



Elev8 Baltimore: Youth Opportunity

MSDE Report: SY 2020-2021

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Contributors

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Introduction

Elev8 Baltimore is a year-round program that provides Out-of-School Time (OST) programming, school-based healthcare, and other family supports to community schools in Baltimore City. Elev8 Baltimore functions as a Lead Agency and OST provider as part of a full-service Community Schools strategy. The Community Schools strategy is an approach that positions public schools as hubs of integrated service delivery for students, families, and the broader community. OST programming in Baltimore City is intentionally aligned with the Community Schools strategy.

A Community School is both a place and set of strategic partnerships that promote student achievement, positive conditions for learning, and the well-being of families and communities. Through the work of Lead Agencies, each community school leverages unique community resources to meet needs and maintain a core focus on children, while recognizing that children grow up in families, and that families are building blocks of communities. This integrated approach is designed to lead to student success, strong families, and healthy communities.

Meanwhile, OST programs offer young people educational, recreational, and enrichment opportunities during the hours when school is not in session, extending the support services of community schools beyond the school day. They provide academic support and homework help, nutritious meals, high-quality care, and opportunities to explore new interests and experiences. OST programs are designed to promote academic benefits for youth as well as broader, non-academic benefits for youth and their families.

This report focuses on Elev8 Baltimore's programming at Youth Opportunity. The report is prepared by Inciter, a research and evaluation consulting firm that has served as the external evaluator for Elev8 Baltimore since 2010.

Youth Opportunity

Youth Opportunity serves youth and young adults between the ages of 17 and 24 who are disconnected from school and/or the workforce and links them to community-based educational, workforce preparation, and personal development services.

Methodology

As in past years, Inciter worked closely with Elev8 program leadership and staff to develop this report.

Three guiding questions orient this work:

- I. What is the student enrollment and attendance at each school's OST program by grade?
- II. How are students using the Exact Path system to improve their skills in reading and math (if applicable)?
- III. What is Elev8, as a Lead Agency and OST program provider, offering in terms of daily programming and special events? How is it engaging students, their families, and the greater community?

Data System

During the 2019-2020 school year, Elev8 transitioned from a traditional data system to a completely web-based one. Staff input data on day-to-day OST attendance (Guiding Question 1) and programming and events (Guiding Question 3) and into custom data collection tools. Data on student learning activities (Guiding Question 2) is downloaded from a separate source. With technical support from Inciter, Elev8 staff are responsible for making sure the student and family data collected by Elev8's OST staff are accurate and complete.

Inciter developed a central web application that aggregates data from disparate sources into one location and built a portal that allows Elev8 staff to access both raw data and data reports. The portal can be customized to clean and transform data, create descriptive statistics based on the raw data, and can produce tables, charts and graphs according to staff needs.

The Elev8 system keeps personally identifiable information (PII) secure by encrypting data at rest and in transit and by housing PII in production environments. Additionally, access to sensitive information is provided by Elev8 to Inciter and any Inciter access is logged in the system. Risk is managed through bi-weekly internal assessments and 48 hour notification in the event of a data breach.

This system supports Elev8 Baltimore's efforts at continuous improvement by enabling the organization to have real-time information on various critical metrics that can then be used to track and potentially improve service delivery.

Data Types

OST Enrollment and Attendance

Elev8 staff collect student enrollment and attendance data and enter it into Excel spreadsheets.

OST enrollment and attendance data are not available for Youth Opportunity.

Skill Mastery Using Exact Path

Skill mastery is assessed using Exact Path data. Exact Path is a personalized learning platform that includes assessment-driven math, reading, and language arts instruction. Students begin by taking an adaptive diagnostic assessment and are given an individualized learning plan based on their performance. The Exact Path system tracks logins, activity, usage, and results, which are exported to the portal on a monthly basis throughout the school year.

Exact Path data are not available for Youth Opportunity.

Events

Elev8 staff enter data on the number and types of family support services and advocacy activities that families receive at all Elev8 Baltimore schools.

To collate events data, Elev8 staff enter event type, attendance, and other data into a Google form, which is uploaded into the portal. These events vary widely, from field trips for students with good attendance, Spooky Math nights, or a High School choice fair for 8th graders, to events geared toward parents and the community, such as self-care and health-oriented events, parenting seminars, and men's support groups.

Data are categorized by whether they occurred once or several times; which stakeholder and age groups they supported; and by event type.

Event types include:

- Barrier removal: Events that remove barriers to optimal learning, such as vision screening and free glasses, a weekly produce market, and free flu shots and health screenings;
- Educational support: Events that further education in some way, such as Black History Month programming, math and literacy nights, and a trip to a local state college for high school students;
- General meeting: Events that range from one-time student assemblies or sessions to help interested students to find a job or sign up for driver's education classes, to recurring working meetings for all stakeholders to coordinate school initiatives or monthly parent breakfasts with a focus on engagement;
- Leadership development: Events that focus on student and/or parent/community leadership, such as quarterly awards for students who excelled during that time, a seminar for parents and staff on conflict mediation, and a training session for students to be grant proposal reviewers for summer funding;
- Out-of-school time: Special events that take place after school, such as a gardening club, a fashion enrichment club, and assisting the Student Government in organizing and preparing for a Winter Formal.

Findings

Out-of School Time Enrollment and Attendance

OST enrollment and attendance data are not available for Youth Opportunity.

Exact Path

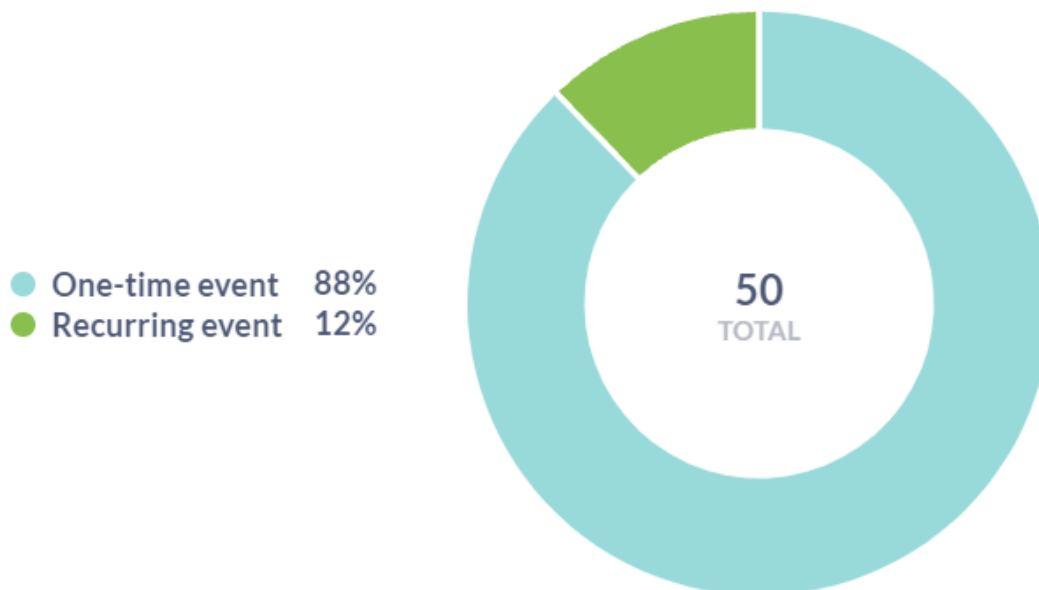
Exact Path data are not available for Youth Opportunity.

Events

According to the data portal, Elev8 at Youth Opportunity organized and hosted one (n=1) weekly recurring leadership event between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2021. The event was a virtual internship program designed to support students in workforce and career development. An estimated 14 stakeholders were supported by the event, which took place over a time span of eight weeks beginning in late November 2020 and ending in late February 2021.

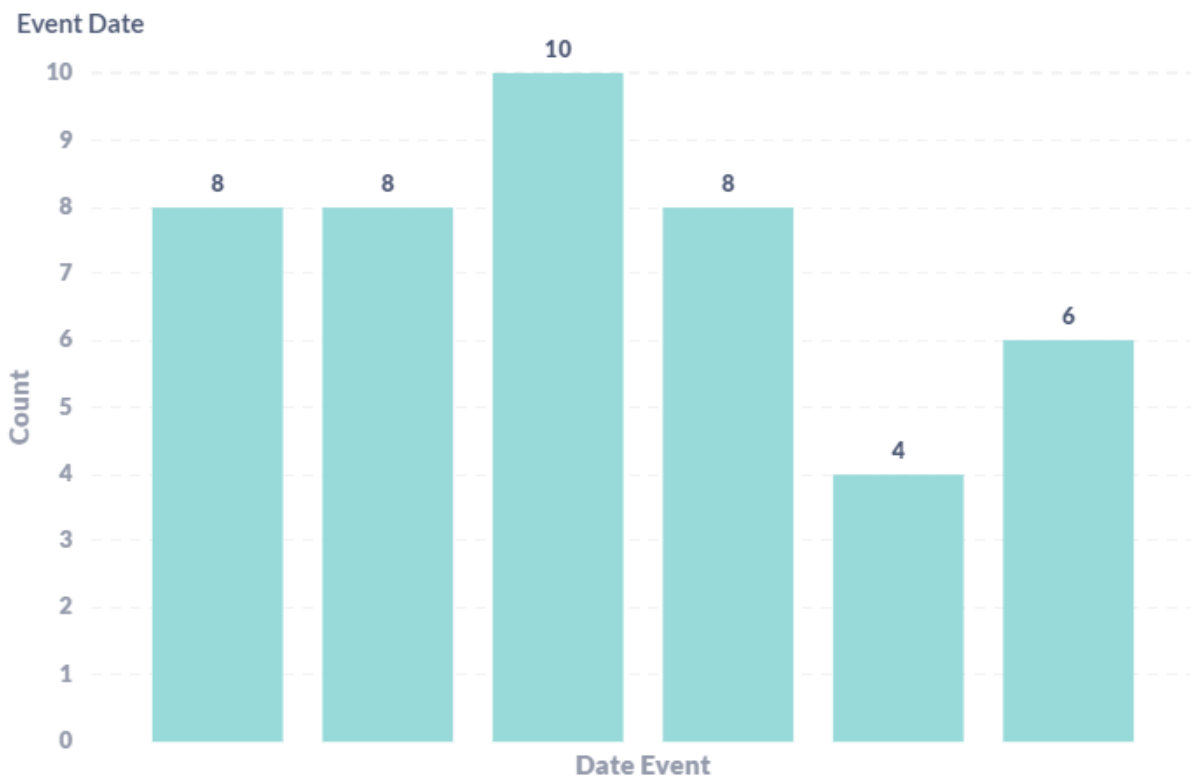
By contrast, 50 events were organized and hosted by Elev8 at Youth Opportunity in 2019-2020.

Figure 2: Event Recurrence, 2019-2020



Of the 50 events planned and organized in 2019-2020, 44 were one-time events and six (n=6) were recurring events. Examining the timing of the one-time events, they occurred at a steady pace throughout the pre-Covid-19 portion of the school year. As shown in Figure 3 below, eight (n=8) one-time events were scheduled in September 2019, eight (n=8) in October 2019, ten (n=10) in November 2019, eight (n=8) in December 2019, four (n=4) in January 2020, and six (n=6) in February 2020. No events took place in school year 2019-2020 after February 2020.

Figure 3: Event Timing, 2019-2020



This suggests that the Covid-19 context, which began in March 2020 and persisted throughout the 2020-2021 school year, posed a significant challenge to events organization at Youth Opportunity.

Conclusions

Broadly speaking, the 2020-2021 school year was an unusual, unprecedented one, characterized by substantial disruptions to service delivery, and to a lesser extent, data collection. These dynamics were pronounced at Youth Opportunity, and a general lack of data makes it difficult to assess what Elev8 offered during the 2020-2021 school year in terms of daily programming and special events beyond the eight-week virtual internship program.

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