

### RESEARCH BRIEF

## An Evaluation for the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

*The purposes of this study were to describe the characteristics and experiences of youth members of the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities and evaluate their academic achievement as compared to that of their peers. Outcomes of youth members were evaluated, with particular attention paid to age, Club attendance levels, and Club tenure.*

### BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Where and how youth spend their time outside of school hours has important implications for their development, and youth benefit when they spend time engaged in structured pursuits that offer opportunities for positive interactions with adults and peers (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Afterschool and summer learning programs can have positive effects on a range of child and youth outcomes and have earned the right to be included in discussions about advancing youth learning and development (Yohalem & Granger, 2013).

The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities strive to offer youth an experience that includes life-changing programs; fun, enriching experiences; and supportive relationships with peers and caring adults. These elements enable and empower the 12,000 youth served each year to achieve positive outcomes and look forward to a great future (Boys and Girls Clubs, 2010). The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities operates clubs at eight metro-area locations, placed in targeted neighborhoods where the need is the greatest.

While the Boys and Girls Clubs (BGC) of the Twin Cities strive to strengthen the lives of youth across multiple facets, this evaluation focused on the experiences and functioning of youth in an academic setting and addressed the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics and experiences of youth who participate in the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities?
2. How do school attendance and academic proficiency of BGC youth differ by Club tenure, Club participation, and age?
3. Do BGC youth have higher attendance and academic proficiency rates than their peers?
4. What characteristics and experiences of BGC youth predict academic proficiency or satisfactory school attendance?
5. What are the high school graduation and dropout rates for BGC youth?



THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF THE TWIN CITIES STRIVE TO OFFER YOUTH AN EXPERIENCE THAT INCLUDES LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAMS, FUN, ENRICHING EXPERIENCES, AND SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS AND CARING ADULTS. THEY SERVE OVER 12,000 YOUTH ACROSS EIGHT METRO-AREA LOCATIONS, LOCATED IN TARGETED NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE THE NEED IS THE GREATEST.

## METHODS

*Program records from the Boys and Girls Clubs in AY2014 were matched to records from the Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services. Descriptive experiences of youth were reported in multiple ways and analyzed to predict academic functioning and graduation rates, as well as a longitudinal analysis of academic outcomes.*

## FINDINGS

*BGC youth had high levels of service needs. BGC youth attended school at high levels over time, similar to that of their peers. BGC youth performed slightly lower on the MCA math and reading assessments than their peers, but further analysis revealed that youth characteristics and service needs contributed to academic achievement. Graduation rates of BGC youth were similar to youth in the Minneapolis Public School district.*

Through Minn-LInK, Boys and Girls Clubs (BGC) AY2014 membership records were matched to Minnesota Departments of Human Services and Education data ( $n=4,669$ ; 80% match rate). Human Services data included history of child protection system (CPS) involvement, out-of-home placement (OHP) history, children's mental health (CMH) service receipt, and food assistance receipt (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP] & Minnesota Family Investment Program [MFIP] receipt). BGC youth characteristics and experiences by Club attendance, Club tenure, and age are presented in Supplemental Table A. For BGC youth, ANCOVA was used to compare Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) math and reading proficiency and school attendance rates; logistic regression was used to determine predictors of proficiency and satisfactory (>90%) school attendance. Graduation and dropout rates were analyzed for all BGC youth who were eligible to graduate high school in AY2012, AY2013, and AY2014 ( $n=834$ ). A comparison group ( $n=1,246$ ) was created for 5th – 8th grade BGC youth ( $n=1,246$ ) via Propensity Score Matching (using race/ethnicity, gender, school district, grade, homeless/highly mobile status, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Home Primary Language, CPS and OHP history, and receipt of CMH, Free/Reduced Lunch, and SNAP/MFIP). MCA reading and math scores and school attendance were compared for BGC and comparison group youth over time using Generalized Estimating Equations (GEE).

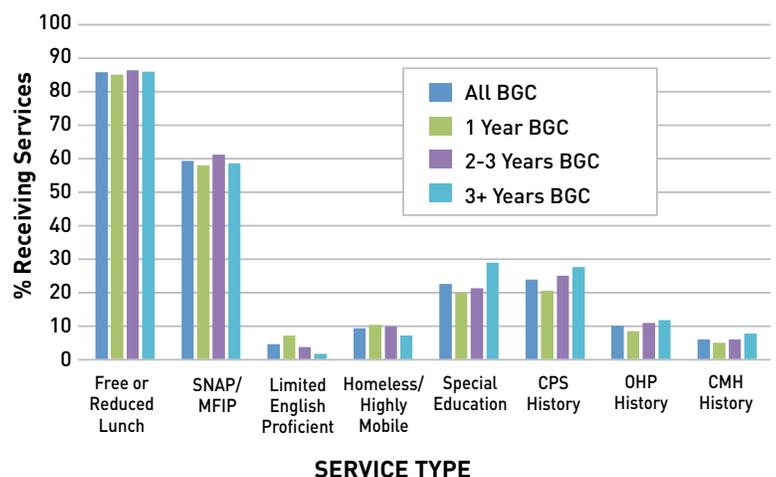
## CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES

In AY2014 the Boys and Girls Clubs served youth in kindergarten through 12th grade, with an average participant age of 11.2 years. Over 90% of BGC youth were youth of color; 60% of youth identified as Black. BGC youth experienced high levels of service need (see Figure 1). In AY2014, 86% of BGC youth received free or reduced lunch and nearly 60% received food assistance through SNAP or MFIP. Approximately 23% of BGC youth received special education services through the public education system; 9% were identified as homeless or highly mobile, and 4% were identified by school records as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Nearly one-quarter of youth experienced CPS contact prior to AY2014, and 10% experienced at least one out-of-home placement as a result of contact with CPS.

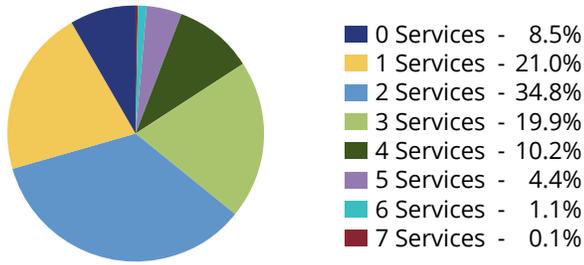
Youth with the highest levels of service need continued participation in the Boys and Girls Clubs for the longest periods of time. Of BGC youth who first participated in AY2014, 20% received special education services. However, 21% of youth who participated for two-three years and 28% of youth who participated more than three years received special education services. Similar patterns were evident across CPS and OHP involvement, and children's mental health. However, the proportions of youth who received free or reduced lunch and SNAP/MFIP remained at similarly high levels across Club tenure.

In addition, many BGC youth had multiple service needs. As can be seen in Figure 2, 36% of BGC youth received 3 or more services. Fewer than 10% of BGC youth had no documented history of service receipt in these areas.

**Figure 1. Service Receipt by Boys and Girls Clubs  
Tenure as of AY2014**



**Figure 2. Overlapping Service Receipt of BGC Youth**

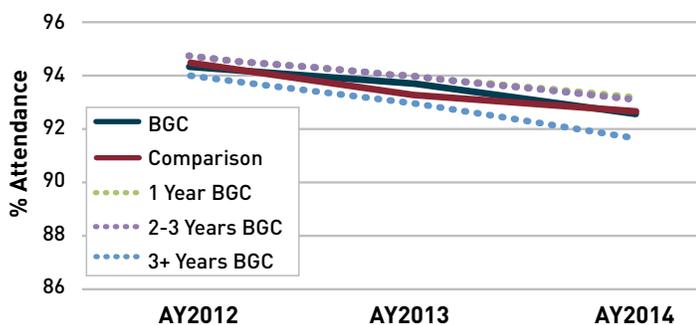


## ATTENDANCE AND ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY

School attendance was examined for all BGC youth who participated in AY2014 by Club tenure, Club participation, and age. Youth who participated three or more years attended school at lower rates in AY2014 (the year of Club participation for all BGC youth) than youth who participated for shorter durations of time (see Supplemental Table A). It is important to note that less frequent school attendance is a common occurrence as youth age, and youth who participated more than three years represented older BGC youth with higher service needs. During AY2014, satisfactory (>90%) school attendance was attained by 83% of youth who participated in BGC more than 156 days, as compared to 74% of youth who participated 52-156 days, and 73% of youth who participated less than 52 days. Seventy-eight percent of children attained satisfactory school attendance, compared to 64% of teens.

School attendance, and MCA math and reading scores were compared for three years for BGC youth and their peers (i.e., 5th - 8th graders in BGC and the matched comparison group;  $N=2,492$ ). As seen in Figure 3, BGC youth and their peers maintained high attendance levels over time (92.5% and 92.6%, respectively), despite a small, non-significant decrease in average school attendance between AY2012 and AY2014 (1.8 percentage points). No significant differences existed between the attendance of BGC youth and their similarly situated peers.

**Figure 3. School Attendance Over Time**



**Note:** All BGC youth participated in AY2014; not all youth participated in AY2012 or AY2013.

Overall, math and reading proficiency rates were low for all youth, ranging from 21-45% for BGC youth and 25-53% for their peers (see Supplemental Figures A & B). GEE findings revealed that youth in the comparison group performed higher, on average, than BGC youth on both MCA-III math and reading (see Supplemental Figures C & D). Rates of change for math and reading were

statistically different from each other ( $\beta= 1.45, p= .01$ ;  $\beta= 1.75, p= .01$ , respectively), with both groups experiencing declining achievement over time – a common occurrence to most students.

Logistic regression was used to determine factors contributing to attendance and achievement. As seen in Supplemental Table B, characteristics and service needs of BGC youth were predictive of AY2014 attendance and achievement. Youth who received special education, children’s mental health, child protection, or food assistance services, youth who were homeless/highly mobile, American Indian/Alaskan Native youth, and youth who experienced school mobility were significantly less likely to achieve satisfactory school attendance. For example, youth who received special education services were 4.5 times less likely to achieve math and reading proficiency. Homeless/highly mobile youth were less likely to demonstrate math (but not reading) proficiency; youth receiving food assistance and CPS were less likely to demonstrate reading (but not math) proficiency. Younger youth, Asian youth, and youth with OHP were significantly more likely to attain satisfactory attendance.

Youth who received free/reduced lunch or special education services, youth who were Limited English Proficient, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic, and Black youth, and youth who experienced school mobility were significantly less likely to achieve proficiency in math and reading. For example, youth who were homeless/highly mobile were 2.2 times less likely (Odds ratio/1 = 0.45/1 = 2.2) to attain satisfactory attendance. Youth who participated in BGC for less than three years were more likely to demonstrate proficiency (math and reading); youth with OHP and younger youth were more likely to demonstrate proficiency in reading and math, respectively.

## GRADUATION & DROPOUT RATES

Nearly 60% of BGC youth eligible to graduate high school in AY2012-2014 achieved this important milestone (Table 1) – a rate comparable to that of the Minneapolis Public School district. Graduation rates for BGC youth were higher than evident in the Minneapolis Public School district across all demographic subgroups, with the exception of graduation rates for White and American Indian/Alaskan youth. Dropout rates were comparable, though slightly elevated for BGC youth as compared to youth in the Minneapolis Public School district. (Additional rates by service need are in Supplemental Table C.)

**Table 1. Graduation and Dropout Rates**

	Graduation Rate		Dropout Rate	
	BGC Youth (%)	MPLS Public Schools (%)	BGC Youth (%)	MPLS Public Schools (%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>57.8%</b>	<b>58.7%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
<b>White</b>	51.3%	77.3%	7.7%	4.2%
<b>Black</b>	48.2%	47.3%	15.4%	10.4%
<b>Hispanic</b>	67.4%	45.1%	10.9%	12.3%
<b>Asian</b>	87.9%	77.6%	3.5%	6.1%
<b>AIAN<sup>1</sup></b>	21.9%	29.2%	43.8%	31.5%
<b>FRL<sup>2</sup></b>	57.1%	49.0%	13.9%	11.7%
<b>LEP<sup>3</sup></b>	71.4%	52.4%	14.3%	9.3%
<b>Spec. Ed.</b>	38.3%	22.8%	14.9%	11.1%

<sup>1</sup>American Indian/Alaska Native, <sup>2</sup>FRL=Free or Reduced Lunch, <sup>3</sup>LEP=Limited English Proficiency

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## Conclusion

The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities is dedicated to providing youth experiences to strengthen academic and social skills, develop positive leadership traits, and learn healthy living behaviors – a model meant to “serve the whole child”. Each year, the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities serves over 12,000 youth across eight clubs in the Twin Cities metro area. These eight locations are placed in targeted neighborhoods where the need is the greatest. This evaluation of youth who participated in the 2014 academic year sought to better understand the experiences and academic outcomes of youth across Club tenure, Club attendance, and age.

This baseline evaluation revealed that the Boys and Girls Clubs did in fact serve a population of youth with high levels of service needs. Youth experiences, such as CPS and OHP involvement, receipt of special education services, low socioeconomic status, and limited English proficiency have been identified as risk factors for poor academic achievement and low school attendance (Cutuli et al., 2013; Lucio, Hunt, & Bornoalova, 2012). Nearly 86% of all BGC youth received free or reduced lunch compared to 38% of the general population of Minnesota youth. Similarly, 22% of BGC youth received special education services, compared to 15% of the general population.

For youth with elevated risk factors, maintaining satisfactory school attendance is crucial to learning, and BGC youth consistently maintained high levels of school attendance over time. While they were attending school at rates above 90%, BGC youth achieved proficiency in MCA math and reading at low levels. In AY2014, of all eligible to take the assessments, only 23% of BGC youth were proficient in reading and 25% were proficient in math. BGC youth, on average, scored in the “partially meets proficiency” range. Coupled with high school attendance rates, targeted intervention opportunities to increase academic achievement may exist to meet the needs of BGC youth with risk factors for academic failure. The results of this evaluation may serve as a baseline from which future school functioning (via targeted intervention) may be compared.

### LIMITATIONS

*Youth in the Twin Cities metro area have a wide variety of after-school programs from which they can choose to be involved. This study was unable to control for participation in other after-school programs that may offer a different or more targeted programmatic focus than the Boys and Girls Clubs. The Boys and Girls Clubs offers programming encompassing a variety of development areas though this evaluation looked solely at academic functioning.*

## References

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