

Calgary
AfterSchool

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Calgary AfterSchool Evaluation Findings 2011



THE CITY OF
CALGARY

Calgary AfterSchool

Evaluation Findings for 2011

Executive Summary

Calgary AfterSchool (CAS) is an innovative initiative of The City of Calgary with support from the United Way of Calgary through UpStart to engage children and youth aged six to 16 in constructive activities during the after-school hours. Research shows that involvement in high-quality, supervised programming from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. can help keep kids out of trouble and nurture their healthy physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. To date, Calgary is the only city in Canada to have developed a comprehensive, city-wide network of after-school programming for children and youth. Because CAS is such a ground-breaking initiative, it is being evaluated over a four-year period between September 2009 and June 2013 by an independent research firm.

The primary objective of CAS is to increase the participation of Calgary's kids in after-school programming through the provision of accessible and quality after school programs.

The design that was created to achieve the overriding objective includes:

- increasing public awareness of the value of participation in after-school programming;
- increasing the number of after-school program spaces;
- ensuring that programs are high quality and physically, financially, and culturally accessible; and
- building collaboration among program partners.

CAS also wants to promote kids' social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. It is not expected that each CAS program will, or possibly could, influence kids' development in all of these areas; rather, it is hoped that programs will help those participants who need extra support to strengthen at least one component of one area of development. For example, a program might be designed to help kids who are socially isolated or new to Canada to make friends or become more self-confident.

How has CAS been implemented?

CAS strives for continuous improvement and will continue to enhance programming, but it is clear that the CAS model has now been successfully implemented in Calgary:

- In 2011, at least 6,000 children and youth registered 8,219 times in one or more of the 253 CAS programs that were offered over the course of the year.
- A wide variety of programs are offered to appeal to many kids. Opportunities range from access to swimming pools and other programs and activities at six City of Calgary Recreation Centres to dance, cooking, and music instruction to drop-in mixed recreation programs to leadership and other personal skills development programs.
- Participant demographic data confirm that CAS programs address the many barriers identified by research—language, cultural, financial, physical location—that often prevent low-income and newcomer youth from participating in after-school programming and other extra-curricular activities. In 2011, 7% of participants were Aboriginal, and 59% were members of ethnocultural minority groups, roughly double the percentages of these groups of kids in Calgary. One-third of CAS participants were born in countries other than Canada and, of these kids, one-third had been for two years or less.
- Almost all CAS participants fall within the target age group. It is cautioned, however, that the number of elementary school-aged participants has been increasing each year while the number of kids in junior high school has been declining.
- CAS programs are delivered by suitably-qualified individuals in safe, secure and, for the most part, physically accessible locations and venues.

- Collaborations and partnerships among CAS programs and between CAS programs and other service providers contribute to the overall quality of programs, reduce overhead costs, and maximize funding by leveraging additional resources that would not otherwise be available.

How is CAS helping kids in Calgary?

In most CAS programs, participants complete questionnaires that capture frequency of participation in after-school and other programming, along with information about social and emotional development and engagement in school. These questionnaires are completed at the beginning of the program and again when the program draws to a close. Data collection and data entry have been challenging for some programs, especially those which operate on a drop-in basis, so we won't have enough data to fully assess the benefits of CAS programs for kids until summer 2013.

Despite this limitation, the data collected thus far reveal some promising results.

CAS programs:

- attract children and youth who did not previously participate in after-school programming and some kids come back year after year;
- increase kids' frequency of participation in after-school programming; and
- increase the number of hours spent by junior and senior high school kids in after-school programming. (Hours spent by younger children in after-school programming are not being tracked because their time estimates are not reliable.)

The data collected so far show that CAS programs support positive child and youth development, and suggest that newcomer kids may be benefiting the most in some ways and the least in others:

- Children in elementary school overall and foreign-born junior and senior high school kids significantly increased their friendships and social skills. The benefits for the newcomer kids were notable, with participants reporting increases on many indicators of friendships including but not limited to number of friends, getting along well with others, being liked by other kids, and having other kids listen to their thoughts and opinions.
- Engagement in community significantly increased in some ways for kids in junior and senior high school: Frequency of volunteering at school increased, especially for kids born in Canada. In addition—although, due to the small number of respondents, the results should be interpreted with caution—foreign born kids felt a stronger sense of belonging in Canada and in their neighbourhoods, and they felt safer in their neighbourhoods.
- Leadership opportunities, such as serving as team leader, captain, etc., significantly increased for kids in elementary school. Children in elementary school were also more likely to report at the end of the program that they could talk to or confide in a mentor, coach, or program leader. However, it appears that these improvements were true only for girls and children born in Canada.

As more data are collected over the next year and a half, it will be possible to determine whether CAS is also helping children and youth in additional areas, such as increasing their engagement in school or their self-esteem and self-confidence and, if so, whether the benefits are greater for some kids than others.



2011 Calgary AfterSchool Evaluation Highlights

Calgary AfterSchool (CAS) provides a variety of quality, supervised, and fun activities for children and youth aged 6 to 16 between 3:00pm and 6:00pm on weekdays over the course of the school year. To date, Calgary is the only city in Canada to have developed a comprehensive, city-wide network of after-school programming for children and youth.

Evaluation Highlights

- The percentage of children in grades 4-6 who felt that they could talk to a mentor, coach, or program leader increased from 35% to 43% over the fall program months.
- The percentage of children in grades 4-6 who felt that they experienced special leadership responsibilities increased from 37% to 43% over the fall program months.
- CAS programs succeed in improving friendships for both children and youth participants.
- The percentage of CAS participants who volunteered a few times a week increased from 20% to 28% over the fall program months.
- 7% of CAS participants identified themselves as Aboriginal. This is almost twice as much of the City of Calgary's Aboriginal population of 3.6%.

2,230

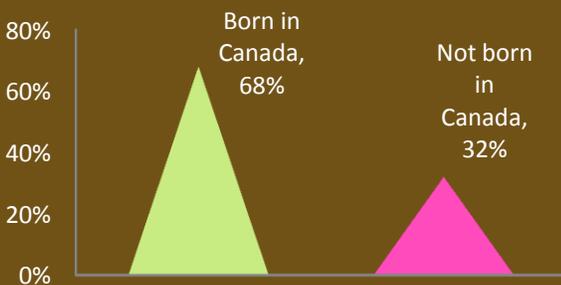
individual children and youth were registered in more than one CAS program over the course of the year.

From September to December, an estimated

8,219

individual children and youth participated in one or more Calgary AfterSchool programs.

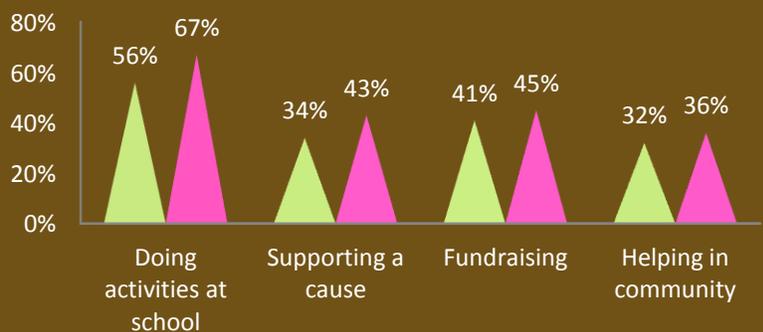
CAS Participants Born In Canada



Engagement in Community, Volunteering

(Youth grades 7-12)

■ Pre test results ■ Post test results



Through numerous partnerships, CAS leverages funds to better serve Calgary's children and youth during the after schools hours. The CAS framework funds 19 not-for-profit agencies, six Recreation sites and four Neighbourhood Service Area Offices.

253 programs were offered in 2011.