

GALAXY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM:

**BETTIE F. WILLIAMS AND
NEWTOWN ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

Year-One Evaluation

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Department of Accountability
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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On March 8, 2005, the School Board approved the implementation of an extended-day instructional program at Bettie F. Williams and Newtown Road elementary schools. The extended-day program, named the Galaxy After-School Program, began operating in September 2005 in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation department within the city of Virginia Beach. The program offers students academic, enrichment, and recreational opportunities after school until 6:30 p.m. This year-one evaluation examines the implementation of the program and progress toward meeting the program goal and objectives.

FINDINGS

Evaluation Question Number 1: What were the components of the program and did the program implementation include the program concepts approved by the School Board?

- As planned, registration for the program was voluntary and flexible. As space allowed, parents could enroll their child throughout the school year for a monthly fee of \$40 per child or a reduced monthly fee of \$20.
- The majority of parents at each site indicated that the main reason they enrolled their child was for after-school care or because of their work schedule.
- As planned, a lead teacher who served as the program director and six certified teachers were hired at each site. In addition, two teacher assistants were hired at each site after the beginning of the school year when it became apparent that additional staffing was needed. One security assistant was employed at each site during program hours, and staff from the City of Virginia Beach Department of Parks and Recreation provided recreational activities for students.
- As planned, the program provided students with time for academics, homework, enrichment, recreation, and dinner after school until 6:30 p.m. Transportation was provided for students at the end of the day.

- The implementation of the program schedule at both schools underwent various changes throughout the school year to maximize the effectiveness of the program. Changes were made based on experiences during the initial months of the program, continuous feedback from parents and staff, staffing changes, and logistics of running the program at each site.
- Teachers involved in the program received staff development and training along with other teachers in Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) and training in specialized instructional materials used in the program. Parks and Recreation staff participated in training with the City of Virginia Beach, but did not appear to participate in VBCPS training for all Galaxy staff as planned.
- Collaboration occurred between Galaxy teachers and regular school-day teachers through informal discussions and the use of feedback forms. However, the use of feedback forms was limited at each site. Teachers at both sites suggested more collaboration with the regular school-day teachers in survey comments.
- Communication with parents occurred at both sites, including a regularly published Galaxy newsletter. A strong parent education component utilizing noted experts in the field was planned. However, one parent educational session was held which focused on discipline strategies, and a limited number of parents attended.

Evaluation Question Number 2: What were the characteristics of the students and teachers who were involved in the program?

- The proposed number of students to be served at each site ranged from 200 to 300. However, enrollment was limited to approximately 150 students at each site in August 2005 due to large numbers of students in several grade levels which was beyond the available staffing for the program.
- At Bettie F. Williams, 155 students were enrolled in the program as of September 30, 2005, which was 21 percent of the school's students. The ethnic characteristics of the Galaxy students were relatively similar to the characteristics of all students in the school, but a lower percentage of Galaxy students were economically disadvantaged compared to the school's students. Approximately 89 percent of the Galaxy students were African American, and 56 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- At Newtown Road, 124 students were enrolled in the program as of September 30, 2005, which was 20 percent of the school's students. A greater percentage of Galaxy students were African American and a lower percentage were Caucasian compared to the school's students, and a lower percentage of Galaxy students were economically disadvantaged. Approximately 88 percent of the Galaxy students were African American, and 57 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- Of the 175 students who were enrolled in the program at Bettie F. Williams at some time during the school year, 48 (27%) withdrew. On average, 123 students attended the program at Bettie F. Williams each day. Of the 163 students who were enrolled in the program at

Newtown Road at some time during the school year, 42 (26%) withdrew. On average, 124 students attended the program at Newtown Road each day.

- There was some data to suggest that overall, as many as 50 percent of the students were picked up by their parents prior to the end of the Galaxy After-School Program at 6:30 p.m. Some survey comments from staff noted concerns with early dismissal because not all students received the full benefit of all program components.
- At both sites, a greater percentage of Galaxy teachers were new to the Virginia Beach school division compared to all instructional staff at the school. At Bettie F. Williams, six teachers remained with the program throughout the school year, but both teacher assistants left the program during the year, and the vacant positions were filled. At Newtown Road, two of the six teachers left the program during the year, and one teacher assistant position that became vacant was filled during the school year.

Evaluation Question Number 3: What were the stakeholders' perceptions of the program?

- Student perceptions of the program at both sites were positive, with a majority of the students indicating that the homework time helped them and at least 85 percent indicating that they liked the recreational time. At least 60 percent of the students at each site wanted to attend the program in the 2006-2007 school year.
- The highest percentage of parents at both sites (93%+) were satisfied with enrichment activities, communication efforts with parents, and Parks and Recreation activities. The majority of parents at both sites were satisfied with other aspects of the program as well (e.g., academic time, dinner, homework time), except less than a majority of Newtown Road parents were satisfied with field trips. At least 91 percent of the parents at each site indicated that they would recommend the program.
- When asked what could be done to make the Galaxy After-School Program better, the largest percentage of parents at each site indicated improvements related to homework, including more homework time, more checking to ensure homework is completed correctly, and having homework time earlier in the program at Newtown Road.
- At both sites, at least 75 percent of the instructional staff members agreed with all survey items regarding implementation and expectations of the program, suggesting positive perceptions. In addition, at Bettie F. Williams, perceptions of the staff development and training were positive.
- At Newtown Road, responses regarding staff development and training were less positive with less than a majority indicating that training helped prepare them or enhanced their ability to work with students in the Galaxy After-School Program. Staff turnover during the year appeared to influence ratings on these survey items because much of the staff training occurred early in the school year, and new staff would not have been hired at that time.

Evaluation Question Number 4: What progress was made toward meeting the program goal and objectives?

- Progress was made at both schools toward meeting each of the program objectives. As a result, progress was made toward meeting the overall program goal of providing a wide range of innovative academic, enrichment, and recreational opportunities that reach the needs of a diverse population within a safe and supportive environment.

Objective #1 – Increase Student Achievement in Language Arts and Mathematics:

- Overall at Bettie F. Williams, there was at least one measure at each grade level for language arts and mathematics that showed evidence of a greater increase in achievement or higher achievement for Galaxy students compared to a similar comparison group of non-Galaxy students.
- At Bettie F. Williams, the majority of students and all instructional staff indicated that they or the students could read better, write better, and were better at math because of the program. The majority of parents indicated that their child could write better; however, less than a majority indicated that their child could read better or was better at math because of the program. The majority of students and parents and all staff indicated that the Galaxy teachers helped students understand what was learned during the regular school day.
- Overall at Newtown Road, there was at least one language arts measure at each grade level and at least one mathematics measure at each grade level except first grade that showed evidence of a greater increase in achievement or higher achievement for Galaxy students compared to a similar comparison group of non-Galaxy students.
- At Newtown Road, the majority of students indicated that they could write better because of the program; however, less than a majority indicated that they could read better or that they were better at math. Less than a majority of parents indicated that their child could read better, write better, or was better at math because of the program. However, a majority of students and parents indicated that the Galaxy teachers helped students understand what was learned during the regular school day. All instructional staff agreed that students' reading skills improved, but fewer agreed that students writing or math skills improved, or that teachers helped students understand what was learned during the day.
- The most consistent evidence of narrowed gaps in passing rates at the schools was between non-special education and special education students, but this could have been due to factors other than the program such as the number of students taking the test. On the grade five writing and math SOL tests, African-American students outperformed Caucasians before the program in 2005 and after the program in 2006 when examining the combined performance at the two schools.

Objective #2 – Improve Students’ Social Skills and Behavior:

- Discipline referral data at both sites suggested that Galaxy students were better behaved than non-Galaxy students during the 2004-2005 school year before the Galaxy After-School Program’s operation and also during 2005-2006 when the program was in operation.
- There was evidence in some grade levels at both sites that Galaxy students’ grades related to social skills and behavior improved more than similar non-Galaxy students’ grades.
- At each site, the majority of the students indicated that they behaved better in school because of the program. A majority of the parents at each site indicated that their child’s social skills improved, and most instructional staff agreed that students’ social skills and behavior improved because of the program.

Objective #3 – Increase Opportunities for Academic Support, Enrichment, and Recreation:

- At both sites, more than three-quarters of the parents and most instructional staff indicated that students received more opportunities for enrichment and recreational activities by attending the program. At Bettie F. Williams, more than three-quarters of the parents and all instructional staff indicated that students received more opportunities for academic support. At Newtown Road, all instructional staff but less than half of the parents thought there were more opportunities for academic support.
- At each site, guest speakers and field trips were included in the program. At Bettie F. Williams where three field trips were held, 91 percent of the students and 92 percent of the parents indicated that they or their child went on a field trip. At Newtown Road where two field trips were held, 35 percent of the students and 24 percent of the parents indicated that they or their child went on a field trip.
- Field trip opportunities were a planned component of the program; however, it appeared that field trips may have been limited due to the perceived availability of funds for transportation and the field trip events.

Objective #4 – Increase Parental Involvement:

- At each site, parents attended Galaxy and schoolwide events. At each site, a majority of the parents indicated that their involvement in their child’s education increased since enrollment in the program, and at least 50 percent of the instructional staff at each site agreed that parent involvement increased.

Objective #5 – Provide a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students:

- At least 72 percent of the students at each site indicated that they felt safe in the Galaxy After-School Program, and at least 66 percent indicated that the teachers helped them get along with classmates and deal with problems. At least 84 percent of the parents and all instructional staff at each site indicated that a safe and supportive environment was provided.

**Evaluation Question Number 5: What was the cost
of the program to the school division?**

- Overall, the total cost for the first year of the Galaxy After-School Program was approximately \$374,777 at Bettie F. Williams and \$376,573 at Newtown Road, for a total of \$751,350 at both schools.
- Of the total cost, \$36,424 from Bettie F. Williams and \$36,542 from Newtown Road were start-up costs. The annual recurring operating cost in year one for personnel, transportation, food services, communication, staff development, office and computer supplies, field trips/speakers, and some instructional supplies was approximately \$338,353 at Bettie F. Williams and \$340,031 at Newtown Road.
- The total annual operating cost for the program at both sites of \$678,384 was approximately \$78,000 more than the highest expected cost for both programs of \$600,000 which was presented to the School Board.
- Of the total cost, \$112,679 was paid from Title I funds in 2005-2006.
- According to survey comments from some program staff, funds are needed for transportation for field trips, as well as funds for the field trips and other activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine methods to increase collaboration between Galaxy and regular school-day teachers regarding Galaxy students' academic needs.
- Discuss and determine creative methods for offering seminars or other parent educational components to involve parents even though many are not available directly after school due to work schedules.
- Develop strategies to encourage parents to allow their children to remain in the program for the entire session each day for their children to receive the full benefits of the program.
- Review survey comments regarding suggestions for program improvement and consider whether adjustments should be made to the program, especially time devoted to homework.
- Review staff development needs for the Galaxy staff and develop a training plan for staff members hired later in the school year to fill vacant positions from staff turnover to help them feel more prepared to work with the program.
- Improve communication among the departments and schools involved in the Galaxy After-School Program implementation regarding available funding sources and resources for the program.