

Dallas City of Learning (DCOL) Powered by Big Thought

Preliminary Data Inventory Report: Program Partners, Youth & Family Participants, & Partner Support from Big Thought

November 2019



Executive Summary

The Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) at Southern Methodist University (SMU) is collaborating with Big Thought to conduct an ongoing formative, process, and outcomes evaluation of 3 key components of Dallas City of Learning (DCOL): (1) Big Thought Support Services for DCOL Partners, (2) DCOL Programs, and (3) Participant Outcomes. The purpose of this descriptive report is to provide an overview of all data collected from programs in summer 2019 through the collective efforts of Big Thought, the DCOL website via Digital Youth Network, and SMU-CORE. This report is organized by data source and type. A separate report in late 2019 will describe the findings of causal analyses to estimate how student participation in multiple summers of DCOL programming is associated with student achievement in school, with an emphasis on understanding how summer programming has differentiated effects on groups of students according to grade level, race, and neighborhood.

Several data sources were compiled, cleaned, merged and coded to create comprehensive and matched data files ready for analysis. The areas of focus were Big Thought Supports to DCOL partners, participating organizations and programs, DCOL events, program staff and leadership at partner organizations, and the students and families engaging in DCOL programming. Data sources include scheduled program and enrollment & dosage data from the DCOL platform, partner surveys, staff surveys, parent and caregiver surveys, partner meetings and trainings rosters, documents from Big Thought, and site observations. The quality of the DCOL data continues to be very strong, with notable improvements over summer 2017 and 2018. While there were overall fewer individuals rostered into programs, the cleanliness and thoroughness of the data continues to improve, providing evidence that the DCOL “system” is strengthening and becoming more a more fluid system. This is also evident in the increase in the proportion of programs rostering individual students, and the increased proportion of learners engaging in multiple programs. While the overall number of documented participants is less, those that are engaging appear to be engaging at a deeper level. This deeper engagement with fewer individuals is also evident in the partner meeting and professional development data.

Big Thought continues to expand the strategic Neighborhood Resource Initiative (NRI), which provides a variety of targeted supports to programs. The data component of NRI seeks to provide a select group of program partners with uniquely available data. This group of partners received additional program capacity supports and agreed to participate in the “deep-dive” data collection efforts related to surveys and program site observations. A total of 4,149 valid surveys were collected from students, caregivers, program front-line staff and program lead staff: 2,248 from students, 1,383 from caregivers, 511 from program staff and 7 from program leadership. This represents a 97% increase from the 2,110 surveys collected in summer 2017, and a 19% increase from the 3,475 collected in summer 2018. Students and caregivers continue to provide positive feedback about programs. Overall, both agree that the programs they attend are valuable, high quality, engaging, and that they like enjoy being around their peers and the staff at the programs. Also notable, according to program staff, there is a more intentional focus on programs in the category of creativity and fine arts. The most common program focus was “academics”, followed by “social-emotional learning” and “fine arts”; this is a shift from prior summers when “cultural enrichment” was always a top program focus. The most commonly reported benefit of programs was “social skills”, followed by “character and leadership skills” and providing “creativity/personal expression”; also representing a shift from prior summers when “a fun and safe space” was reported as a primary benefit rather than creativity.

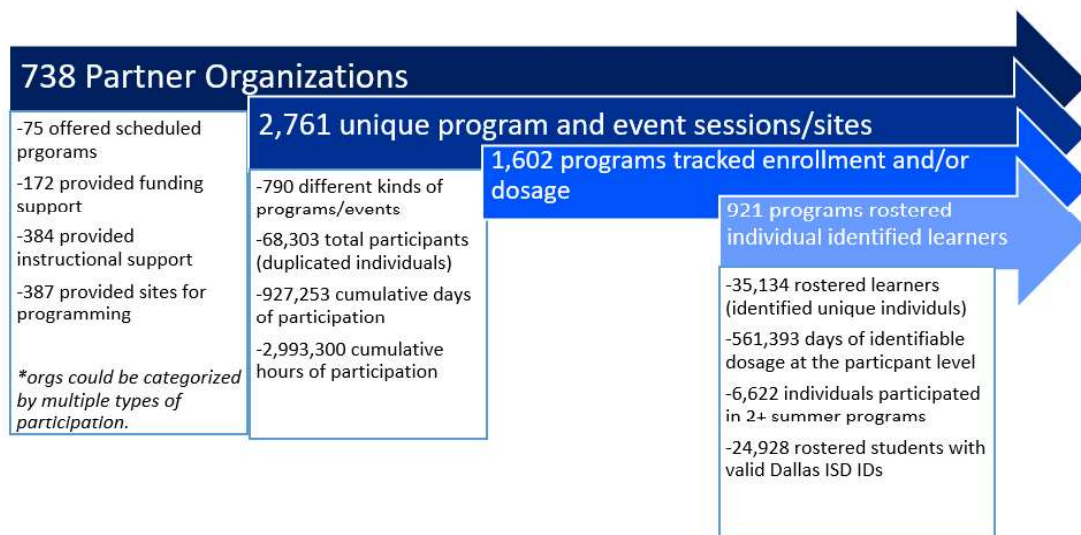
A Partner Spot Observation tool was utilized to conduct observations at summer programming sites; the focus of the tool is the “Six Dimension of Quality (6DQ)” framework that focuses on program features such as climate that supports learning and skills, techniques and knowledge of instructors. At least 1 6DQ observation was conducted at 78 different program sites (compared to 78 in summer 2018 and 28 in summer 2017), for a total of 315 total observations (compared to 311 in summer 2018 and 207 in summer 2017). Like summer 2017 and 2018, Dimension 1 (Climate that Supports Learning) received the highest average rating across sites. Overall, quality scores in summer 2019 average between basic and proficient for all dimensions. This overall snapshot of quality in DCOL is similar to prior summers. However, quality is overall not as strong as summer 2018. Dimensions 4 and 5 had the largest average decrease from last summer – 0.42 points each.

A total of 738 partner organizations participated in DCOL in at least one way, whether by facilitating an event, providing resources such as funding or space for programs, participating in a partner meeting, or most commonly, providing a program for youth and/or families. This represents an increase of 102 organizations compared to 2018. A total of 790 different programs and events were offered across the city during summer 2019: 26 events were held across the city, 93 online programs were offered, and 697 in-person programs were offered across a total of 2,761 unique sessions or sites (618 more than 2018). Most programs, about 95%, were free to participants (an improvement over 2018's rate of 90% free).

A total of 1,620 programs (59% of all listed programs) had some level of program enrollment, whether numbers were aggregate only or available at the individual participant level. This is lower than 2018's rate of 81% of programs with some enrollment. Among all 1,620 programs with valid individual or aggregate dosage, 927,253 cumulative days and 2,993,300 cumulative hours of programming were provided during summer 2019 by DCOL partner organizations (down from 1,217,089 days and 3,689,834 hours in 2018). Specifically, 918 of these different program sessions and/or sites, or 33% of all scheduled programming across DCOL, had individual participant-level enrollment and/or dosage records for summer 2019; this represents a slight increase from 2018's rate of 30% with individuals rostered. Across these 918 program sites with individually-rostered participants, a total of 35,134 unique individuals are properly matched to programs, and 6,622 of those participated in 2 or more programs (compared to about 38,000 in 2018 and 5,462 with 2 or more). Of the individually rostered participants, 24,928 have valid school ID numbers for later matching to student outcome metrics; similar to 2018's count of about 26,000.

Based on interviews with both Big Thought staff and program staff, there is an overwhelming agreement that there is a desire from both Big Thought and program leaders to more proactively and strategically engage beyond the summer months. Specifically, Big Thought staff are ready to actively learn how leveraging their strategic partnerships can provide sustainability for DCOL long-term, and program partners are eager to deepen their role in DCOL to more proactive and strategic advocates and partners.

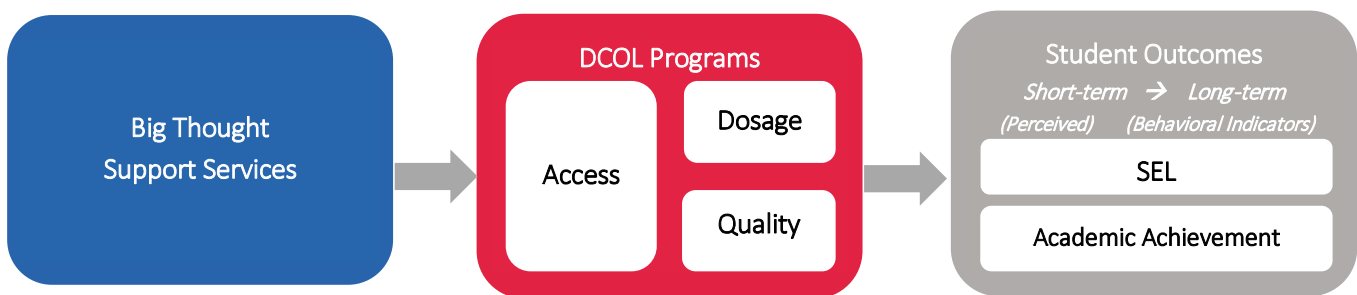
Finally, related to partner supports provided by Big Thought, 241 different organized meetings or training sessions were scheduled and facilitated by BT staff and/or DCOL partners (increased from 87 during summer 2017 and 205 during 2018); 161 of these were classified as training/professional development (increase from 130 in 2018). Representing 123 different partner organizations or programs, 1,819 staff participated in these sessions for a cumulative 5,211 hours. Compared to prior summers, the number of training offerings and depth of offerings has increased. Concurrently, the number of participating organizations and individuals participating has decreased while the total number of hours of participation has *increased*. This suggests that in-person support is getting deeper and richer with a more concentrated group of providers and partners. For comparison, in summer 2018 there were 148 participating orgs (45 *more* than 2019), 2,185 staff (355 *more* than 2019), but 4,592 hours of support (618 *less* than 2019).



Evaluation Framework and Data Sources

The evaluation framework is illustrated in Figure One. The ongoing evaluation seeks to answer questions about each of the three key components: Big Thought supports, DCOL programs, and student outcomes, seeking to understand each of the three components individually, and how they are associated with each other. The Year One (summer 2017) phase of the evaluation established baseline of evidence across the DCOL continuum, with an emphasis on understanding how the processes and outputs of the system support feasible and rich evaluation. This initial phase also focused on short-term student outcomes that included student perceptions of SEL skills, attitudes toward academic and career-related interests, and beginning of school year in-school achievement (as measured by course enrollment, course performance, and attendance in the first six weeks of school). Year 2 (summer 2018) built upon the initial evidence of the processes and outputs of the DCOL system. The current phase, following summer 2019, has two aims: (1) further examine trends in system processes and outputs, and (2) conduct causal analyses to estimate how student participation in multiple summers of DCOL programming is associated with student achievement. This report focuses on the first aim – to examine trends in system outputs.

Figure One. DCOL Evaluation Logic Model



Planned Data Sources

A matrix describing the relationship between the evaluation questions and each of the individual data sources is illustrated in Table One on the next page. The remainder of this report provides detailed descriptions of data collected during and post-summer 2018 programming.

Table One. DCOL Evaluation Questions by Data Source

	BT Support Services		DCOL Programs			Student Outcomes (Short- & Long-term)	Relationship between BT & Programs	Relationship between Programs & Students Outcomes	Relationship Variation Based on Context Factors
BT Activity Log (meetings and professional development)	X						X		X
Program Observations (6DQ)				X	X			X	X
Student Surveys			X	X	X	X		X	X
Caregiver Survey			X	X	X	X		X	X
Program Lead & Staff Surveys	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
BT Staff Interviews	X						X		X
Program Staff Interviews		X	X	X	X		X		X
Program Roster Data			X	X				X	X
SEL Assessments ¹						X			
Document Review ²	X		X				X		X
Extant DISD Data						X			X

Note: Sources in blue are not summarized in this current report and will be included in later reports.

¹ May include Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) or the Student Strengths Indicator System (SSIS) which was administered at select program sites over the course of summer 2018

² Documents for review may include evidence of transportation and financial resources allocated to DCOL partners.