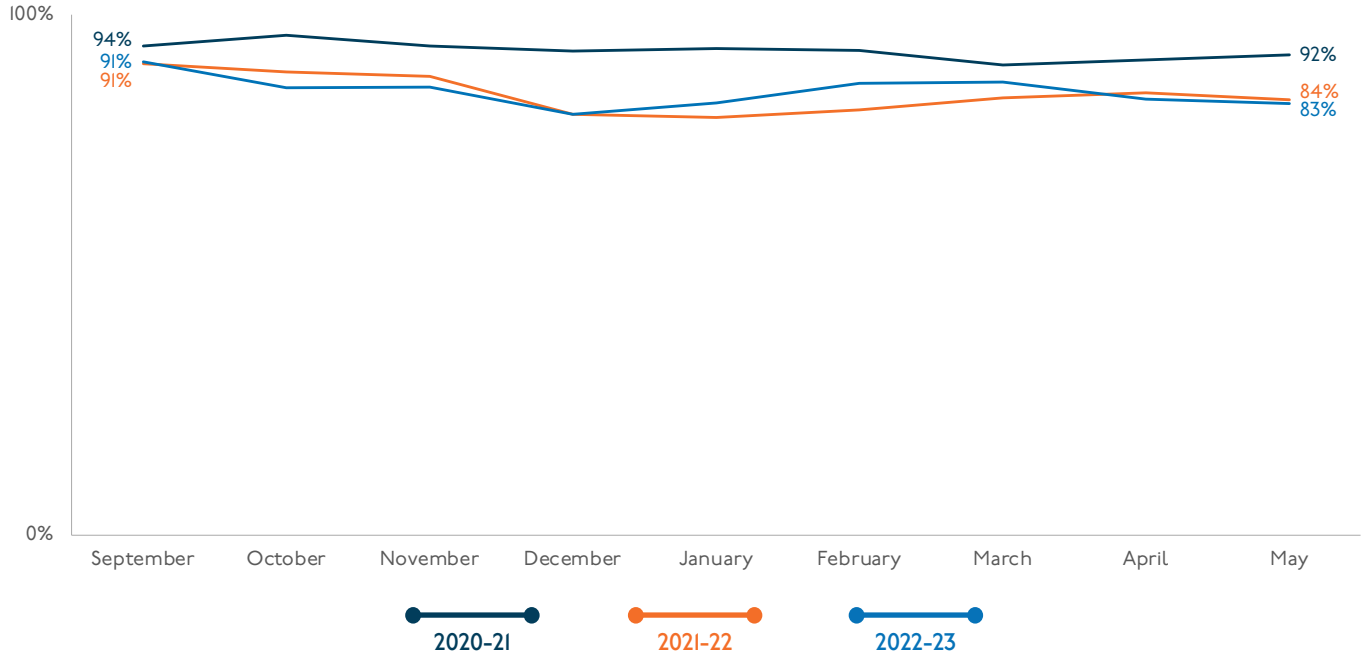
for 2020-21 through 2022-23



Source: 2020-21 through 2022-23 MPS attendance data.

Figure 13: Monthly Student Attendance Rate for Mitchell

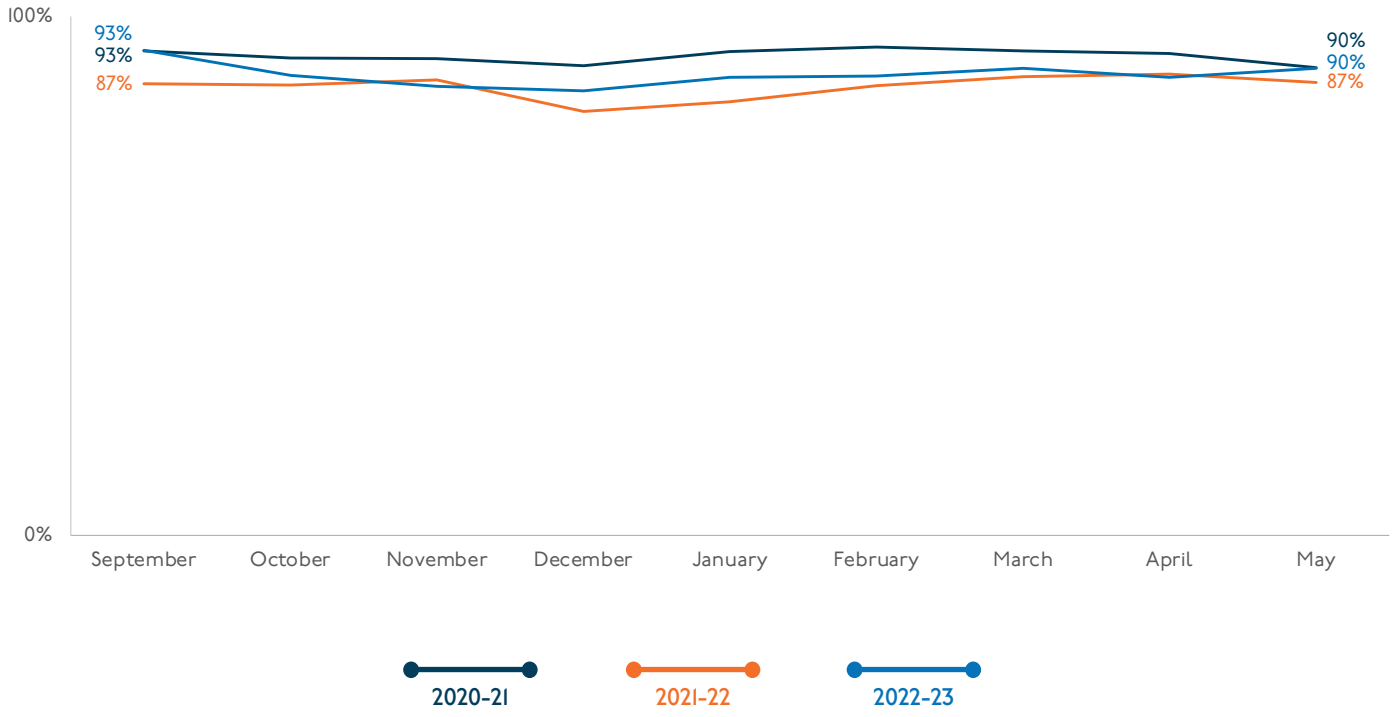
for 2020-21 through 2022-23



Source: 2020-21 through 2022-23 MPS attendance data.

Figure 14: Monthly Student Attendance Rate for Rogers

for 2020-21 through 2022-23



Source: 2020-21 through 2022-23 MPS attendance data.

As one measure of how successfully Partnership (and non-Partnership) schools are addressing attendance issues among their lowest-attending students, we also show in Table 17 the percentage of students in grades K-8 only that had attendance rates of 90% or lower. **We note with some concern that 55 percent of students across all four Partnership schools had attendance rates of 90% or lower in 2022-23. This represents a 7 percentage point improvement over 2021-22, but remains much higher than all pre-pandemic years. The rate of Partnership students with less than 90% attendance was also 11 percentage points higher than for non-Partnership sites districtwide during the most recent year**. Percentages of students with 90% attendance or less in 2022-23 improved (decreased) at Carver, Clarke, and Rogers compared to 2021-22, although Clarke had the highest overall rate of students with attendance rates 90% or lower during 2022-23 at 78 percent.

Table 17: Percentage of K-8 Students with Attendance Rates < 90%

by Partnership Site for 2014-15 through 2022-23

SCHOOL	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	46%	36%	47%	53%	47%	48%	23%	77%	70%
Clarke	34%	39%	49%	59%	63%	47%	72%	86%	78%
Mitchell	30%	26%	33%	31%	36%	26%	23%	55%	55%
Rogers	25%	20%	21%	17%	18%	22%	24%	51%	41%
Partnership	32%	26%	32%	31%	32%	32%	29%	62%	55%
Non-Partnership	25%	23%	26%	29%	30%	26%	30%	51%	44%

2019-20 reflects data for September through February, due to COVID interruption. Clarke data prior to joining the Partnership are shown for context. Non-Partnership totals exclude Clarke in all years.

In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

Source: 2014-15 through 2022-23 MPS attendance data.

Behavior

Table 18 presents a summary of Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs) over time in Partnership and non-Partnership sites, as one measure of student behavior (and a more useful measure, we argue, than simply focusing on suspensions and expulsions). No data are shown for 2020-21 since MPS instruction was virtual for most students that entire year. Table 18 shows that over **one-fifth of students across all Partnership sites combined had at least one ODR during 2022-23, a 3 percentage point increase from 2021-22. The rate of students with at least one ODR ranged widely across sites, from 9 percent of students at Rogers to 45 percent of students at Clarke. ODR rates were slightly higher relative to non-Partnership schools (21 percent)**.

Table 18: Percentage of Students with 1+ Office Disciplinary Referral

for 2014-15 through 2022-23

SCHOOL	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	57%	59%	58%	35%	34%	24%	31%	35%
Clarke	19%	24%	63%	62%	51%	44%	41%	45%
Mitchell	27%	33%	29%	14%	12%	12%	15%	23%
Rogers	18%	13%	9%	8%	9%	9%	11%	9%
Partnership	31%	31%	29%	17%	21%	18%	20%	23%
Non-Partnership	25%	26%	26%	25%	22%	18%	18%	21%

2019-20 reflects data for the first 120 days of school, due to COVID interruption. 2020-21 behavior data are not shown as students attended school virtually due to the pandemic. Clarke data prior to joining the Partnership are shown for context. Non-Partnership totals exclude Clarke in all years.

In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

Source: 2014-15 through 2022-23 MPS behavioral incidence data.

Table 19 shows the average number of ODRs each year among students who had at least one such incident, as a complement to Table 18 which summarized the percentage of students with at least one ODR each year. In other words, Table 18 provides a measure of the *breadth* of disciplinary challenges at schools, while Table 19 looks at *depth*. For both measures, as noted above, we do not report data for 2020-21 since MPS was in virtual mode for most of the year and there were very few ODRs as a result.

Across all Partnership sites combined in 2022-23, students with at least one ODR averaged 4.3 such incidents. This figure is a noticeable increase from the years 2017-18 through 2021-22. Looking at individual sites, large increases in average numbers of ODRs are seen at Clarke and Mitchell, while Carver and Rogers maintained similar rates to 2021-22. After many years of having fewer average office referrals relative to non-Partnership sites, in 2022-23 average referrals at Partnership sites were higher than those at non-Partnership sites.

Table 19: Average Number of Office Disciplinary Referrals

for 2014-15 through 2022-23

SCHOOL	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23
Carver	6.7	6.5	6.4	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.5	2.6
Clarke	2.4	2.0	6.8	6.7	5.3	4.0	3.2	6.7
Mitchell	5.3	6.5	5.0	2.3	2.0	1.8	2.8	4.8
Rogers	3.5	2.9	2.4	2.7	2.0	2.3	3.0	3.0
Partnership	5.5	5.9	5.4	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.9	4.3
Non-Partnership	4.9	4.7	5.0	4.4	3.6	3.1	3.4	3.5

2019-20 reflects data for the first 120 days of school, due to COVID interruption. 2020-21 behavior data are not shown as students attended school virtually due to the pandemic. Clarke data prior to joining the Partnership are shown for context. Non-Partnership totals exclude Clarke in all years.

In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

Source: 2014-15 through 2022-23 MPS behavioral incidence data.

Student Academic Performance

This next section summarizes selected measures of student academic performance in Partnership schools over time. We begin with data from the STAR assessment, which MPS began administering three times each year (fall, winter, and spring) in 2015-16 (the initial year of the Partnership initiative) in the subject areas of English Language Arts (ELA)/Reading and Math. For historical context, MPS paused STAR administration in the spring of 2019-20 due to the pandemic (i.e., in 2019-20 there were fall and winter STAR tests) and did not administer STAR at all during 2020-21. In 2021-22, MPS changed its Kindergarten Reading assessment from STAR to Brigance. Brigance has had a gradual rollout, a situation we describe below. We are unable to include data on median student growth percentiles (SGPs) for STAR assessments (our typical measure of growth) for this year's report, since this information was not available. We hope to include SGPs in future reports if possible.

STAR Attainment in Math and Reading

Selected STAR data in Reading and Math are reported in terms of scale scores as well as the five categories of proficiency (Significantly Above Target, On Target, Below Target, Well Below Target, Significantly Below Target) that are used to project proficiency on state assessments. Table 20 shows the percentage of students in both Partnership and non-Partnership sites who were performing On Target or above in Math in the Fall and Spring. We show data for the two most recent years (2021-22 and 2022-23), as well as the first year of the Partnership (2015-16) for context. In percentile terms, On Target for STAR Math means any student with a national percentile rank at or above 75. For grades 1-5, only non-English Learner (EL) students who took the English version of STAR are included in Table 20, while for grades 6-8 all students who took the English STAR are included, regardless of EL status. Tables 21 and 22 complement Table 20 by combining Partnership and non-Partnership sites (Table 21) and by reporting separately the results for EL students at Mitchell and Rogers who took the Spanish version of STAR Math, which MPS began administering in 2017-18 (Table 22). In Table 22, for 2019-20, we use Fall and Winter since there was no Spring administration.

We observe the following noteworthy trends from STAR Math results:

- Fall On Target rates remain very low (4 percent for Fall 2022, the same as Fall 2021) and lower than the pre-pandemic level of 7 percent from Fall 2019 (not shown). As one useful comparison point, the Fall On Target rate for the rest of the district (non-Partnership MPS schools) also declined over this same timeframe (from 14% to 8%). Both declines are highly suggestive of COVID learning loss, which we address in the next section of the report.
- Fall 2022-23 Math On-Target rates are similar for individual Partnership sites (0% to 7% at each site).
- Lower percentages of students in Partnership sites combined were On Target at both the beginning (Fall 2022) and end (Spring 2023) of the recently-completed school year compared to students in non-Partnership sites combined.
- Within-year (Fall-Spring) improvement in terms of On Target rates across all Partnership sites was minimal during 2022-23, increasing only slightly from 4 percent to 6 percent.
- STAR Spanish Math results (which are relevant only at Mitchell and Rogers among the four Partnership sites) show a similar pandemic-related decline in terms of students scoring in the On Target category, with a decrease from 29 percent for Fall 2019 to just 24 percent for Fall 2022. Relative to Fall 2021, however, Partnership students were much more likely to attain On Target or better on Fall 2022 STAR Spanish Math.

Table 20: Percentage of Students On Target in STAR Math by Site

for 2015-16, 2021-22, and 2022-23

SCHOOL	YEAR	SEASON	GR1	GR2	GR3	GR4	GR5	GR6	GR7	GR8	ALL GRADES
Carver	2015-16	Fall	8%	2%	6%	8%	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%
		Spring	18%	5%	17%	13%	15%	5%	18%	0%	11%
	2021-22	Fall	13%	0%	4%	0%	4%	5%	0%	3%	4%
		Spring	9%	0%	4%	7%	7%	8%	0%	0%	4%
	2022-23	Fall	12%	6%	0%	0%	0%	4%	5%	0%	4%
		Spring	27%	15%	3%	3%	0%	4%	0%	0%	7%
Clarke	2015-16	Fall	24%	6%	0%	4%	4%	0%	4%	0%	5%
		Spring	14%	17%	10%	0%	4%	0%	4%	0%	7%
	2021-22	Fall	6%	10%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
		Spring	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	1%
	2022-23	Fall	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
		Spring	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	2%
Mitchell	2015-16	Fall	13%	0%	9%	2%	4%	7%	4%	4%	5%
		Spring	9%	7%	11%	11%	30%	9%	7%	4%	11%
	2021-22	Fall	15%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	5%	0%	3%
		Spring	8%	0%	0%	5%	6%	2%	7%	1%	4%
	2022-23	Fall	4%	5%	10%	0%	6%	2%	0%	4%	4%
		Spring	4%	5%	0%	0%	14%	2%	3%	4%	4%
Rogers	2015-16	Fall	14%	5%	15%	13%	2%	3%	3%	6%	7%
		Spring	17%	16%	24%	9%	12%	5%	11%	11%	13%
	2021-22	Fall	n/a	0%	13%	8%	14%	5%	5%	3%	5%
		Spring	7%	14%	18%	21%	14%	7%	6%	7%	10%
	2022-23	Fall	18%	0%	20%	11%	15%	4%	5%	2%	7%
		Spring	11%	7%	12%	16%	10%	6%	9%	8%	9%

Clarke data prior to joining the Partnership are shown for context.

Source: 2015-16, 2021-22, and 2022-23 MPS STAR data.

Table 21: Percentage of Students On Target in STAR Math

for Partnership and Non-Partnership Sites Combined for 2015-16, 2021-22, and 2022-23

SCHOOL	YEAR	SEASON	GR1	GR2	GR3	GR4	GR5	GR6	GR7	GR8	ALL GRADES
Partnership	2015-16	Fall	11%	3%	11%	7%	3%	4%	3%	4%	6%
		Spring	15%	9%	18%	11%	19%	6%	11%	6%	12%
	2021-22	Fall	12%	2%	5%	5%	4%	3%	4%	2%	4%
		Spring	7%	4%	6%	9%	7%	5%	5%	3%	5%
	2022-23	Fall	8%	3%	8%	2%	7%	3%	4%	2%	4%
		Spring	13%	9%	4%	5%	8%	4%	4%	4%	6%
Non-Partnership	2015-16	Fall	26%	17%	23%	17%	15%	12%	11%	9%	17%
		Spring	27%	23%	20%	18%	21%	16%	13%	8%	18%
	2021-22	Fall	14%	7%	11%	9%	7%	4%	5%	4%	8%
		Spring	22%	15%	15%	13%	13%	7%	7%	4%	12%
	2022-23	Fall	14%	8%	11%	8%	8%	6%	5%	4%	8%
		Spring	24%	17%	14%	12%	13%	7%	6%	5%	12%

Non-Partnership totals exclude Clarke in all years.

In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

Source: 2015-16, 2021-22, and 2022-23 MPS STAR data.

Table 22: Percentage of Students On Target in STAR Spanish Math

By Site and for Partnership and Non-Partnership Sites Combined for 2019-20, 2021-22, and 2022-23

SCHOOL	YEAR	SEASON	GR1	GR2	GR3	GR4	GR5	ALL GRADES
Mitchell	2019-20	Fall	8%	48%	32%	11%	27%	25%
		Winter	72%	48%	15%	18%	40%	36%
	2021-22	Fall	19%	6%	4%	0%	8%	8%
		Spring	45%	35%	4%	30%	28%	28%
	2022-23	Fall	26%	23%	21%	0%	29%	19%
		Spring	33%	13%	16%	11%	38%	21%
Rogers	2019-20	Fall	15%	57%	24%	38%	36%	35%
		Winter	32%	88%	24%	37%	48%	47%
	2021-22	Fall	27%	6%	19%	21%	5%	15%
		Spring	44%	53%	22%	14%	5%	26%
	2022-23	Fall	22%	35%	40%	28%	23%	29%
		Spring	22%	47%	35%	21%	23%	29%
Partnership	2019-20	Fall	11%	52%	29%	24%	31%	29%
		Winter	53%	70%	18%	27%	44%	41%
	2021-22	Fall	22%	6%	9%	12%	7%	11%
		Spring	45%	44%	11%	21%	18%	27%
	2022-23	Fall	24%	27%	31%	12%	26%	24%
		Spring	28%	25%	26%	15%	30%	25%
Non-Partnership	2019-20	Fall	13%	23%	30%	22%	22%	22%
		Winter	33%	32%	32%	29%	32%	31%
	2021-22	Fall	21%	11%	16%	11%	14%	15%
		Spring	33%	18%	15%	16%	20%	20%
	2022-23	Fall	25%	24%	16%	14%	9%	18%
		Spring	44%	25%	16%	16%	17%	24%

2019-20 did not have a Spring STAR administration due to COVID; Winter is shown instead. Non-Partnership totals exclude Clarke in all years.

In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

Source: 2019-20, 2021-22, and 2022-23 MPS STAR data.

STAR Reading performance in Partnership sites (Tables 23 and 24) follows the same pattern as the preceding STAR Math results, in that we examine the proportion of students in Partnership and non-Partnership sites that were performing On Target or above during the first year of the initiative (2015-16), and the two most recent years. Tables 23 and 24 show the percentage of students who were performing On Target for STAR Reading (Grades 2-8) or STAR Early Literacy (Grade 1) for Fall and Spring. For grades K-2, only non-EL students who took the English version of STAR are included, while for grades 3-8 all students who took the English STAR are included, regardless of EL status. **Key findings from On Target data for STAR Reading remain similar to the storyline from Math: low percentages of students at Partnership sites performing at the On Target level, modest Fall to Spring growth, and On Target rates below those of non-Partnership sites. Rogers shows the highest percentage of students On Target, while Carver experienced the largest growth in On Target rate from Fall to Spring**.

Table 23: Percentage of Students On Target in STAR Reading/Early Literacy

By Site for 2015-16, 2021-22, and 2022-23

SCHOOL	YEAR	SEASON	GR1	GR2	GR3	GR4	GR5	GR6	GR7	GR8	ALL GRADES
Carver	2015-16	Fall	15%	5%	6%	8%	3%	0%	6%	0%	5%
		Spring	33%	2%	8%	8%	2%	5%	3%	0%	8%
	2021-22	Fall	12%	4%	13%	0%	4%	3%	3%	0%	5%
		Spring	13%	0%	4%	6%	4%	5%	7%	0%	5%
	2022-23	Fall	4%	10%	0%	6%	6%	4%	5%	0%	4%
		Spring	19%	21%	7%	6%	0%	4%	3%	0%	8%
Clarke	2015-16	Fall	17%	6%	0%	0%	4%	0%	4%	0%	4%
		Spring	21%	3%	7%	0%	4%	8%	8%	0%	6%
	2021-22	Fall	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	6%	1%
		Spring	14%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	3%
	2022-23	Fall	0%	7%	12%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
		Spring	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Mitchell	2015-16	Fall	21%	8%	8%	2%	2%	6%	3%	3%	5%
		Spring	22%	8%	17%	6%	7%	7%	3%	4%	8%
	2021-22	Fall	8%	4%	4%	11%	0%	6%	5%	0%	4%
		Spring	8%	4%	0%	14%	6%	4%	7%	3%	5%
	2022-23	Fall	4%	0%	2%	4%	10%	0%	2%	0%	3%
		Spring	0%	6%	4%	2%	7%	2%	5%	6%	4%
Rogers	2015-16	Fall	27%	13%	14%	5%	10%	3%	6%	6%	9%
		Spring	17%	18%	16%	10%	12%	5%	8%	16%	12%
	2021-22	Fall	4%	10%	3%	11%	8%	11%	2%	7%	7%
		Spring	33%	14%	8%	8%	10%	17%	11%	5%	12%
	2022-23	Fall	6%	8%	5%	13%	11%	6%	11%	0%	8%
		Spring	16%	20%	6%	9%	11%	4%	11%	2%	8%

Clarke data prior to joining the Partnership are shown for context.

In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

Source: 2015-16, 2021-22, and 2022-23 MPS STAR data.

Table 24: Percentage of Students On Target in STAR Reading/Early Literacy

Partnership and Non-Partnership Sites Combined for 2015-16, 2021-22, and 2022-23

SCHOOL	YEAR	SEASON	GR1	GR2	GR3	GR4	GR5	GR6	GR7	GR8	ALL GRADES
Partnership	2015-16	Fall	20%	8%	10%	4%	5%	3%	5%	4%	7%
		Spring	25%	9%	15%	8%	8%	6%	5%	8%	9%
	2021-22	Fall	6%	4%	5%	9%	3%	6%	3%	3%	5%
		Spring	18%	5%	3%	9%	6%	9%	8%	3%	7%
	2022-23	Fall	4%	7%	4%	8%	9%	3%	6%	0%	5%
		Spring	9%	14%	6%	5%	7%	3%	6%	3%	6%
Non-Partnership	2015-16	Fall	27%	24%	19%	19%	16%	16%	14%	12%	18%
		Spring	38%	29%	23%	21%	18%	16%	15%	11%	22%
	2021-22	Fall	12%	16%	14%	14%	13%	12%	11%	12%	13%
		Spring	25%	22%	19%	17%	14%	11%	11%	9%	16%
	2022-23	Fall	13%	15%	11%	12%	11%	11%	11%	9%	12%
		Spring	28%	20%	16%	14%	13%	10%	10%	8%	15%

Non-Partnership totals exclude Clarke in all years.

In 2022-23, we expanded the list of non-Partnership schools excluded from the analysis.

Source: 2015-16, 2021-22, and 2022-23 MPS STAR data.

Kindergarten Brigance Participation

In 2021-22, MPS introduced Brigance as its kindergarten early literacy screener, although implementation was gradual during that year. Data for 2022-23 shown in Table 25 indicate that during 2022-23, 55 percent of MPS kindergarteners overall completed the fall Brigance, including 65 percent of Partnership kindergarteners. Based on information available at the time of this report, evaluators do not know how students were selected to take Brigance, and why Brigance administration rates vary across schools. As a result, we do not report Brigance achievement due to potential selection issues that impact the comparability of data across schools.

Table 25: Fall 2022 Kindergarten Brigance Completion Rates

By Site and for Partnership Sites and MPS Overall for 2022-23

	FALL 2022 BRIGANCE TEST TAKERS	WISEDASH KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT	BRIGANCE ADMINISTRATION RATE
Carver	1	26	4%
Clarke	12	16	75%
Mitchell	28	47	60%
Rogers	47	47	100%
Partnership	88	136	65%
MPS Overall	2619	4783	55%

Source: 2022-23 MPS Brigance data.

COVID Learning Recovery and Possible Partnership Impact

With schools in Wisconsin and across the country having transitioned back to in-person instruction following the pandemic, substantial attention has focused on how much student learning may have regressed due to the challenges associated with virtual learning and the extent to which recovery to pre-pandemic levels may be occurring. We conducted an analysis last year (in 2021-22) to determine if the Partnership initiative appeared to mitigate pandemic-related learning losses to any visible extent. We found that students in Partnership schools actually experienced *more* COVID-related learning loss in Reading and Math than a set of similar peers who attended other (non-Partnership) sites over the same period. We offered several potential explanations for these observed outcomes. One was that there were unobservable differences between Partnership and non-Partnership students prior to the period of interest that the evaluation was unable to control for. If true, this could have caused statistical bias in the results. The other possible explanation we offered was that under normal (non-COVID) circumstances, the Partnership initiative does indeed benefit students – but the initiative was not able during the pandemic (and virtual learning) to implement all of its various "moving parts" with enough fidelity to adequately provide those benefits. The lack of full implementation of Partnership activities during the pandemic, in other words, may actually have provided evidence of the positive impacts of the initiative, in the sense that COVID-related learning losses might not have happened had the full set of Partnership supports (SPARK, classroom support of City Year corps members, full participation in afterschool, etc.) been in place during the pandemic.

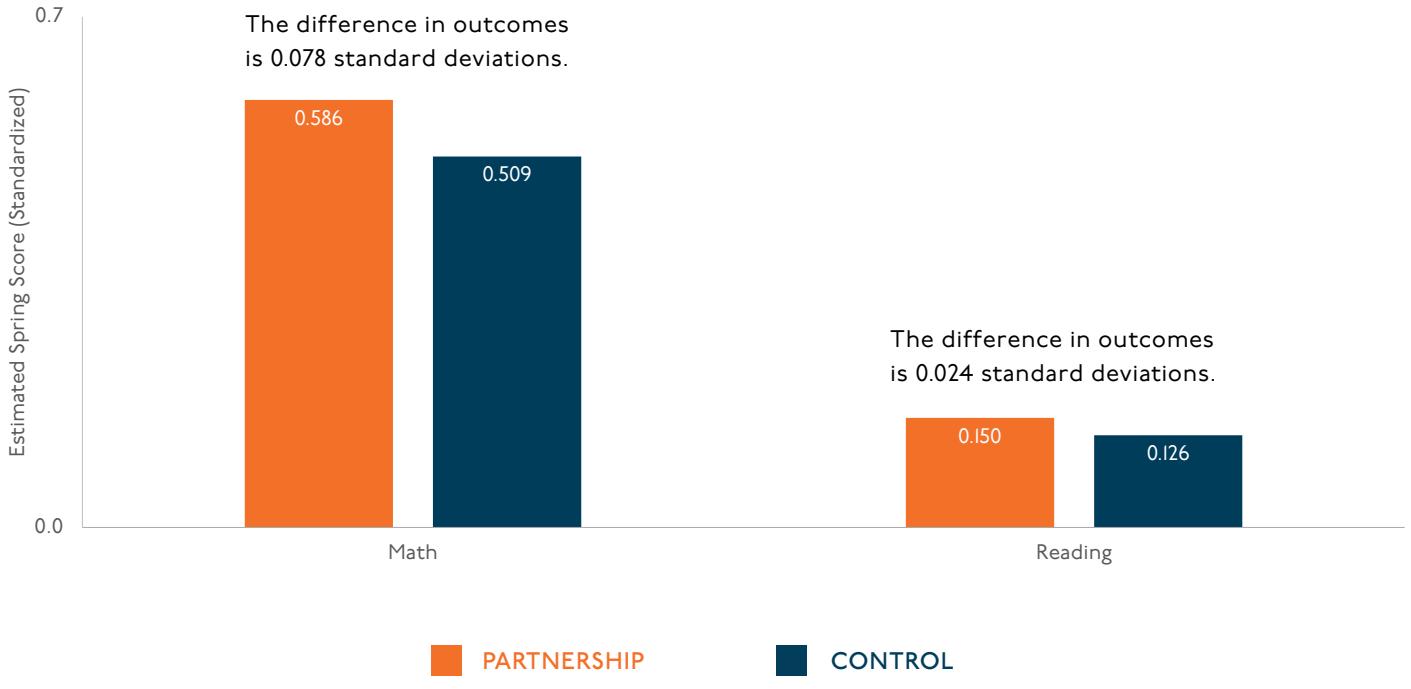
This year, we followed up on our previous analysis with new analyses to investigate whether the Partnership had an impact on learning recovery post-COVID during the 2021-22 school year, when more Partnership activities were occurring. To do this, we utilized a methodology which compares a "treatment" sample of students in Partnership schools to a control group of students who are similar in terms of key factors such as prior achievement and demographic characteristics. This approach compares the academic outcomes of both groups of students (treatment and control) from the Fall of 2021-22 to the Spring of 2021-22. The difference in the Spring scores between the Partnership (treatment) and control schools while controlling for prior achievement in the Fall provides the estimated impact of the Partnership on STAR Reading and Math growth between Fall of 2021-22 and the Spring of 2021-22, the period of time after COVID-related learning loss may have occurred.

Figure 15 shows results from this analysis in Math and Reading. As shown in this figure, the difference in Math outcomes between the treatment group of Partnership students and a matched set of control group peers from non-Partnership sites was small but positive (0.078 standard deviations). Results are similar for Reading, where the difference in outcomes was also small but positive (0.024 standard deviations). However, neither of these differences in outcomes were statistically significant nor statistically different than zero.[3] **As opposed to the previous analysis showing that Partnership schools experienced more learning loss, here we see that Partnership schools performed at the same level in improving student academic growth as similar non-Partnership schools**.

This result may indicate more progress toward a return to normal Partnership impacts. Previous evaluation reports prior to the pandemic indicated a positive impact of the Partnership on Math outcomes and no significant impact on Reading outcomes. **As we see a slightly larger (but still not significant) impact in Math in 2021-22, there may be some indication that supports are starting to return to their pre-pandemic levels of impact**. Our evaluation reports in subsequent years will continue to track outcomes to see if growth patterns return to normal.

3 Statistical significance examined at the 0.05 level.

Figure 15: Analysis of COVID Learning Recovery in 2021-22



Source: 2021-22 MPS Enrollment and STAR data.

State Report Card

Report Cards produced annually by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for all publicly-funded schools in Wisconsin provide an additional source of information that we include here as context. Specifically, we show data from two of the four Priority Areas of the state Report Card (Achievement and Growth) for English Language Arts and Math from the two most recent years (2020-21 and 2021-22)[4] for each of the four Partnership sites in relation to district averages.[5] We do so with several important caveats, including the fact that Report Card data measure only a limited set of outcomes (such as test scores and attendance) that DPI collects for all schools statewide. Participation rates on state assessments also vary from year to year, particularly during the pandemic when less than 40 percent of MPS students were tested (compared to 95 percent or higher in other years). We have also declined to show the summative ratings[6] assigned by DPI to districts and schools, since these are not comparable over time due to changes in the cut scores used to make these determinations.

Notwithstanding these obvious limitations, Report Card data provide one useful way of comparing Partnership sites' performance against the MPS district average, and against other publicly-funded schools statewide, on a common set of benchmarks (including the same assessments that all students statewide complete each spring). We believe that the Student Growth measure is particularly useful, as it uses a value-added calculation to describe how much growth students in each school make from year to year after controlling for differences in prior achievement and selected demographics. As such, the growth measure provides a useful way to "level the playing field" in measuring performance across schools districtwide and statewide whose student populations differ considerably. We also note that Report Card metrics are the most widely-used measures of school performance by the federal government (in determining schools in need of improvement) and by state-level policymakers, in addition to being the most accessible measures of school performance by the general public.

Figures 16 and 17 below show Achievement and Growth scores for ELA and Math, respectively, for the two most recent Report Cards (2020-21 and 2021-22). Both scores are reported on a 0-100 scale.[7] The Achievement score shows how students are distributed among the four performance levels of the state assessment system (Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic). Having more students at the upper performance levels results in a higher achievement score, as a student is assigned 0 points for being Below Basic, 0.5 points for Basic, 1 point for Proficient, and 1.5 points for Advanced. To reduce the impact of year-to-year fluctuations in test scores, up to three years of most-recent testing data are used in order to improve the reliability of scores. The Growth score, as noted above, measures something very different, in that it shows change in students' performance over time compared to the growth of similar students (as measured by prior achievement and demographics) across the state.

In ELA (Figure 16), Report Card data show that Achievement scores for all four Partnership sites have been well below the MPS average for the past two reporting cycles, particularly at Carver and Clarke. ELA Growth scores, however, tell a different story, with Carver and Clarke having higher scores than the district average. In Math (Figure 17), the same general trends are observed, with Carver and Clarke having lower Achievement scores and higher Growth scores. Carver's Growth scores are particularly noteworthy in both subject areas for the past two Report Card cycles, as they have been substantially higher than district averages.

4 No state Report Cards were produced for 2019-20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

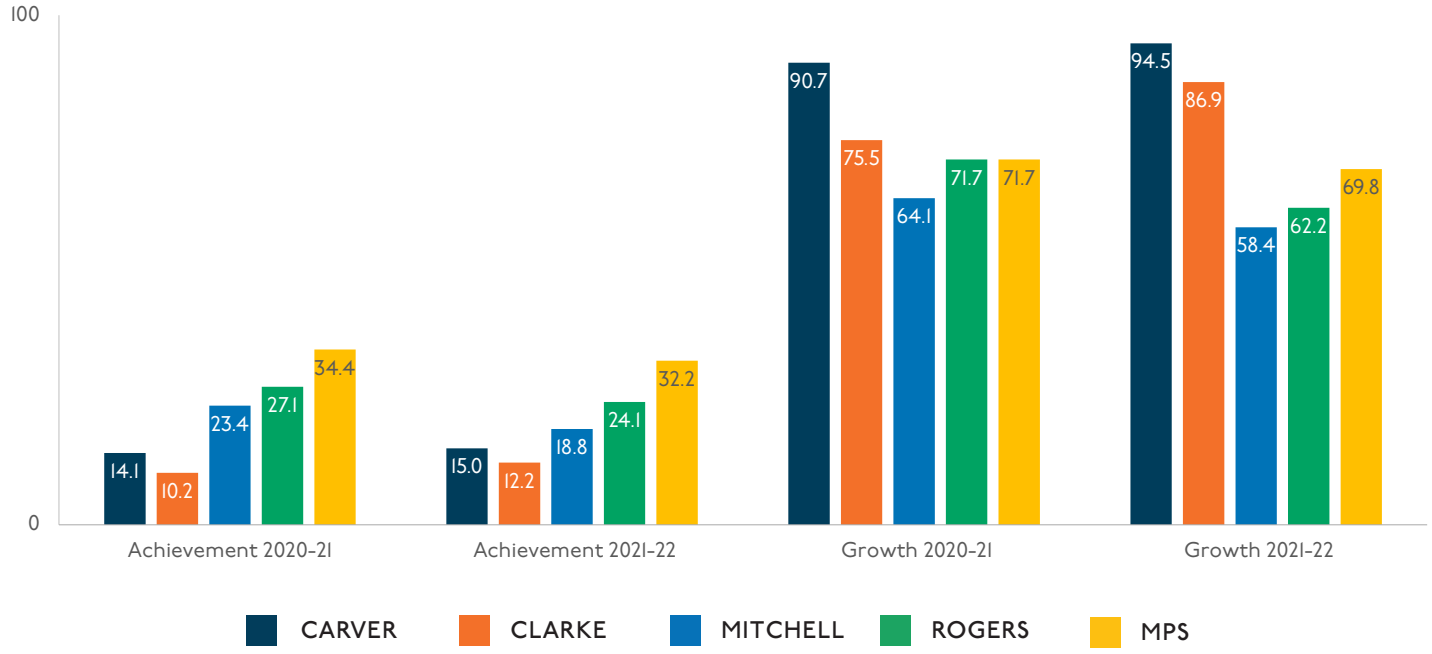
5 Report Card data for the 2022-23 school year will be released publicly in Fall 2023.

6 DPI assigns each district and school a rating (Significantly Exceeds Expectations, Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, Meets Few Expectations, Fails to Meet Expectations) based on data from four specific categories of data, two of which are Achievement and Growth in ELA and Math. More information is available at https://dpi.wi.gov/accountability/report-cards.

7 In prior years' versions of the Report Card, DPI reported scores for achievement and growth on a 0-50 scale, so we have eliminated comparisons to prior years to avoid confusion.

Figure 16: ELA Achievement and Growth Scores

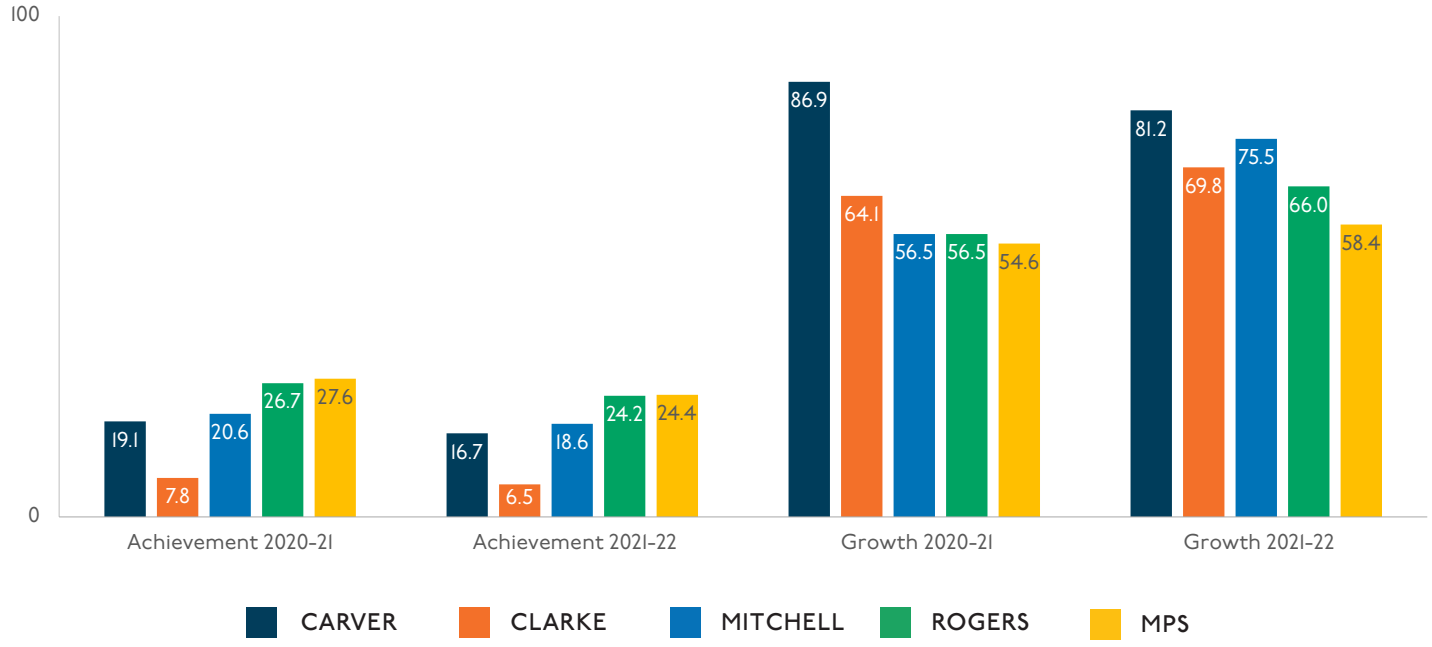
From State Report Card for 2020-21 and 2021-22



Source: 2020-21 and 2021-22 Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Report Cards.

Figure 17: Math Achievement and Growth Scores

2020-21 and 2021-22



Source: 2020-21 and 2021-22 Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Report Cards.

SPARK Participation and STAR Test Growth

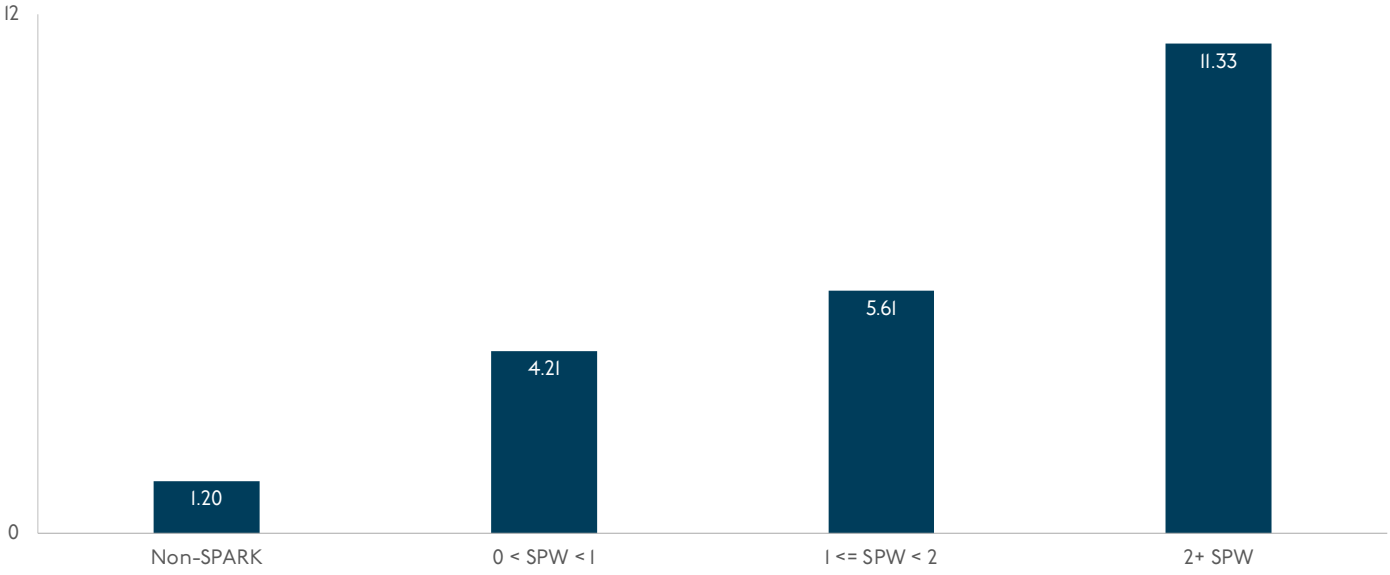
SPARK tutoring is provided to students in grades K-3, and is designed to improve students' reading by increasing foundational reading skills, comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and emotional well-being. Tutoring is a well-researched intervention that has been shown to have significant effects when students receive intensive dosages.[8]

To study possible impacts of SPARK on reading growth at Partnership schools, Figure 18 presents STAR Reading fall-spring growth by the amount of SPARK tutoring students received during the 2022-23 school year. We divided students for this analysis into four groups based on the average number of SPARK sessions per week they received. **The data show that students receiving more sessions of SPARK experienced greater reading growth, particularly for students receiving at least two sessions per week.** Students at Partnership schools who did not receive any SPARK tutoring grew an average of 1.2 percentile rankings from fall to spring. Meanwhile, students receiving 0-1 and 1-2 average sessions per week grew by 4.21 and 5.61 percentiles, respectively, and those receiving two or more sessions grew by 11.33 percentiles.

8 Harris, D. N. (2009). Toward Policy-Relevant Benchmarks for Interpreting Effect Sizes: Combining Effects with Costs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 31*(1), 3-29. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25478682

Figure 18: STAR Reading Growth by SPARK Participation

Fall to Spring Growth in Percentile Rankings during 2022-23



Note: SPW stands for average sessions per week.

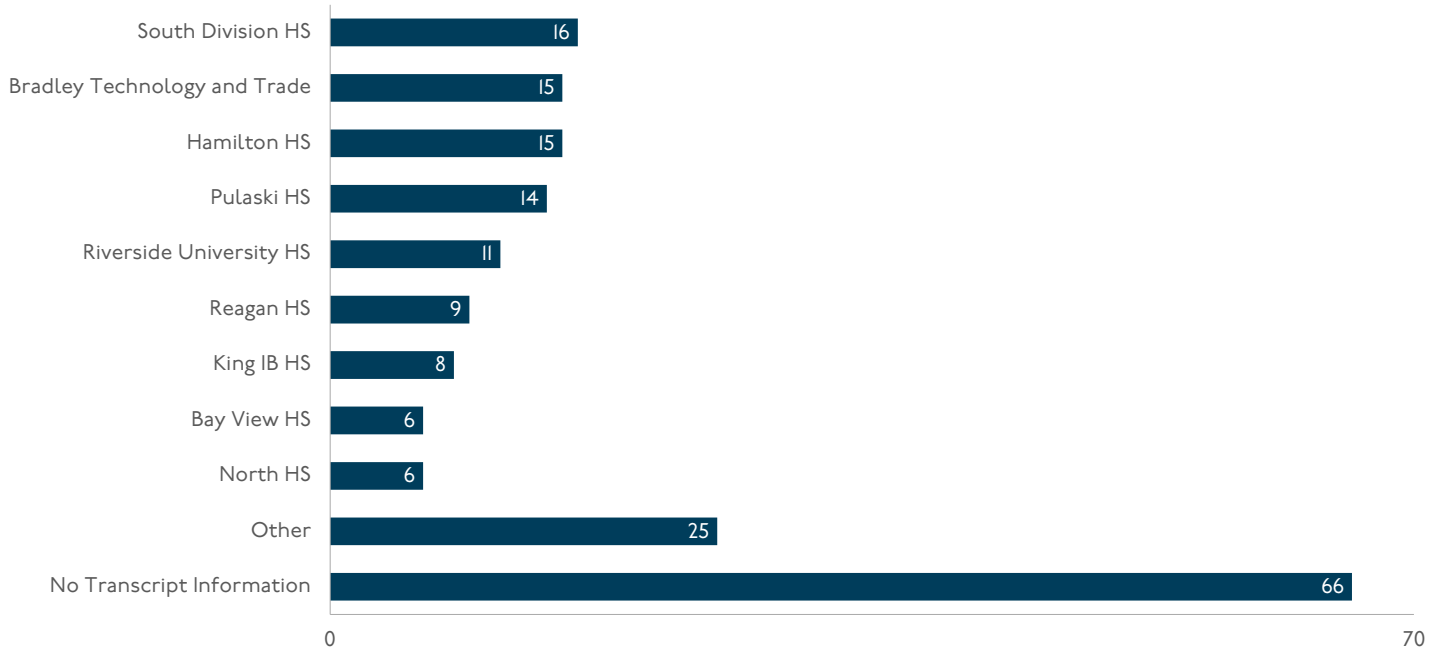
Source: 2022-23 MPS STAR data and SPARK records obtained from BGCGM.

ST Math and Ninth Grade Math Performance

As in prior years' reports, we also examine associations between 8th grade students' level of participation in ST Math while attending Partnership schools (where ST Math is a Tier I intervention available to all students) and selected measures of how they perform in 9th grade math classes the following year. While any observed associations would not necessarily be causal in nature – in other words, we cannot conclude that the level of ST Math participation among 8th graders is responsible for 9th grade math outcomes – data we have reported previously suggests that a positive association does indeed exist. That is, higher levels of ST Math participation among 8th graders in Partnership sites are associated with better 9th grade math outcomes the following year.

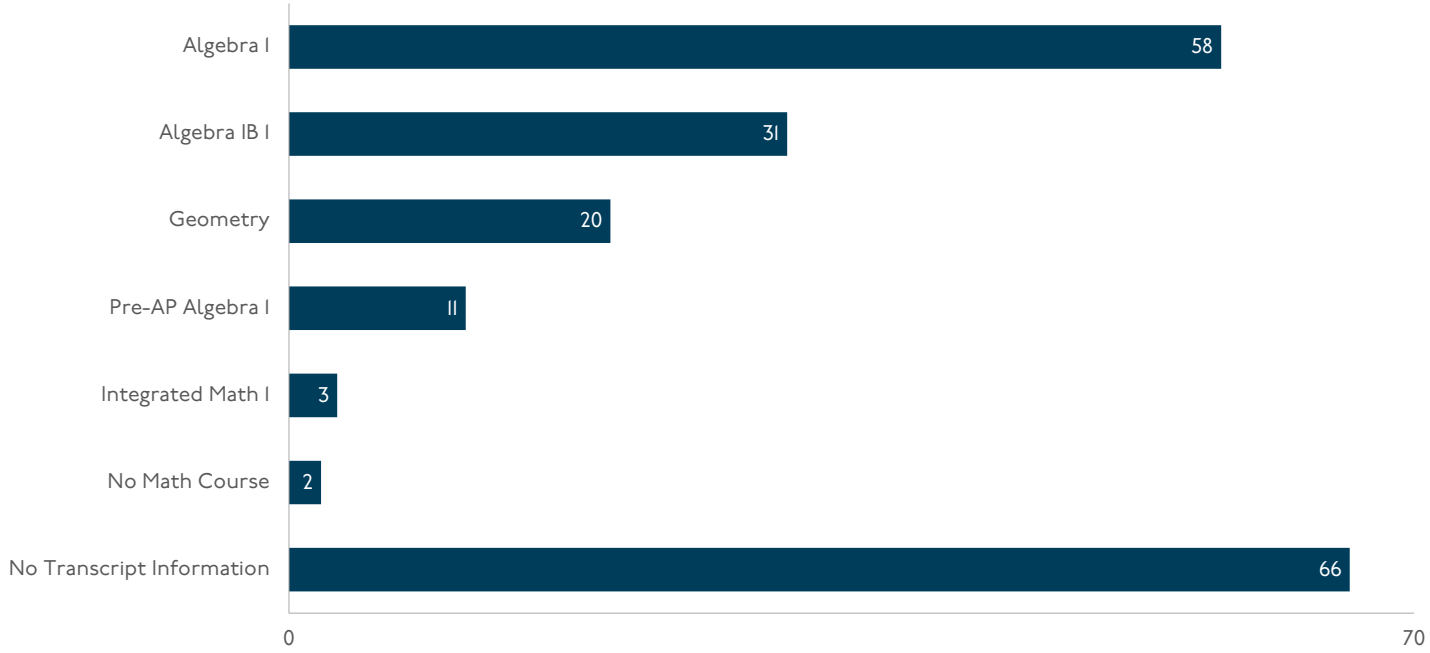
For this analysis, we identified students enrolled in Partnership sites as 8th graders who participated in ST Math in 2021-22 (n=191), selected those who were also enrolled in MPS as 9th graders in 2022-23 (n=125), and then determined both which high schools they attended (Figure 19) and which Math course(s) these students took during their first semester as 9th graders (Figure 20). No single high school dominates the list of destinations for Partnership 8th graders the following year, with the most commonly-attended including South Division, Bradley Tech, Hamilton, Pulaski, and Riverside. In terms of which 9th grade math courses were taken in 2022-23 by Partnership 8th graders from 2021-22 (Figure 20), we see that the most commonly-taken math class was Algebra I (as expected), followed by Algebra IB I (most often at Riverside or Reagan high schools) and Geometry. Just more than one-third of the 8th grade Partnership sample (66 students) had no 9th grade MPS math transcript information, indicating that these students were not enrolled in an MPS high school as 9th graders in 2022-23.

Figure 19: High Schools Attended in 2022-23 for 8th Grade Partnership Students from 2021-22



Source: 2021-22 ST Math data and 2022-23 MPS transcript data.

Figure 20: 9th Grade Fall Semester Math Course in 2022-23 for 8th Grade Partnership Students from 2021-22



Source: 2021-22 ST Math data and 2022-23 MPS transcript data.

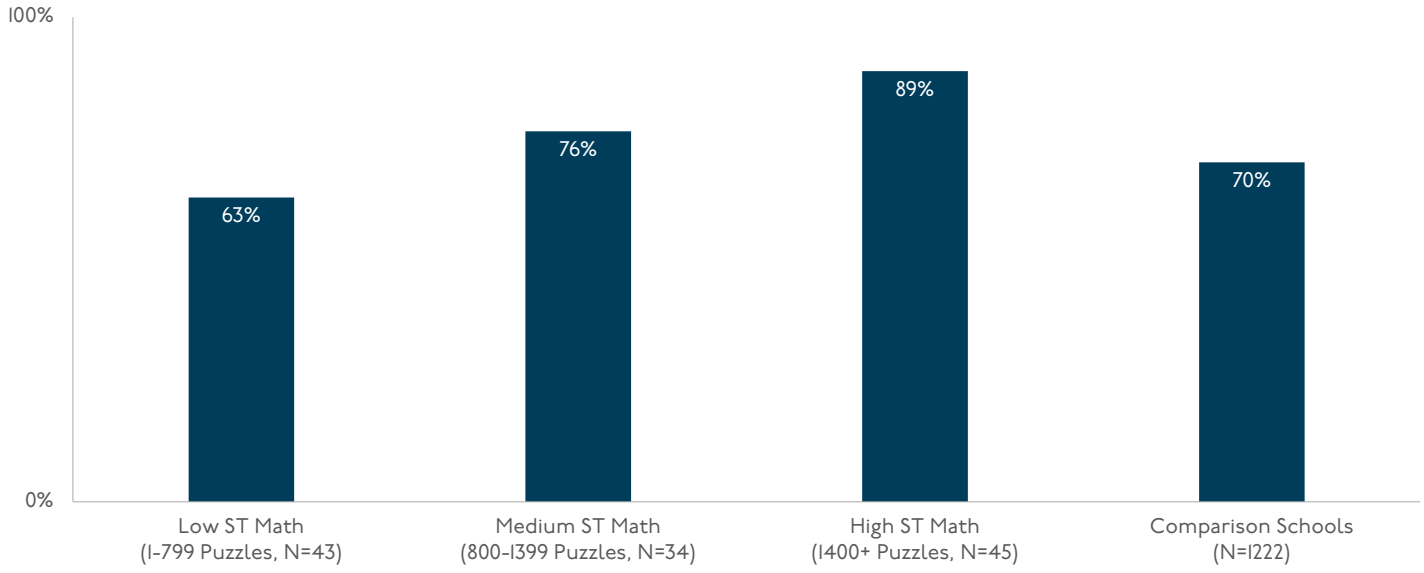
Fall semester 2022-23 passing rates for high school math courses are shown in Figure 21 for students who participated in varying levels of ST Math as 8th graders at Partnership sites in 2021-22. We also show pass rates for a comparison group of students who were first-time 9th graders at South Division, Pulaski, Hamilton, North, and Bradley Tech, but completed 8th grade at non-Partnership sites. To account for varying levels of participation in ST Math among 8th grade students, we use the three thresholds for ST Math participation found in Figure 21:

- Low: students who completed 0-799 puzzles as 8th graders in 2021-22 (n=43 students)
- Medium: students with 800-1,399 puzzles completed as 8th graders (n=34 students)
- High: students with 1,400 or more puzzles completed as 8th graders (n=45 students)

Similar to prior years' analyses, we find that Low levels of ST Math participation in 8th grade are associated with lower pass rates in 9th grade Math classes. That is, 63 percent of students in the Low category of ST Math participation as 8th graders passed their math class the following fall as 9th graders, compared to 76 percent of their peers who had Medium levels of ST Math participation as 8th graders and 89 percent of their peers who had High levels of ST Math participation. We note that the Medium and High ST Math groups also had higher 9th grade Math pass rates than did all first-time 9th graders at the comparison high schools.

Figure 21: 9th Grade Math Course Passing Rates by 8th Grade ST Math Participation

Fall Semester 2022-23 9th Grade Math Course Passing Rates by 8th Grade ST Math Participation Level in 2021-22

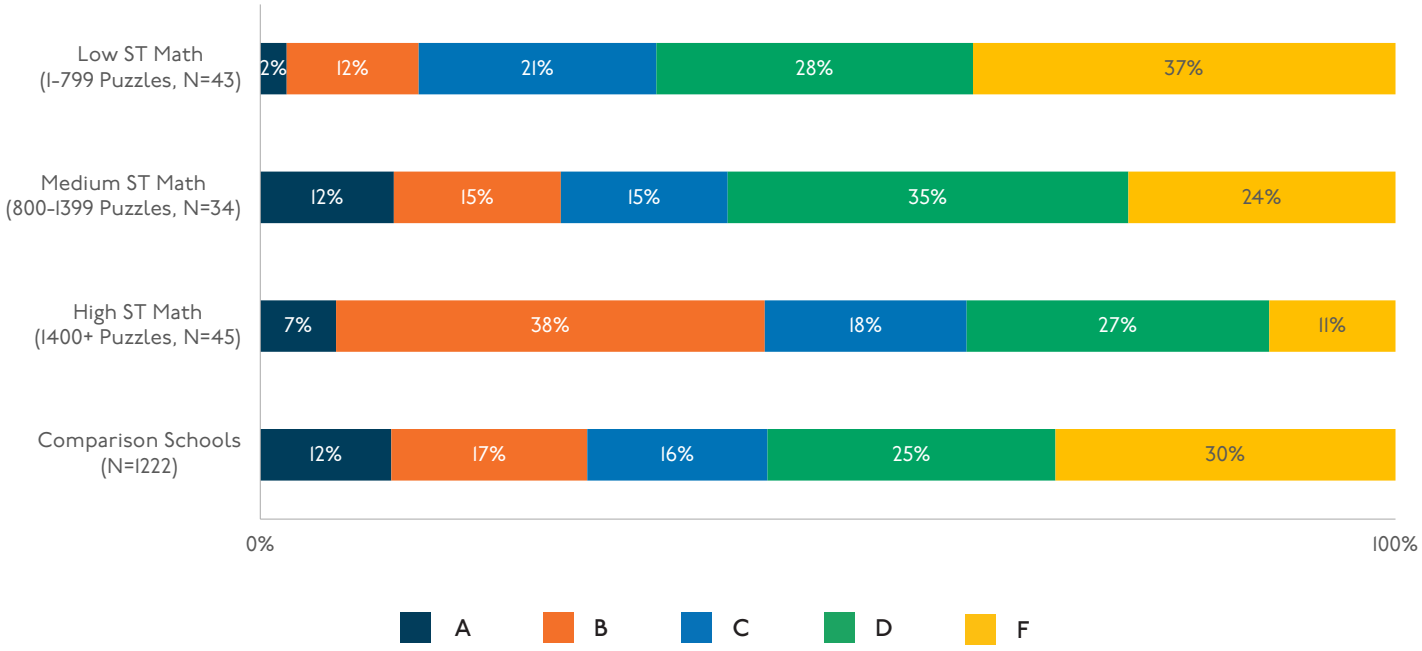


Source: 2021-22 ST Math data and 2022-23 MPS transcript data.

Figure 22 shows the distribution of 9th grade fall semester Math course grades by ST Math participation level in 8th grade, with the same general pattern evident: **Students in the Low ST Math participation category were less likely to get grades of A or B in their 9th grade Math classes compared to their peers who had Medium and High ST Math participation**. There also appears to be a benefit of having High ST Math participation compared to Medium participation, especially the likelihood of receiving an A or B.

Figure 22: 9th Grade Math Course Grades by 8th Grade ST Math Participation

Fall Semester 2022-23 9th Grade Math Course Final Grades by 8th Grade ST Math Participation Level in 2021-22

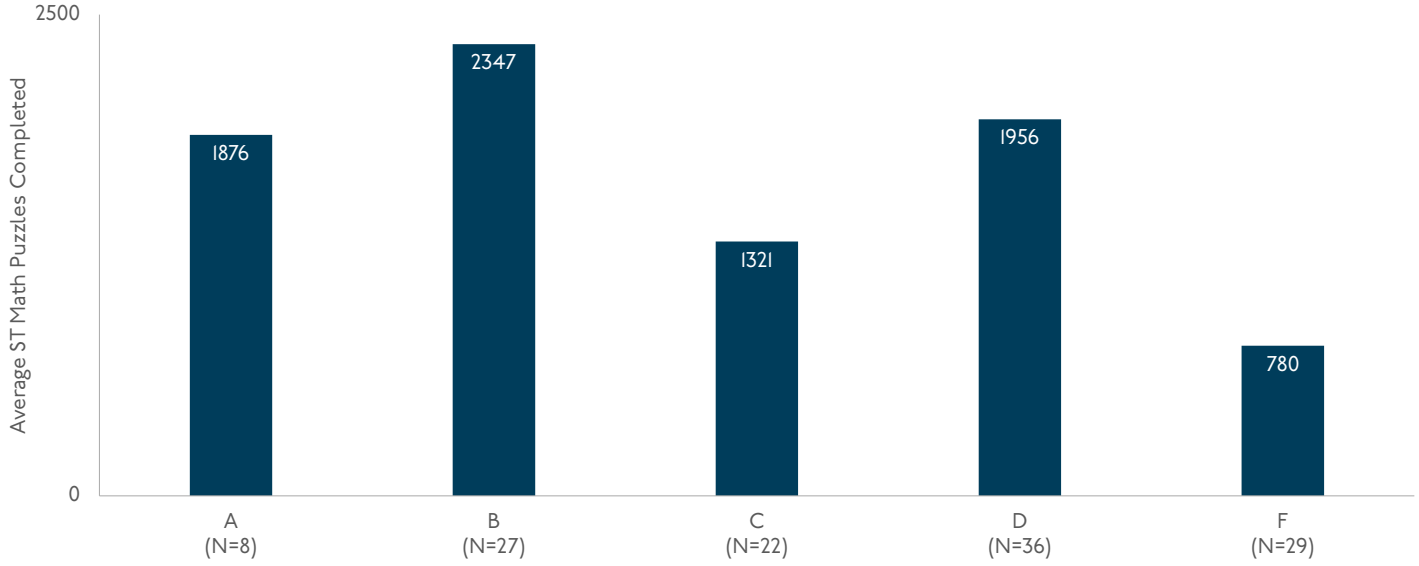


Source: 2021-22 ST Math data and 2022-23 MPS transcript data.

Figure 23 shows the number of students who received each potential Math grade (A-F) during Fall semester of 9th grade in the 2022-23 school year, along with their average level of ST Math progress as 8th graders in Partnership sites during the previous year (2021-22). **Students who earned better math course grades (A or B) as 9th graders had made more ST Math progress as 8th graders compared to their peers who earned a failing grade (F).** Sample sizes are small, and results should be considered with caution (particularly as relates to claims of causality), but **the data again show a generally positive association between ST Math participation in 8th grade and 9th grade Math course grades. Since these results in 2022-23 generally mirror results from the past four years, we again encourage Partnership sites to consider ways to increase rates of ST Math participation, particularly among 8th graders, as we find again that more ST Math participation is associated with better 9th grade Math outcomes.**

Figure 23: 9th Grade Math Course Grades by 8th Grade ST Math Puzzle Completion

Fall Semester 2022-23 9th Grade Math Course Grades by 8th Grade ST Math Puzzles Completed in 2021-22



Source: 2021-22 ST Math data and 2022-23 MPS transcript data.

Section 4

Summary

Summary

Our Year 8 report of the Partnership Schools initiative in MPS, covering the 2022-23 school year, summarizes trends in terms of fidelity of implementation/program participation, stakeholder perceptions, and outcomes (including student engagement and academic performance). Key findings that are largely similar to prior years include a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration that characterizes Partnership sites and stakeholders' continued appreciation for resources provided by the initiative. Stakeholders unanimously praise the teamwork and collaboration that the Partnership initiative has helped to create, and affirm that these four sites are fortunate to have the staffing and programmatic supports that the initiative makes possible. We also heard a lot from stakeholders about staffing challenges that include turnover in key Partnership-funded roles, educator shortages, and difficulty protecting the time of key staff to perform their intended duties. Stakeholders also described ongoing efforts to "return to normal" in the face of rising mental health needs of students and staff, unstable funding tied to enrollment declines, and a policy environment characterized by distrust and resentment.

Outcome data continue to show a mix of bright spots and ongoing areas of concern, with limited overall evidence thus far of sustained, across-the-board improvement in student engagement and academic performance. We emphasize, however, that the lingering and delayed effects of the pandemic make it very difficult to assess the true impact of the initiative beyond generally positive anecdotal evidence and stakeholder perceptions. We continued to hear from teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders about the many ways in which substantial numbers of students in Partnership sites (particularly in the lower grades) who were already behind were still "catching up," both academically and socially, from nearly 18 months of virtual instruction and isolation caused by the pandemic. While research on school reform efforts suggests that it often takes five or more years to adequately assess the impact of significant school-based initiatives, the multiple layers of disruption created by the pandemic lead us to conclude that it will likely take several more years to fully assess the impact of the Partnership initiative.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with MPS, City Year, and the Boys & Girls Club again this year on the external evaluation of the Partnership Schools initiative, and look forward to continued collaboration to help improve outcomes for MPS families and children.

WEC

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