

Promoting Academics and Character Education Program (PACE)

FINDINGS FOR 11-12/12-13 PARTICIPANTS

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Introduction

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver contracted with OMNI Institute to analyze and report on data gathered for the Promoting Academics and Character Education (PACE) Program across two school years of the program: 2011-12, and 2012-13. The PACE Program aims to provide youth who attend Denver Public Schools and exhibit significant behavioral problems with an alternative placement to out of school suspension while offering education and services that reduce youths' risk for future delinquency. Past annual reports have repeatedly documented significant decreases in rates of behavioral incidents for youth following their participation in the PACE program. Thus, the main objective of this cumulative analysis was to utilize an increased sample size to examine program outcomes across multiple subgroups of participants. Specifically, can we document effectiveness of PACE across gender, race/ethnicity, and age; and does PACE appear equally effective for youth with different risk and need profiles, as indicated by ABC stoplight ratings and whether youth have an Individualized Education Plan? The key questions to be addressed through the analysis of data were:

- What are the demographic characteristics of youth served by the PACE program; and what is their ABC stoplight rating?
- Do the average number and severity of behavioral referrals both pre and post-PACE vary by demographic and risk variables? Are significant decreases from pre- to post-PACE observed for all groups? Specifically,
 - What are the findings by gender, race/ethnicity, and grade?
 - What are the findings for students with versus without an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and students with different ABC stoplight ratings?
 - What are the findings for students with systems involvement, such as juvenile justice or human services?

Results

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 369 students were served by the PACE program across the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, 32 of whom did not complete the program primarily due to behavioral issues (e.g., non-compliance with the program, habitual truancy). All demographic descriptions of the PACE program participants are based on the students who completed the program and for whom behavioral data were available (n=271). Sample sizes vary for analyses of behavioral incidents prior to and following PACE, due to availability and validity of data across fields.

As shown below in Table 1, almost three-quarters of the PACE participants were male, and the majority (83%) identified as Hispanic/Latino (47.2%) or African-American (35.8%). Approximately 40% of all PACE participants across the two years of the program were in 8th grade.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PACE STUDENTS

Demographics	2011-12		2012-13		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender						
Male	97	69.3%	95	72.5%	192	70.8%
Female	43	30.7%	36	27.5%	79	29.2%
Race/Ethnicity						
Hispanic/Latino	67	47.9%	61	46.6%	128	47.2%
African American	53	37.9%	44	33.6%	97	35.8%
White	8	5.7%	11	8.4%	19	7.0%
Native American	1	0.7%	2	1.5%	3	1.1%
Pacific Islander	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
Other	10	7.1%	11	8.4%	21	7.7%
Multi-Race	0	0.0%	1	0.8%	1	0.4%
Missing	0	0.0%	1	0.8%	1	0.4%
Grade						
Grade 5	1	0.7%	1	0.8%	2	0.7%
Grade 6	40	28.6%	31	23.7%	71	26.2%
Grade 7	35	25.0%	55	42.0%	90	33.2%
Grade 8	64	45.7%	44	33.6%	108	39.9%

Table 2 below describes the status of PACE participants with regard to background risk factors of systems involvement and academic needs. Information on systems involvement was only available for SY 2012-13, but indicate that a sizable proportion of youth served by PACE have some involvement in the juvenile justice system (35.9%) and/or have mental health needs (26.0%). With regard to academic needs, about 1 in 5 PACE participants had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and a majority were failing 3 to 4 academic thresholds used to determine ABC stoplight ratings. These thresholds include grades in math and language arts, student attendance, and suspensions. Interestingly, about half (51.3%) of the 2012-13 cohort was failing all thresholds, compared to 20% of the 2011-12 cohort.

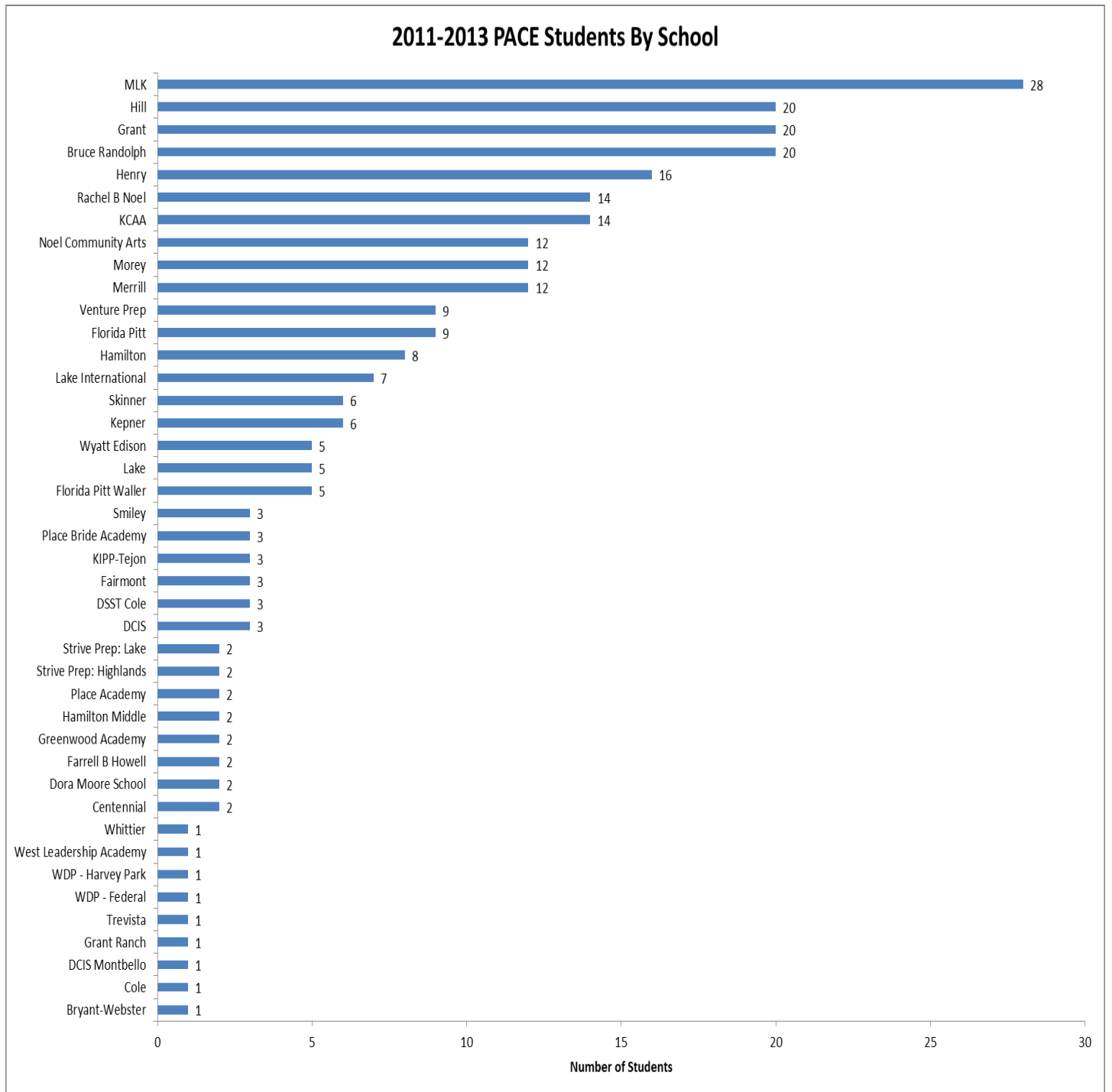
TABLE 2: RISK FACTORS OF PACE STUDENTS

Risk Factor	2011-12		2012-13		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
IEP						
No IEP	109	79.0%	108	82.4%	217	80.7%
IEP	29	21.0%	23	17.6%	52	19.3%
DHS Involvement						
No Involvement	n.a.	n.a.	115	87.8%	n.a.	n.a.
Involvement	n.a.	n.a.	16	12.2%	n.a.	n.a.
JJ Involvement						
No Involvement	n.a.	n.a.	84	64.1%	n.a.	n.a.
Involvement	n.a.	n.a.	47	35.9%	n.a.	n.a.
MH Involvement						
No Involvement	n.a.	n.a.	97	74.0%	n.a.	n.a.
Involvement	n.a.	n.a.	34	26.0%	n.a.	n.a.
ABC Risk Score						
Passed All Thresholds	4	2.9%	0	0.0%	4	1.6%
Failed 1 Thresholds	14	10.1%	10	8.4%	24	9.3%
Failed 2 Thresholds	42	30.2%	21	17.6%	63	24.4%
Failed 3 Thresholds	51	36.7%	27	22.7%	78	30.2%
Failed All Thresholds	28	20.1%	61	51.3%	89	34.5%

*Note: fewer data points were available for the 2011-12 PACE cohort; 'n.a.' is used to indicate where data were 'not available.'

Figure 1 below displays the school affiliations of PACE participants across 2011-12 and 2012-13.

FIGURE 1: SCHOOL AFFILIATION OF PACE STUDENTS



REFERRALS FOR BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

Across the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, a total of 1,215 referrals for behavioral issues were documented, 68 of which were missing event dates and therefore could not be determined as having occurred before/during or after PACE. Additionally, a sizable proportion (n=94) of students who were documented as having completed the PACE program had no recorded behavioral incidents prior to PACE. Since a behavioral incident is what triggers a referral to the PACE program, the absence of a recorded incident is likely the result of interrupted administrative processes at specific school sites. Analytic comparisons of the average number of behavioral referrals prior to versus following participation in PACE could only be conducted for youth who had at least one documented behavioral referral that preceded the PACE program start date.

Looking at the 243 students for whom data could be analyzed, referrals for behavioral issues decreased substantially from an average of 3.28 per student prior to PACE to 1.40 following PACE, and this difference was highly statistically significant at $p < .001$. Further, only 119 (49.0%) of this group had documentation of any behavioral incident occurring post-PACE. In other words, within the timeframe and data available, it appears that fully half of students participating in PACE had no further behavioral incidents for the remainder of the school year following their completion of the program.

The cumulative amount of data available across two years of the program also allowed for examination of changes in behavioral referrals broken out by demographics and risk factors. See Table 3 below, which displays the mean (average) numbers of behavioral referrals documented pre- versus post-PACE by each subgroup of the sample. Following Table 3, Figures 2 through 5 highlight pre-post changes by key dimensions such as race/ethnicity and ABC stoplight rating. Statistically significant decreases in behavioral referrals were observed for all subsets of youth, with exception of those who had documented involvement with Department of Human Services (DHS). Nonetheless, DHS-involved youth still showed a substantial decrease in number of incidents and given only 16 youth were classified as DHS-involved, the non-significant change is likely due to insufficient sample size.

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF BEHAVIORAL REFERRALS FOR PACE STUDENTS

Demographic and Risk Categories	Average Number of Behavioral Referrals		
	Pre-PACE	Post-PACE	Statistically Significant Difference?
Gender			
Male	3.28	1.42	yes
Female	3.28	1.34	yes
Race/Ethnicity			
Hispanic/Latino	3.50	1.45	yes
African American	3.08	1.53	yes
White	3.06	0.94	yes
Grade			
Grade 6	3.05	1.30	yes
Grade 7	3.85	1.30	yes
Grade 8	2.99	1.55	yes
IEP			
No IEP	3.24	1.25	yes
IEP	3.28	1.41	yes
ABC Risk Score			
Failed 1 Thresholds	2.26	0.58	yes
Failed 2 Thresholds	2.83	0.81	yes
Failed 3 Thresholds	3.09	1.45	yes
Failed All Thresholds	4.11	1.99	yes
DHS Involvement			
No Involvement	3.44	1.67	yes
Involvement	3.29	2.00	NO
JJ Involvement			
No Involvement	3.08	1.60	yes
Involvement	4.05	1.93	yes
MH Involvement			
No Involvement	3.36	1.66	yes
Involvement	3.61	1.89	yes
Overall			
Overall	3.28	1.40	yes

FIGURE 2: PRE/POST BEHAVIORAL REFERRALS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

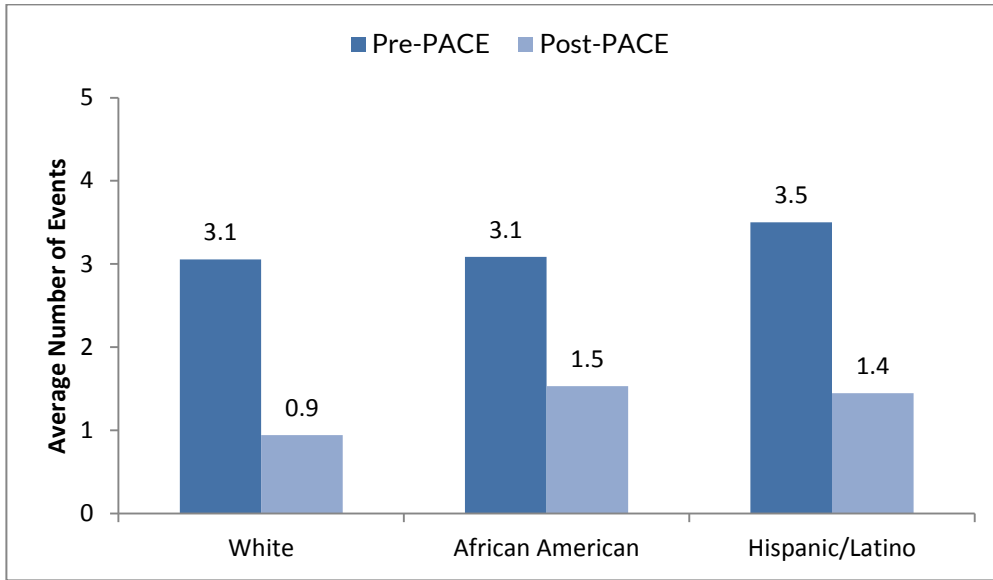


FIGURE 3: PRE/POST BEHAVIORAL REFERRALS BY GRADE

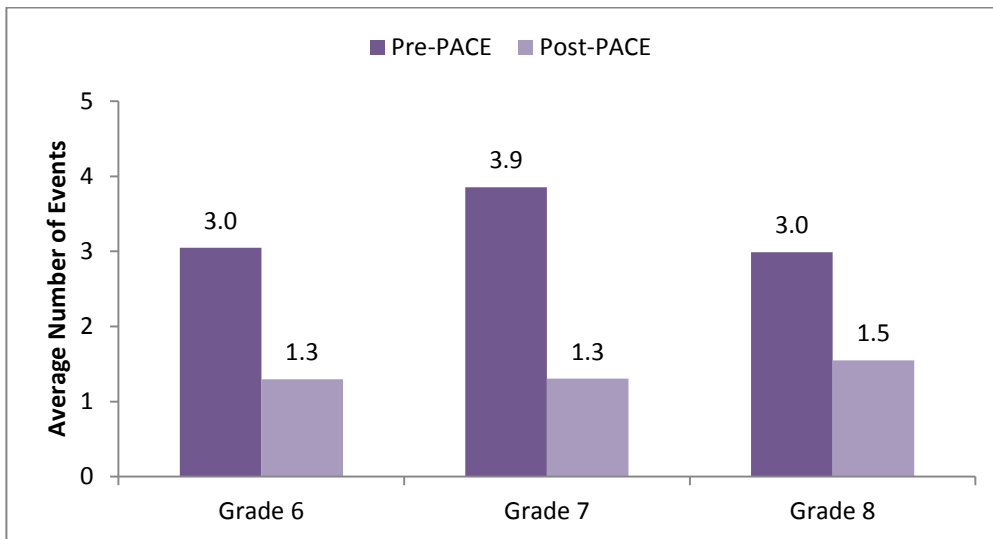


FIGURE 4: PRE/POST BEHAVIORAL REFERRALS BY ABC STOPLIGHT RATING

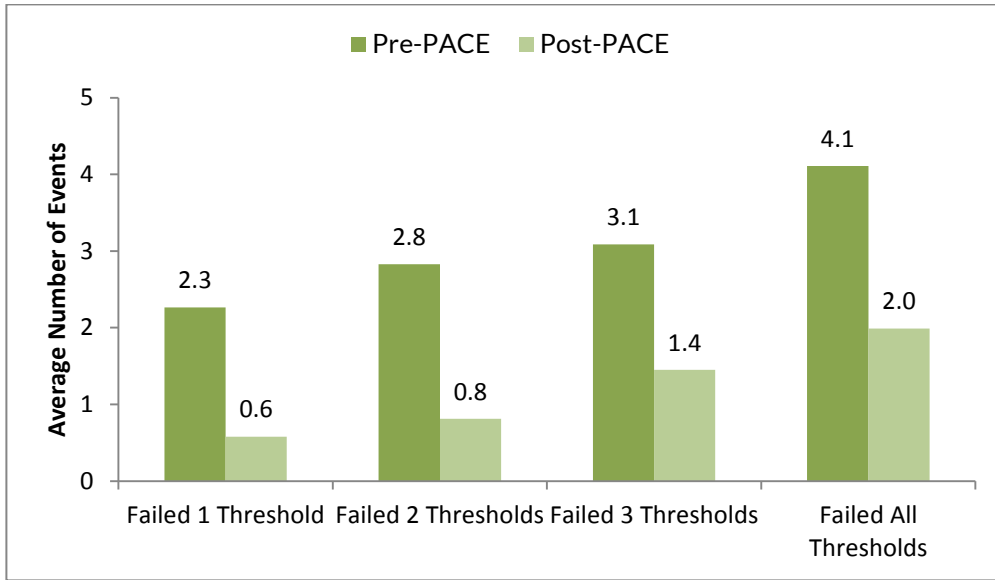
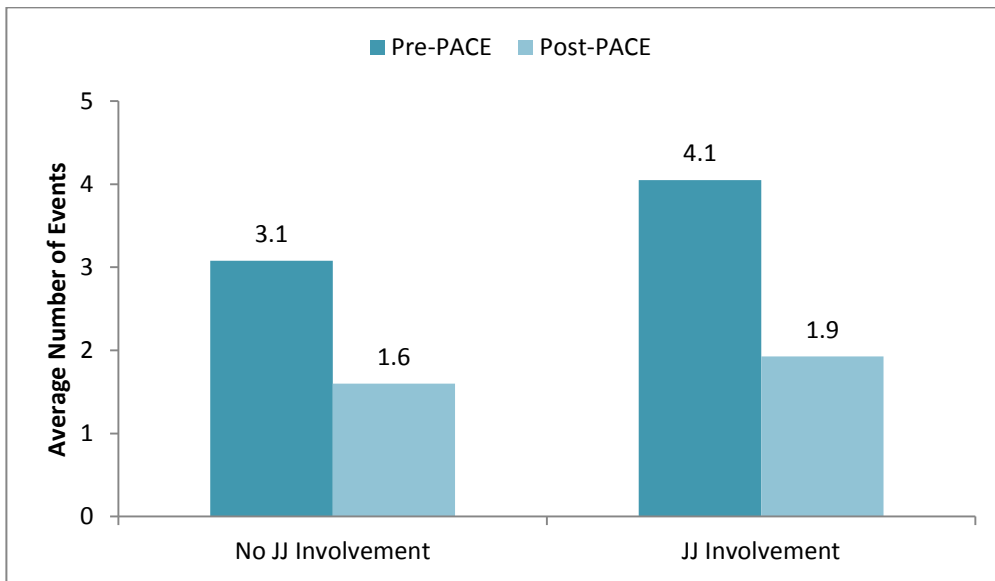


FIGURE 5: PRE/POST BEHAVIORAL REFERRALS BY JUVENILE JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT



SEVERITY OF BEHAVIORAL INCIDENTS

Analyses were conducted to examine average severity across incidents occurring before versus post-PACE, only including data from incidents that actually occurred. Thus, the sample of PACE students for this analysis includes only those youth who had behavioral incidents documented both prior to and following PACE. Specific disciplinary or criminal events are associated with each severity rating. The average severity rating of behavioral incidents across the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years was 1.32 prior/during PACE, and 1.34 after PACE. In the context of the 1-5 severity scale, the average severity of incidents prior to PACE is low, which leaves little room for significant movement downwards. Therefore, further significant decreases in behavior severity following PACE programming would not be expected. No significant differences in severity of behavioral incidents were observed overall or by demographic or risk dimensions.

Conclusion

Analysis of multi-year data documents positive program outcomes for PACE across the range of youth served, and also provides additional context on frequency of behavioral issues across different demographic and risk groups. For example, while all youth showed substantial improvements, youth who had juvenile justice involvement and/or were failing all thresholds of the ABC stoplight rating, had more documented incidents of behavioral referrals prior to PACE (around 4, on average) and thus may represent populations in greatest need of PACE programming.

A next step in helping to examine and document effectiveness of PACE programming is to obtain data on a comparison group of students who were eligible for PACE but were not referred or accepted into the program. These students should be matched to PACE participants on demographics, academic risk variables, and school affiliation, and have documentation of behavioral issues similar to students served by PACE. Of particular interest to PACE is extent to which its programming may facilitate students staying 'on track' and making the difficult transition from middle to high school.