

GALAXY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM:

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

Year-Two Evaluation

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment
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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 Department of Parks and Recreation within the city of Virginia Beach. The program offers students academic, enrichment, and recreational opportunities after school until 6:30 p.m. This year-two evaluation examined the continued implementation of the program and progress toward meeting the program goal and objectives.

FINDINGS

Evaluation Question Number 1: What actions were taken as a result of the recommendations from the year-one evaluation?

- The Galaxy After-School Program staff responded positively to all six recommendations from the year-one evaluation and addressed them with a variety of methods and strategies.
- Instructional information from each grade level was shared with Galaxy teachers, and survey results from students and instructional staff members suggested that collaboration between Galaxy and regular school-day teachers improved.
- Alternative means of providing parents with educational information, such as publishing information in the newsletter and providing parents with informative articles, were implemented instead of offering seminars for parents at the schools.
- Efforts were made to encourage parents to allow their children to remain in the after-school program for the entire session each day rather than picking students up early, although early dismissal from the program continued to be a concern during year two.
- Parent and student perceptions of the homework time during the program were generally more positive than during the program's first year.

- There was substantial improvement in instructional staff members' survey responses related to staff development at Newtown Road, which had the lowest staff ratings in the program's first year.
- Communication among school division departments and the schools appeared to improve during the second year with funding secured for Galaxy After-School Program field trips and teacher assistants. Parents of Newtown Road Galaxy students showed substantial increases in their satisfaction with field trips in the program's second year, and satisfaction levels remained high at Bettie F. Williams.

Evaluation Question Number 2: What changes regarding the program components occurred during the second year as the implementation process continued?

- As in year one, 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 for the Department of Parks and Recreation component.
- Registration and enrollment for the program's second year was limited to 25 students per grade level for a total capacity of 150 students at each school. The enrollment limit at each grade level resulted in more balanced enrollment across grade levels compared to the program's first year and allowed both schools to organize the program schedule by grade level.
- As in year one, 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 in year one, a lead teacher who served as the program director and six certified teachers were hired at each site. In the program's second year, three teacher assistants were hired for the program at Bettie F. Williams, and two teacher assistants were hired for the program at Newtown Road. 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.
- The program provided students with scheduled time after school for academics, homework, enrichment, recreation, and dinner until 6:30 p.m. The program was four hours at Bettie F. Williams and three and one-half hours at Newtown Road. Transportation was provided for students at the end of the day, although the majority of the students at each school (67% to 70%) were picked up by their parents and did not ride the buses home.
- The implementation of the program schedule at Bettie F. Williams remained the same as during the program's first year, while the program schedule was revised at Newtown Road after class sizes were limited to 25 students per grade level.
- As in year one, 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 participate in VBCPS training for all Galaxy staff due to difficulty in coordinating work schedules.

- Collaboration occurred between Galaxy teachers and regular school-day teachers through informal discussions and discussions regarding the Galaxy After-School Program, but there was limited use of Teacher Communication Forms which were designed to facilitate communication regarding individual students' academic needs.
- Communication with parents occurred at both sites, including a regularly published Galaxy newsletter. During the program's second year, it was determined that providing educational and training items in the monthly parent newsletter was more beneficial than offering parent seminars at the schools which resulted in low parent attendance during the program's first year.

Evaluation Question Number 3: What were the characteristics of the students and teachers who were involved in the program?

- At Bettie F. Williams, 129 students were enrolled in the program as of September 30, 2006, which was 18 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 90 percent of the Galaxy students were African American, and 59 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- At Newtown Road, 121 students were enrolled in the program as of September 30, 2006, 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 83 percent of the Galaxy students were African American, and 43 percent were economically disadvantaged.
- Of the 145 students who were enrolled in the program at Bettie F. Williams at some time during the school year, 26 (18%) withdrew, which was a lower withdrawal rate compared to the program's first year (27%). On average, 114 students attended the program at Bettie F. Williams each day, which was lower than in year one.
- Of the 142 students who were enrolled in the program at Newtown Road at some time during the school year, 43 (30%) withdrew, which was a higher withdrawal rate compared to the program's first year (26%). On average, 97 students attended the program at Newtown Road each day, which was lower than in year one.
- The majority of the students who withdrew at each school did so because they moved to another school either in or out of the city.
- Student dismissal data indicated that the number of Galaxy students dismissed early from the program increased steadily throughout the Galaxy session at each school. The largest

percentages of students at both schools were picked up by their parents between 5:01 and 6:00 p.m. By 6:00 p.m., over one-half of the Galaxy students in attendance had been picked up by their parents, leaving less than half of the students remaining until the end of the program at 6:30 p.m.

- 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, four of the six teachers (67%) were new to the Galaxy After-School Program in the program's second year. All six teachers remained with the program throughout the school year. At Newtown Road, two of the six teachers at the beginning of the school year (33%) were new to the program. However, two of the six teachers left the program during the year, and vacant positions were filled.

Evaluation Question Number 4: What were the stakeholders' perceptions of the program?

- Student perceptions of the program at both sites were positive. At least 70 percent of the students at both sites indicated that the homework time helped them, and percentages increased compared to year one. At least 93 percent at each site indicated that they liked the recreational time. Sixty-three percent of the students at each site wanted to attend the program in the 2007-2008 school year.
- The highest percentage of parents at both sites (89%+) were satisfied with Parks and Recreation activities, field trips, enrichment activities, and the Galaxy program's communication efforts with parents. The majority of parents at both sites were satisfied with other aspects of the program as well, such as academic time, dinner, homework time, parent meetings, and transportation. At least 90 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 most prevalent suggestions from parents were related to homework, including more homework time and having homework time earlier in the program at Newtown Road.
- At both sites, a majority of the instructional staff members agreed with all survey items regarding implementation and expectations of the program, suggesting positive perceptions overall. In addition, the majority of all staff demonstrated positive perceptions of the staff development and training they received for the program's second year.
- At both sites, the staff survey item with the lowest level of agreement was that parents understand what is expected of them by having their children enrolled in the Galaxy After-School Program, and levels of agreement decreased in year two of the program.

Evaluation Question Number 5: What progress was made toward meeting the program goal and objectives?

- Overall, the Galaxy After-School Program is meeting the 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. While these components are being provided for students, outcome data for the specific program objectives suggested varying levels of success.

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

- At Bettie F. Williams, there were mixed results regarding the extent to which the program's first objective was met. While there was some evidence that a greater percentage of Galaxy students demonstrated improvements in classroom grades from fall to spring and exhibited more positive performance on some SOL tests, the results were not consistent across language arts and mathematics educational performance measures or grade levels. Although classroom grade data did not consistently demonstrate that greater percentages of Galaxy students showed academic improvement compared to non-Galaxy students, Galaxy students at most grade levels generally received higher grades in the fall and spring.
- At Bettie F. Williams, the majority of students and all instructional staff indicated that students could read better, write better, and were better at math because of the program. A slight majority of parents indicated that their child was better at math, but less than a majority indicated that their child could read or write better because of the program. However, 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.
- At Newtown Road, there were mixed results regarding the extent to which the program's first objective was met. While there was some evidence at most grade levels that a greater percentage of Galaxy students demonstrated improvements in PALS scores or classroom grades from fall to spring and exhibited more positive performance on some SOL tests, the results were not consistent across language arts and mathematics educational performance measures or grade levels. Although classroom grade data did not consistently demonstrate that greater percentages of Galaxy students showed academic improvement compared to non-Galaxy students, Galaxy students in grades one, two, and three generally received higher grades in the fall and spring.
- At Newtown Road, the majority of students indicated that they could write better and were better at math because of the program; however, less than a majority indicated that they could read better. Less than a majority of parents indicated that their child could read better, write better, or were better in math because of the program. However, a majority of students and parents and all instructional staff indicated that the Galaxy teachers helped students understand what was learned during the regular school day, and percentages increased from the program's first year. All instructional staff agreed that students' reading and math skills improved, but fewer agreed that students' writing skills improved.

- The most consistent evidence of narrowed gaps in passing rates at the schools was between non-special education and special education students. However, this was only evident on the grade three English and mathematics SOL tests, and this could have been due to factors other than the program such as the number of students taking the SOL test.

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

- At Bettie F. Williams, the data did not provide strong evidence that the program reduced discipline referral rates for Galaxy students relative to non-Galaxy students, although it appeared that Galaxy students in 2006-2007 were somewhat better behaved than non-Galaxy students. A lower percentage of Galaxy students than non-Galaxy students had a decrease in discipline referrals in 2006-2007 compared to 2005-2006.
- At Newtown Road, the data provided some evidence that the Galaxy students had reduced referral rates relative to non-Galaxy students and suggested that Galaxy students in 2006-2007 were better behaved than non-Galaxy students. A higher percentage of Galaxy students than non-Galaxy students had a decrease in discipline referrals in 2006-2007 compared to 2005-2006.
- There was some evidence in certain grade levels at both sites that Galaxy students’ grades related to social skills and behavior improved more than similar non-Galaxy students’ grades. However, the evidence was not consistent across measures or grade levels.
- At each site, the majority of the students indicated that they behaved better in school because of the program, and percentages increased from year one. A majority of the parents at each site indicated that their child’s social skills improved, and these percentages also increased from year one. However, only about one-third of the parents at each site indicated that their child’s behavior improved. 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, at least 86 percent of the parents and most instructional staff indicated that students received more opportunities for enrichment and recreational activities by attending the program. At each site, the majority of parents and all instructional staff indicated that students received more opportunities for academic support, and parents’ responses improved from the program’s first year.
- At each site, guest speakers and field trips were included in the program. At each site, at least 91 percent of the students and 96 percent of the parents indicated that they or their child went on a field trip, and all percentages increased compared to year one.

Objective #4 – Increase Parental Involvement:

- At each site, parents attended Galaxy and schoolwide events. A majority of the parents and instructional staff indicated that parent involvement in their child’s education increased since

their child's enrollment in the program. In addition, a greater percentage of parents and staff indicated that parent involvement increased compared to the program's first year.

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

- At least 76 percent of the students at each site indicated that they felt safe in the Galaxy After-School Program, and at least 80 percent indicated that the teachers helped them get along with classmates and deal with problems. At least 89 percent of the parents and 83 percent of the instructional staff at each site indicated that a safe and supportive environment was provided. Most student and parent percentages increased compared to year one.

Evaluation Question Number 6: What was the cost of the program to the school division?

- Overall, the total cost for the second year of the Galaxy After-School Program was approximately \$422,844 at Bettie F. Williams and \$393,762 at Newtown Road, for a total of \$816,606 at both schools. Nearly all costs in year two were recurring costs for personnel, transportation, food services, communications, additional instructional materials, and office and computer supplies.
- The cost at Bettie F. Williams in the second year was higher than during the program's first year mainly due to an additional teacher assistant allocation to work with the Galaxy After-School Program. The size of the staff at Newtown Road did not change, and the cost in the second year was relatively similar to the cost during the program's first year.
- The total cost for the program at both sites of \$816,606 in year two was approximately \$216,606 more than the highest expected cost for both programs of \$600,000 which was presented to the School Board when the program was initially approved in 2005.
- Based on the total number of students who were enrolled in the Galaxy After-School Program at both schools some time during the school year (287), the estimated per pupil cost during the program's second year was approximately \$2,845.
- Of the total cost, \$148,252 was paid from Title I funds in 2006-2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop and implement a system to focus Galaxy and regular school-day teacher collaboration efforts on identifying each individual Galaxy student's academic needs to allow Galaxy teachers to address those specific needs in the after-school program. (Schools)
- Strengthen the Galaxy After-School Program attendance and dismissal policies so that parents understand that their children should remain in the program for the entire session each day to receive the full benefits of the program. (Department of School Administration, Schools)

- Develop and implement a Parent Contract or an agreement with parents who enroll their children in the Galaxy After-School Program which outlines program expectations for parents and students based on the program's purpose, goal, and objectives. This should include expectations and policies regarding student attendance and early dismissal from the program. (Department of School Administration, Schools)
- Implement additional instructional strategies or program schedule changes aimed at supporting students' academic needs to enable the program to more fully meet the objective of increasing students' academic achievement. (Department of School Administration, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Schools)
- Reexamine the program's purpose, the program schedule, the student dismissal patterns, and the program evaluations to determine if any modifications should be made to the program. (Department of School Administration, Schools, Galaxy After-School Program Committee)
- Continue the Galaxy After-School Program through 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 after the three elementary schools in the Bayside Tri-Campus are all fully operational. Provide an interim evaluation report in fall 2008 focused on the actions taken in response to this report's recommendations and progress made toward accomplishing the objective of increasing academic achievement. Provide a full evaluation report in fall 2009 which will include recommendations regarding continuation of the program. (School Administration, Schools, Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment)