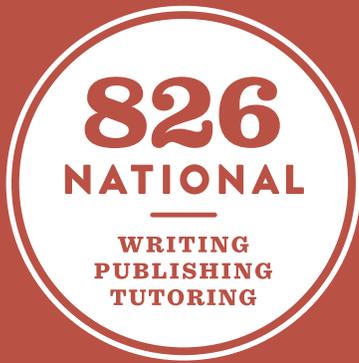


An
ARBOR CONSULTING PARTNERS
report on



After-School Tutoring Programs

In October 2013, 826 National contracted Arbor Consulting Partners to conduct a national study on the impact of its After-School Tutoring (AST) program on participating students. In particular, Arbor researchers were asked to focus on the extent to which 826's central focus on creativity contributes to positive outcomes for participating students throughout its chapters.

Project Credits

Arbor Consulting Partners

Arbor Consulting Partners was formed in 2002, and its senior social scientists have over twenty years of experience consulting to governments, businesses, universities, and foundations as well as to community-based organizations. They offer superior analytical expertise combined with a firm knowledge base in six principal areas: Community Development, Environment, Public Health, Human Resources, Early Care and Education, and Arts and Arts Education.

The 826 National Network

826 National's seven chapters (located in San Francisco, Ann Arbor/Detroit, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington, D.C.) offer a variety of inventive programs that provide under-resourced students, ages 6-18, with opportunities to explore their creativity and improve their writing skills. They also aim to help teachers get their classes excited about writing. Their mission is based on the understanding that great leaps in learning can happen with one-on-one attention, and that strong writing skills are fundamental to future success. The 826 National office serves the growing educational network by providing strategic leadership, administration, and other resources to ensure the success of the 826 network.

826national.org

Arbor Consulting Partners began with defining 826's "culture of creativity:"

826, by design, is a creative space, and the ethos of 826 centers is to encourage creativity. Within 826, there is a "culture of creativity" driven by a set of norms which infuse daily activity, from the tone set by staff to the way in which tutors work with students to the inventiveness of young people once given the okay to explore. These norms include: experimentation and risk-taking for student writing; respect for diversity of learning styles; honoring diversity of opinion, race, ethnicity and culture; and experimentation for tutors in working with students on homework and writing.



**“Cause of you guys,
you make me stand tall.”**

– Student, age 10, 826NYC

The evaluation of 826's AST programs utilized a mixed methods approach, with an emphasis on quantitative methods (specifically, student, volunteer, and parent surveys). Arbor also used qualitative methods to better understand the nature of the 826 AST programs. They did an extensive review of 826 materials and conducted one-hour focus group interviews with 24 volunteer tutors from three centers: 826 Boston, 826CHI, and 826LA.

Findings Overview

Arbor researchers found that [826's After-School Tutoring] program fosters the use of creativity through its physical space, by the tone set by staff, and in allowing volunteers the autonomy to explore a variety of strategies in their work with students, including use of humor and creative problem-solving approaches.

As a result of participating in a program that offers a caring, positive, and creative environment; individualized attention from tutors who support homework completion and creative writing; peer

support; and opportunities to feel like they are part of a writing community, students make progress in developing "habits of mind," or improved "dispositions" or attitudes that provide the foundation for skill development. These habits of mind are manifest in 826 students' increased confidence and increased persistence in completing tasks, even if they are difficult. Increased confidence and persistence are dispositions that are known to contribute positively to both academic and more broadly, life success.

Among Arbor's Findings

- Results show that students are more persistent and more confident in completing their homework as a result of participation in the 826 AST program.
- Volunteers observe gains in student academic skills.
- Students report feeling comfortable asking others for help with their homework.
- Volunteers employ a variety of strategies to infuse creativity into their work with students.
- Data from students indicates that they believe they are better writers and use writing as a means for self-expression.
- Parents confirm that their children are more likely to complete homework when at 826.
- Finishing homework at 826 takes the burden off parents and contributes to quality of family time.



“826 creates a norm of creativity and this has the greatest impact on students, getting to be a part of the creative process.”

—Tutor, 826LA

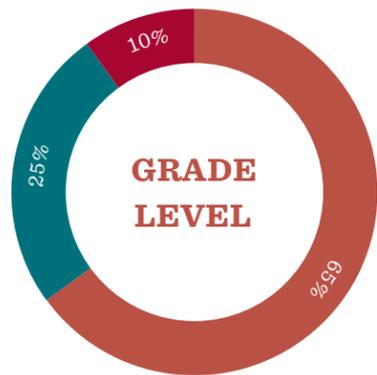
Key Findings & Supporting Data

The findings that emerge from the data—in which Arbor triangulated the voices of students, tutors, and parents—form several important narratives regarding the efficacy of the 826 AST program. (The number of respondents for each survey type was as follows: 347 volunteers, 340 parents, 590 pre-program students, and 459 post-program students.)

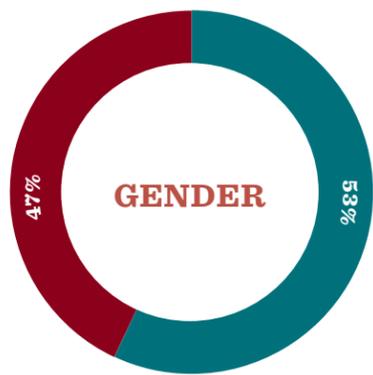
A) 826 provides a safe physical and social space in which a culture of creativity flourishes.

- More than half of the volunteers indicated that the 826 program offers them a welcoming space that affirms the value of creativity (56%), and half indicated that they have the autonomy to use creativity in their work with students (50%). Both of these indicators reflect the interconnectedness between a safe place and a culture of creativity, which define 826's program environment.
- [A] student from 826CHI says that volunteers “treat you very nice and with respect, and they are patient and understanding.”
- A 13-year-old student from 826michigan comments that, “826 is really fun because I get to come and do writing, and I’m not judged by my ideas.”
- Parents overwhelmingly confirm that, in their opinion, 826 provides a safe space for their children. Nearly all parents rate the item, “I feel comfortable when I know my child is at 826,” as “very true.”

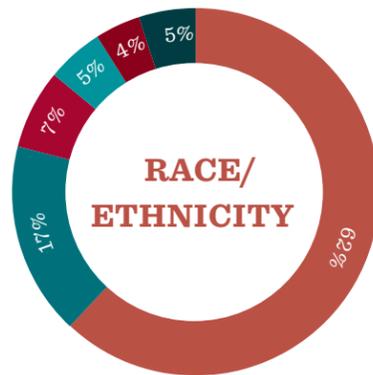
After-School Tutoring Student Demographics



Elementary school students
grades K-5 (65%)
Middle school students
grades 6-8 (25%)
High school students
grades 9-12 (10%)



Female students (53%)
Male students (47%)



Latino/Hispanic (62%)
Black/African/African-American (17%)
Asian (7%)
Caucasian (5%)
Bi-racial (4%)
Unreported (5%)

B) 826 contributes to longer-term social-emotional student outcomes.

- Volunteers were asked to identify the types of gains students made as a result of their experience at 826. Three of the items—**greater self-confidence, greater comfort in asking others for help, and greater persistence in completing work**—are what may be called “habits of mind.” In 826’s Theory of Change model, habits of mind are viewed as “dispositions” that provide the foundation for skill development.
- In addition, the ability to develop and sustain relationships with adult mentors is significant for all children, and particularly for students who—for a variety of reasons—lack a level of support and engagement in their home environments. This may include the fact that English isn’t spoken in the home; parents lack the background required to help their children

with homework; or possibly that families have challenging problems that result in lack of adequate support for their children.

- [T]here was a statistically significant increase between the matched pre-program and post-program means on students’ ratings of the item: “I feel comfortable asking others for help with my homework.”

[Arbor] posits that being able to ask for help signifies that a) students have developed a positive connection with an adult mentor; b) students feel safe asking for help; and c) students feel confident that asking for help is a positive thing, and not an admission of weakness.

- [T]he share of students who said it was “very true” that “I feel confident about finishing my homework assignments” increased 14 percentage points between the pre-program and post-program measurements (59% to 73%).

- The share of students who said it was “very true” that “I stick with a school assignment, even when it’s hard” increased 7 percentage points (53% to 60%).

These increases support the conclusion that students’ engagement in the 826 AST program increases their confidence about finishing homework assignments, and in a related measure, helps them develop perseverance to do so, a critically important trait related to school—and even, life—success.

- The share of students who said it was “very true” that “writing is a good way to express my ideas and feelings” increased 11 percentage points (45% to 56%).

- 88% of parents indicated it was “very true” that having their child finish homework at 826 allows the child to spend more quality time with the family.

“[My children] are able to get help from the tutoring that I cannot do at home, and I cannot afford to pay a tutor. [They] love going to 826michigan. I thank God for 826michigan.”

—Parent of AST students, 826michigan



C) 826 impacts gains in student academic skills

- Nearly 50% of volunteers observed that students had improved their academic skills.
- The share of students who have pride in their school grades increased between the pre-program and post-program surveys.

[The percentage of students who] indicated that it was “very” or “somewhat true” that “I am proud of the grades I get in school” increased 6 percentage points—to 89%—on the post-program survey.

[Arbor Consulting Partners] believe it is a warranted assumption that when students

report that they have increased pride in their grades, it is because those grades have increased, and not because their grades have stayed the same but that they are now proud of them.

- Moreover, 85% of students indicate that “826 has helped me to become a better writer.”

Elements of the 826 AST program that volunteers feel contribute to student progress

- A safe physical and social environment**
- Knowledgeable and dedicated staff and volunteers**
- Students, families, 826 staff, and volunteers work together to create a support system**
- One-on-one attention**



% Responded “Very True”

Parents confirm their children are more likely to complete homework when at 826 versus when NOT at 826

My child usually completes all of his/her homework when at 826

73%

My child usually completes all of his/her homework when NOT at 826

43%

% Responded "Very True"

Volunteers' assessment of student gains while participating in the AST program

Improved relationships with adult mentors

56%

Greater self-confidence (e.g., more willing or able to express themselves)

55%

Greater comfort asking others for help

52%

Greater persistence in completing work

45%

Improved ability to set and meet goals

29%

Greater enjoyment of creative writing

33%

A sense of ownership and/or pride in their work

50%

Volunteers were asked to check all that apply

Conclusion: Key Strengths of the 826 After-School Tutoring program

- The 826 AST program is a model program in which a culture of creativity infuses both homework help and creative writing opportunities.
- Students in the 826 AST program become part of a community of learners and writers, supported by committed volunteers and staff who are devoted to helping them succeed.
- With the support of volunteers and staff—and within an environment permeated by a culture of creativity—students develop “habits of mind” that support the achievement of positive academic outcomes.

“We are truly thankful for the collective and creative environment that you provide that allows him to grow in a constructive and positive manner. Thank you 826LA and all your wonderful volunteers for the time and energy that you spend. Your efforts provide a social and academic network that allows (our son) the best opportunity to succeed and thrive in a world that is challenging to him.

P.S. Your tutoring program has helped maintain a level of sanity in our home. THANK YOU!”

—Parent, 826LA

At the time of this report, 826 chapters included: 826 Boston, 826CHI (Chicago), 826DC (District of Columbia), 826LA (Los Angeles), 826michigan (Ann Arbor/Detroit), 826NYC (New York City), 826 Seattle, 826 Valencia (San Francisco). As of November 2014, 826 Seattle is no longer a part of the 826 National network.

Evaluation and report conducted by Mindy Fried, M.S.W., Ph.D. and Madeleine Taylor, Ph.D. of Arbor Consulting Partners. Excerpts and highlights found in this document were extracted from the original report from the authors and compiled by Lauren Broder, Ph.D., Director of Research and Evaluation at 826 National.