Mayor de Blasio and his administration have greatly expanded afterschool options for NYC middle schoolers through the School’s Out New York City (SONYC) initiative. Through the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), NYC is supporting organizations across the city in providing new programs and expanding existing ones. American Institutes for Research (AIR), an independent evaluator, has been studying the SONYC expansion. In Year 1, AIR conducted a case study of 37 high-performing sites. Here we present key findings from this in-depth research. The youth, families, and program staff who participated in the case study reported that the SONYC expansion was a success.

**WHAT DO FAMILIES SAY ABOUT SONYC?**

- **98%** report that their child likes coming to the program
- **97%** would recommend the program to other families
- **92%** feel welcome at the program

“My child feels excited about the afterschool program because each day she learns something new.”

**WHAT DO YOUTH SAY ABOUT SONYC?**

- **91%** report that they have fun during activities
- **89%** would recommend the program to a friend

“I learned how to become a leader and not a follower. I learned a lot about leadership and how to communicate with my peers.”
SONYC programs enrolled over 58,000 participants. City-wide, over 111,000 middle school students attended after-school programs, with the balance served by other programs at DYCD and the Department of Education. DYCD hired independent research firm American Institutes for Research to conduct the ongoing implementation evaluation.

**DRAMATIC RISE IN SONYC ENROLLMENT**

- **SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**
  - 18,702 youth
  - enrolled in 143 programs

- **SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**
  - 58,745 youth
  - enrolled in 459 programs

**WHAT WERE THEY DOING?**

- **Enrichment (includes STEM, ELA, and the arts)**
  - 33%

- **Physical Activity and Healthy Living**
  - 27%

- **Leadership Development**
  - 22%

- **Academic Support (includes homework help and tutoring)**
  - 18%

**SONYC EVALUATION BY THE NUMBERS**

- 37 site visits across New York City
- 2,300 hours of program observations
- 2,100 youth surveys
- 900 family surveys
- 7,600 hours of interviews with program directors, staff, principals, and teachers
- Analysis of SONYC data

Youth described how the SONYC program makes them feel. The bigger the word, the more often it was used.

 Cornelis van der Laan said, “We are teaching them a lot of leadership and life skills that they take with them outside... and we see their progress throughout the year. We see them... taking these skills and putting them to use in the school day.”

- Program Director

It really brings the school community together... Most of the [afterschool] teachers are teachers that teach here during the regular school day, [which keeps] kids connected to their teachers.

- School Principal

That’s a little something that we like about the program: it’s not in isolation. It is school and afterschool together as one.

- Program Activity Leader

We are teaching them a lot of leadership and life skills that they take with them outside... and we see their progress throughout the year. We see them... taking these skills and putting them to use in the school day.

- Program Director

Youth described how the SONYC program makes them feel. The bigger the word, the more often it was used.
Mayor de Blasio and his administration have greatly expanded afterschool options for NYC middle schoolers through the School’s Out New York City (SONYC) initiative. Through the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), NYC is supporting organizations across the city in providing new programs and expanding existing ones. American Institutes for Research (AIR), an independent evaluator, has been studying the SONYC expansion. In Year 2, AIR surveyed school principals and program directors across the SONYC initiative and conducted youth focus groups in a sample of high-performing programs. Findings suggest that program and school leaders believe the SONYC program makes a strong contribution through the variety and quality of program activities, the quality of the program staff, and the relationships the staff have with youth.

WHAT DO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS SAY ABOUT SONYC?

“Because of the program, many kids who would not otherwise participate in afterschool have opportunities to do so.”

- 96% report that program staff treat all young people fairly
- 93% perceive the afterschool program as providing a warm and welcoming environment
- 87% feel supported by the afterschool program at their school

WHAT DO PROGRAM DIRECTORS SAY ABOUT SONYC?

“We empower students to take ownership in the design and development of their program.”

- 100% report that program staff respect and value youth
- 99% design program activities to purposefully facilitate learning and promote skill-building
- 98% report that they provide program opportunities for youth leadership with the goal of building youth leadership skills
SONYC programs enrolled over 71,000 participants. City-wide, over 116,000 middle school students attended after-school programs, with the balance served by other programs at DYCD and the Department of Education. DYCD hired independent research firm American Institutes for Research to conduct the ongoing implementation evaluation.

SONYC ENROLLMENT CONTINUES TO RISE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14</th>
<th>18,702 youth enrolled in 143 programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15</td>
<td>58,745 youth enrolled in 459 programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL YEAR 2015–16</td>
<td>66,598 youth enrolled in 511 programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SONYC EVALUATION BY THE NUMBERS

- **286** school principal surveys
- **379** program director surveys
- **12** hours of focus groups with 83 youth at a sample of high-performing programs
- Analysis of SONYC data

SONYC programs enrolled over 71,000 participants. City-wide, over 116,000 middle school students attended after-school programs, with the balance served by other programs at DYCD and the Department of Education. DYCD hired independent research firm American Institutes for Research to conduct the ongoing implementation evaluation.

IN THEIR WORDS: YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

- "I learned that sometimes I'm shy.... It's okay to be who you are.

[Program staff] speak to us with appropriate language and they talk to us like they would want to be spoken to. It's a two-way respect that goes on.

- "Fun [activities] keep you motivated, keep you going, [and] inspire you."

- "We learn how to be better people and to care about the world. We also learn how to be better leaders by talking about our opinions."
Toward the goal of universal access to afterschool programming for middle school students in New York City, the de Blasio Administration now funds over 500 Schools Out New York City (SONYC) programs serving more than 67,000 students annually. SONYC is administered by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). DYCD hired American Institutes for Research (AIR), an independent evaluator, to study the SONYC initiative to understand program implementation and outcomes. In Year 3 of the initiative and evaluation, AIR focused on youth leadership development and surveyed SONYC program staff and families across the initiative. AIR also surveyed youth about their leadership attitudes and skills in a representative sample of programs. Key findings from Year 3 suggest that programs have hired experienced staff, engaged families of youth participants, and are prioritizing youth leadership development as a program goal.

**SONYC Programs Prioritize Youth Leadership Development**

On a validated youth leadership survey, youth attending SONYC programs have positive perceptions of their leadership attitudes and skills:

- **Inner/Self Characteristics**—See themselves as motivated, self-aware, and persistent (99%)
- **Communication Skills**—See themselves as inspirational, confident, active listeners, effective communicators, and persuasive (94%)
- **Collaboration With Others**—See themselves as purposeful, conveners, and perspective-takers (94%)

Staff and families agree that it is important for young people to develop leadership skills. Staff and families agree that the program provides opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills.

Youth leadership development is a core component of the SONYC initiative and a central construct in the SONYC evaluation. DYCD has developed a framework for youth leadership development and has aligned resource materials for SONYC program staff. In future years of the evaluation, AIR and DYCD will study how implementation of quality leadership practices influences youth perceptions of their leadership attitudes and skills. DYCD is also developing a version of the survey for use in high school programs.
SONYC programs enrolled over 67,000 participants. Citywide, more than 116,000 middle school students attended afterschool programs, including students served by other DYCD-funded programs and the Department of Education. DYCD hired independent research firm AIR to conduct the ongoing evaluation.

SONYC PROGRAMS HAVE EXPERIENCED STAFF

- 80% have 2+ years of experience in the field.
- 86% attend professional development.

SONYC PROGRAMS ENGAGE FAMILIES

- Staff and families agree that the program is welcoming to family members.

- Families learn more about what youth do in the program.

- Families and their children spend more time together.

The program provides families opportunities to connect with their children.

SONYC EVALUATION BY THE NUMBERS

- 5,680 family surveys from 310 programs
- 3,290 program staff surveys from 405 programs
- 5,840 youth leadership development surveys from a representative sample of 152 programs
- Analysis of SONYC program administrative data

SONYC PROGRAMS HAVE EXPERIENCED STAFF

Since the 2014 expansion, DYCD has increased supports for capacity building by nearly doubling the budget for training and professional development for SONYC program providers and creating the Program Quality and Innovation unit to support quality programming.

WHAT WERE THEY DOING?

How participants spent their time:

- Enrichment (includes STEM, ELA, and the arts) 37%
- Leadership Development 23%
- Physical Activity and Healthy Living 22%
- Academic Support (includes homework help and tutoring) 18%

2016–17 SONYC ENROLLMENT

67,844 youth were enrolled in 504 programs.
SONYC has more than tripled enrollment since the initiative’s expansion in 2014.

DYCD has developed a framework for family engagement and has established it as a universal quality indicator for all agency programs.