Follow Up Report: Summary of Survey Responses Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic Effect on Families, Youth, and Programs

NOTE: This December 2020 follow up report serves as a supplement to CORE's Fall 2020 DCOL report that described all data collected from programs, program staff, and program participants in summer 2020.

Summary

CORE received surveys from a total of 83 unique programs (compared to 133 in summer 2019) – from students, caregivers, program frontline staff, and program leaders through a combination of scan-ready paper forms and online methods. The surveys were designed to collect student, caregiver and program staff perceptions of a variety of factors such as program engagement, program quality, program value, self-assessment of school motivation and social-emotional learning, benefits of DCOL and reflections of support received from Big Thought (program leads only). **This year, surveys also included new items specific to the COVID-19 pandemic to understand the effect of the pandemic conditions on programs and students. This supplemental report describes the survey results for the items specifically addressing program and participants perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic, including perceived impacts on themselves and the programs.**

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Sample

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Table Onedescribes the number of each type of survey collected at DCOL programs and the number of surveys that were confidently matched to a specific program session or valid-format school ID numbers (this will allow survey data to be linked with extant ISD data).

Table One. *Number of Identifiable Surveys Collected; summer 2020*

	Student Survey	Caregiver Survey	Front Line Staff Survey	Program Lead Survey
Total # Surveys Collected	444	292	162	52
Difference From 2019	*-1804*	*-1091*	*-349*	*+45*
Number Surveys Matched to Program (unique session)	425	284	157	51
Difference From 2019	*-1823*	*-1099*	*-354*	*-44*
Number Surveys with Valid Format Student IDs (7 digit)	203	109	n/a	n/a
Difference From 2019	*-913*	*-514*	*n/a*	*n/a*

Survey Results

Student Surveys

More items were added to the summer 2020 survey to address the COVID-19 pandemic as well; some of the traditional survey items related to SEL and motivation for school were adapted to be re-measured in light of the new context and completely new items were written to understand the impact of the virus on learning and students' mental or emotional state.

Student perspectives of their own SEL skills

Students were asked to rate themselves on a series of 11 positive social-emotional behaviors, perspectives, and skills from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Example items include "I feel good about my future", "I like to plan ahead and set goals", and "I am good at telling other people about my feelings." On average, students rated their social-emotional skills a 3.18 out of 4 (compared to 3.17 in summer 2019 and 3.19 in summer 2018).

Students were also asked four of the same questions again, with the precursor: "how have you been feeling since school was closed because of COVID-19?" These questions included "I am good at telling others about my feelings," "I like to plan ahead and set goals," "I care about the feelings of other people," "I am

interested in community and world events," and "I feel good about my future." On these items, **students rated their current social-emotional skills a 2.22 out of 4, a decrease of nearly one full point from their pre-COVID ratings**. This indicates that the average student does not agree with the positive statements about their feelings since school closed in March 2020.

Student perspectives on school
Students were asked to share their perspective on school and their ability to perform well at school, specifically during "typical" or pre-COVID times. Responding to a series of four questions, such as "I am doing a good job in school" and "If I try hard, I believe I can do my schoolwork well," students scored their positivity about school an average of 3.40 out of 4 (a one-tenth of a point increase compared to 3.29 in summer 2019 and 3.33 in summer 2018).

Three of the questions about student perspectives on school were also asked in light of the COVID pandemic with the instructions: "think about "at home" school you have probably been doing due to coronavirus." **When rating their positivity about at-home or online school, students rated themselves 3.28 out of 4, on average.** This is about one-tenth of a point lower than their perspective on "typical" school.
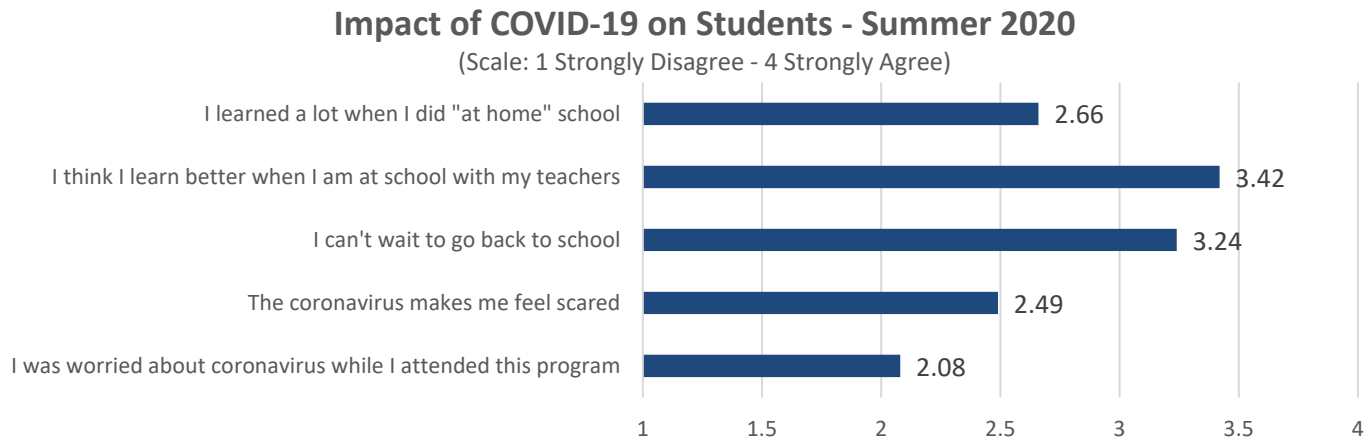
Student perspectives on virtual programming
Students were also asked a set of new questions designed to explore their perspectives on the virtual program experience. These items included questions such as "I liked being able to meet new friends online during this program," "I really liked online activities," and "if I could keep doing this program online, I would". **Generally, students were neutral about the virtual experience**, with an average rating of 2.89 out of 4 (slightly more positive than negative). Students felt more positively about their enjoyment of meeting new friends online (average 3.1) than about any other aspect of the virtual experience (all rated between 2 and 3, or between "disagree" and "agree," on average).

Additionally, students were asked about their access to the technology required for virtual learning. Seventy-four percent (74%) said they have a computer all to themselves that they can use at home. Ninety-three percent (93%) reported that they can get on the internet easily. A limitation to these findings is that all of the students that responded to these items were already engaged in virtual summer programs and therefore might not represent the full student population.

Influence of COVID-19 on students
In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, students were asked questions to assess its influence on learning, emotions, and socialization. **Overall, students prefer in-person school to virtual and were neutral about whether they learned a lot during "at home" school. Students do not report feeling particularly worried or scared about coronavirus.** Interestingly, fifty-two percent of students reported that "when I came to this program it's the first time I have been with other kids outside my own family in a long time."

Figure One. *Average student survey responses for the influence of COVID-19 (n=444)*

Impact of COVID-19 on Students - Summer 2020

(Scale: 1 Strongly Disagree - 4 Strongly Agree)

Statement	Value
I learned a lot when I did "at home" school	2.66
I think I learn better when I am at school with my teachers	3.42
I can't wait to go back to school	3.24
The coronavirus makes me feel scared	2.49
I was worried about coronavirus while I attended this program	2.08

Table Two. *Rate of student survey responses for the influence of COVID-19 (n=444)*

	Agree	Strongly Agree
I learned a lot when I did "at home" school	34%	19%
I think I learn better when I am at school with my teachers	22%	56%
I can't wait to go back to school	25%	48%
The coronavirus makes me feel scared	28%	16%
I was worried about coronavirus while I attended this program	18%	9%

Caregiver Surveys

Program quality according to caregivers

Caregivers were asked two additional questions to investigate the quality of the program in light of the pandemic. **Caregivers generally agreed with the statement "the way this program was delivered was just as good as it has been in previous summers,"** with an average 5.08 out of 6 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Students were also very engaged in the virtual program, as reported by their caregivers (5.59 out of 6).

Program value according to caregivers

Specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, caregivers did not feel strongly either way as to whether their child "lost learning opportunities and fell behind during school closures in spring 2020" (average of 3.63 out of 6). However, **parents slightly agreed that due to the program their child "is 'making up' some of the learning they lost due to being home from school during coronavirus** (4.37 out of 6).

Caregiver perspectives of their child's SEL skills

Caregivers were asked to rate their child on a series of 10 positive social-emotional behaviors, perspectives, and skills from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Example items include "My child feels good about their future", "My child likes to plan ahead and set goals", and "My child is good at telling other people about their ideas and feelings". On average, caregivers rated their child's social-emotional skills a 5.14 out of 6 (compared to 5.24 in summer 2019, 5.21 in summer 2018 and 5.06 in summer 2017).

Program access and adaptations due to COVID-19

New items were included in the summer 2020 survey to address the COVID-19 pandemic context. When asked about the availability of programs, caregivers did not feel strongly either way as to whether they wished the program had been offered for more days (3.86 out of 6) or for more hours per day (3.43 out of 6). **Caregivers slightly agreed overall that it was hard for them to find programs for their children this summer** (4.11 out of 6).

Caregivers reported that the adaptations made to programs for summer 2020 were satisfactory: caregivers agreed or strongly agreed that the program met their family's needs this summer for a socially distanced learning opportunity (5.69 out of 6) and that the way the program was delivered made them feel like their child was safe (5.79 out of 6).

Caregiver priorities and stressors due to COVID-19

Caregivers report moderate levels of personal stress during school and program closures this summer, with an average 3.06 on a scale of 1 (extremely low stress) to 5 (extremely high stress). As a follow up, caregivers were asked to rate how much of a stressor they consider a variety of concerns to be. **The two highest rated concerns were "racism and protests in our city" and "keeping children busy and engaged during the summer."** Results for all items are described in Table Three on the next page.

Four questions about caregiver priorities were added to the summer 2020 survey, each on a scale of 1 (not very important) to 3 (very important). **Caregivers** were consistent with their ratings; they **report that it is important to them that their "children can keep doing summer programs" (average of 2.64), "that schools focus on academics and regaining lost learning time," (average of 2.64), and "that schools focus on social, emotional, and mental health needs of families and students"** (average of 2.71). Caregivers were somewhat less concerned that "school opens again as soon as possible," rating it as important (2.04) but not very important.

Table Three. *Caregiver report of stressors due to COVID-19 (n=292)*

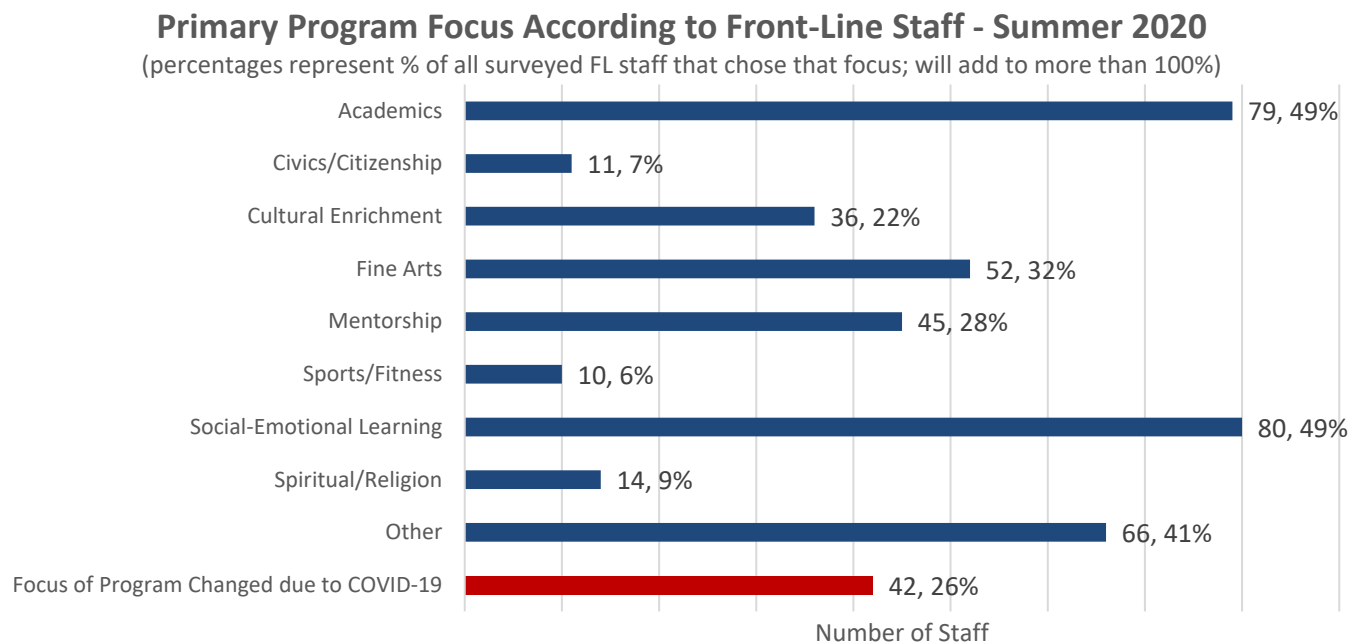|	Somewhat Stressful	Extremely Stressful
getting enough food and other basic supplies that our family needs	32%	3%
getting access to WiFi so that people in my household can work from home or complete school assignments	24%	5%
getting devices so that people in my household can work from home or complete school assignments	35%	7%
get things done such as cooking, cleaning, and keeping up with the household	41%	10%
dealing with my own stress and anxiety	36%	12%
a parent, child, or other person in my home is at high risk for COVID-19 based on CDC guidelines	23%	9%
helping my child(ren) deal with stress or worry that they might have about coronavirus	29%	5%
keeping children busy and engaged during the summer	44%	14%
having a college aged student come home to live with us again	2%	2%
at-home learning; figuring out websites, log-ins, etc	27%	9%
working from home	25%	8%
an adult in the home is looking for a job or has recently lost their job due to coronavirus	9%	9%
someone close to us has been sick with coronavirus	13%	5%
paying bills on time, including rent	24%	8%
racism and protests happening in our city	33%	32%

Frontline Program Staff Surveys

"Front-line staff" are the key staff members of the organization who have the most direct contact with students and provide programs and activities. This is different from leadership and director-level staff. CORE received a total of 162 surveys from front-line staff at program sites.
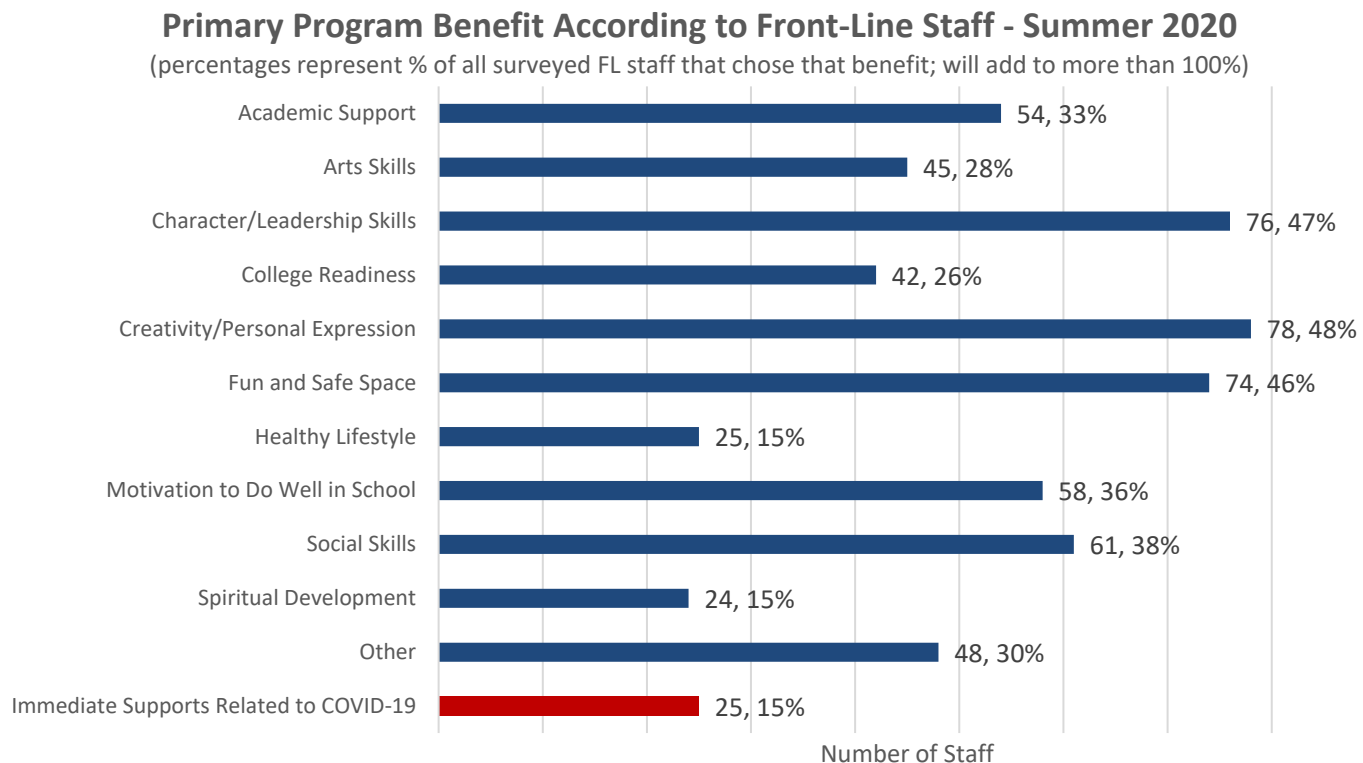
To determine how staff perceive the overall purpose and benefit of their programming, front-line staff were asked about the (1) primary focus of the program and (2) how they hope children will benefit from participation. Each staff respondent chose up to three options for each question. Figures Two and Three show how staff described their programs.

The most commonly reported benefit of programs was "creativity/personal expression," followed closely by "character/leadership development" and providing a "fun and safe space." (In 2019, the most commonly reported benefits were "social skills", followed by "character and leadership skills" and "creativity/personal expression.") While "academics" was the most common program focus, "academic support" was the sixth most commonly reported benefit of programs.

Figure Two. *Focus of Programs, According to Front-line Staff; summer 2020 (n=162)*

Primary Program Focus According to Front-Line Staff - Summer 2020
(percentages represent % of all surveyed FL staff that chose that focus; will add to more than 100%)

Focus	Number of Staff, Percentage
Academics	79, 49%
Civics/Citizenship	11, 7%
Cultural Enrichment	36, 22%
Fine Arts	52, 32%
Mentorship	45, 28%
Sports/Fitness	10, 6%
Social-Emotional Learning	80, 49%
Spiritual/Religion	14, 9%
Other	66, 41%
Focus of Program Changed due to COVID-19	42, 26%

Number of Staff

Figure Three. *Benefit of Programs, According to Front-line Staff; summer 2020 (n=162)*

Primary Program Benefit According to Front-Line Staff - Summer 2020
(percentages represent % of all surveyed FL staff that chose that benefit; will add to more than 100%)

Benefit	Number of Staff, Percentage
Academic Support	54, 33%
Arts Skills	45, 28%
Character/Leadership Skills	76, 47%
College Readiness	42, 26%
Creativity/Personal Expression	78, 48%
Fun and Safe Space	74, 46%
Healthy Lifestyle	25, 15%
Motivation to Do Well in School	58, 36%
Social Skills	61, 38%
Spiritual Development	24, 15%
Other	48, 30%
Immediate Supports Related to COVID-19	25, 15%

Number of Staff

Program Quality During COVID
Staff were asked if they believe the quality of their programming had declined due to the changes necessary for summer 2020. 32% of respondents agreed to some extent (somewhat or strongly) that quality declined; most did not agree that quality declined. On a scale of 1-6, with 6 being strongly agree, respondents were neutral on average (average of 2.67 out of 6), indicting they didn't generally agree or disagree strongly that quality declined. Responses were similar for both face-to-face and virtual programs.

Reported Program Changes due to COVID-19
Most program staff, 66%, reported that they made significant alterations to their programming for summer 2020. This was more true for programs that held in-person/face-to-face; 79% said that they made significant alterations. 55% said that they are likely to continue with the adaptations they have made well after the COVID-19 pandemic ends. 51% of programs held virtually said they would continue with the adaptations. 65% said that making these program changes was difficult, and 15% said it was extremely difficult. For programs held in-person, 17% said making the adaptations was extremely difficult compared to 13% of online programs reporting this difficulty.
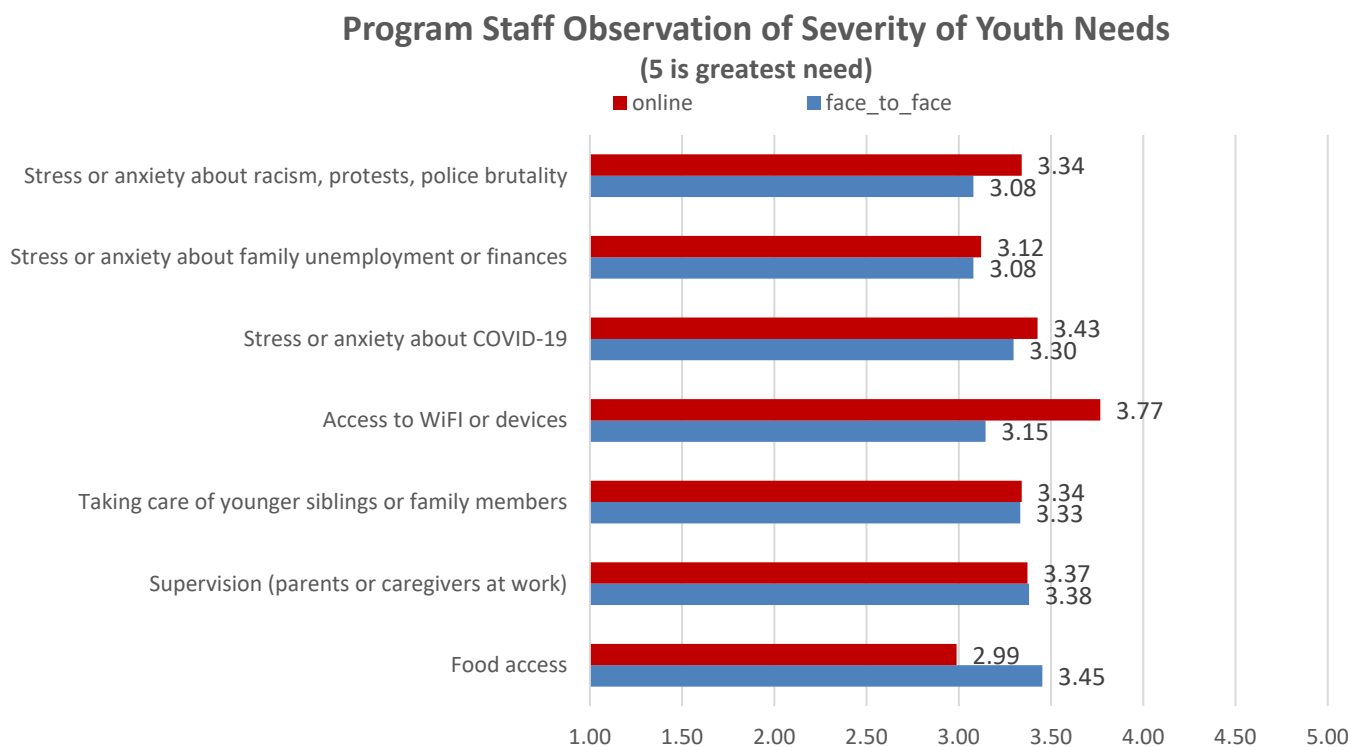
Program Access and Dosage During COVID-19
Half of all program staff agreed that youth and families had significant challenges accessing their program due to COVID-19. This rate was 54% for in-person programs and 44% for virtual programs. Sixty percent of program staff said they had to reduce the number of youth served by their program due to COVID-19. For in-person programs, 66% of staff said they reduced program capacity compared to 56% of staff at virtual programs. Less staff reported that they reduced the number of days that they provided programing – just 38% said that they reduced program days. This response was the same for both in-person and virtual.

Staff Perspectives of Youth Needs During COVID-19

Finally, staff were asked "What needs of youth have you observed or heard about this summer?". Staff responded on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating "never" and 5 indicating "a great deal". Across all staff, the greatest reported youth need was "access to WiFi or devices", followed by "stress or anxiety about COVID-19" and "supervision (parents or caregivers at work)". Staff of virtual programs perceived needs to be slightly greater compared to staff at face-to-face programs. At face-to-face programs, the most reported needs were "supervision" and "food access".

Figure Four. *Youth Needs During COVID-19 According to Front-line Staff; summer 2020 (n=162)*

Program Staff Observation of Severity of Youth Needs
(5 is greatest need)

■ online   ■ face_to_face

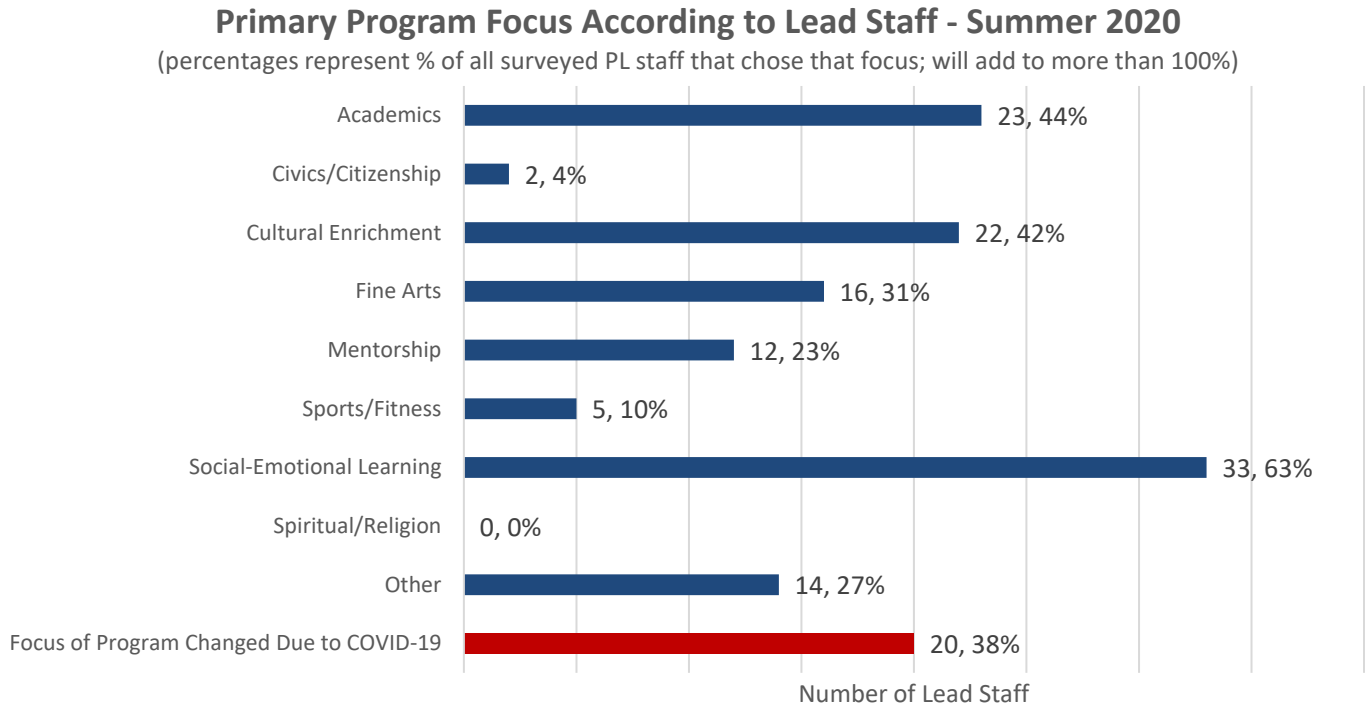| Need	online	face_to_face
Stress or anxiety about racism, protests, police brutality	3.34	3.08
Stress or anxiety about family unemployment or finances	3.12	3.08
Stress or anxiety about COVID-19	3.43	3.30
Access to WiFI or devices	3.77	3.15
Taking care of younger siblings or family members	3.34	3.33
Supervision (parents or caregivers at work)	3.37	3.38
Food access	2.99	3.45

Lead Program Staff Surveys

The lead program staff surveys were provided to the staff members that hold leadership positions in some of the programs that worked directly with Big Thought as part of the Neighborhood Resource Initiative. Survey items asked similar questions about the program as were asked of front-line staff. CORE received a total of 52 responses from lead staff at program sites. Most lead staff have worked for their organizations for 3-5 years.

To determine how leadership staff perceive the overall purpose and benefit of their programming, program lead staff were asked about the primary focus of the program and how they hope children will benefit from participation. Each leader respondent chose up to three options for each question. Figures Five & Six show how program leads described their programs. "Social-emotional learning" was identified as the most common focus, followed by "academics" and "cultural enrichment." (Summers 2018 and 2019 respondents chose "Cultural enrichment" and "fine arts" equally as the most common program focus, followed by "academics" and "social emotional learning"). Program leads identified "character/leadership skills" and "creativity/personal expression" equally as the most common benefits, followed by "a fun and safe space"
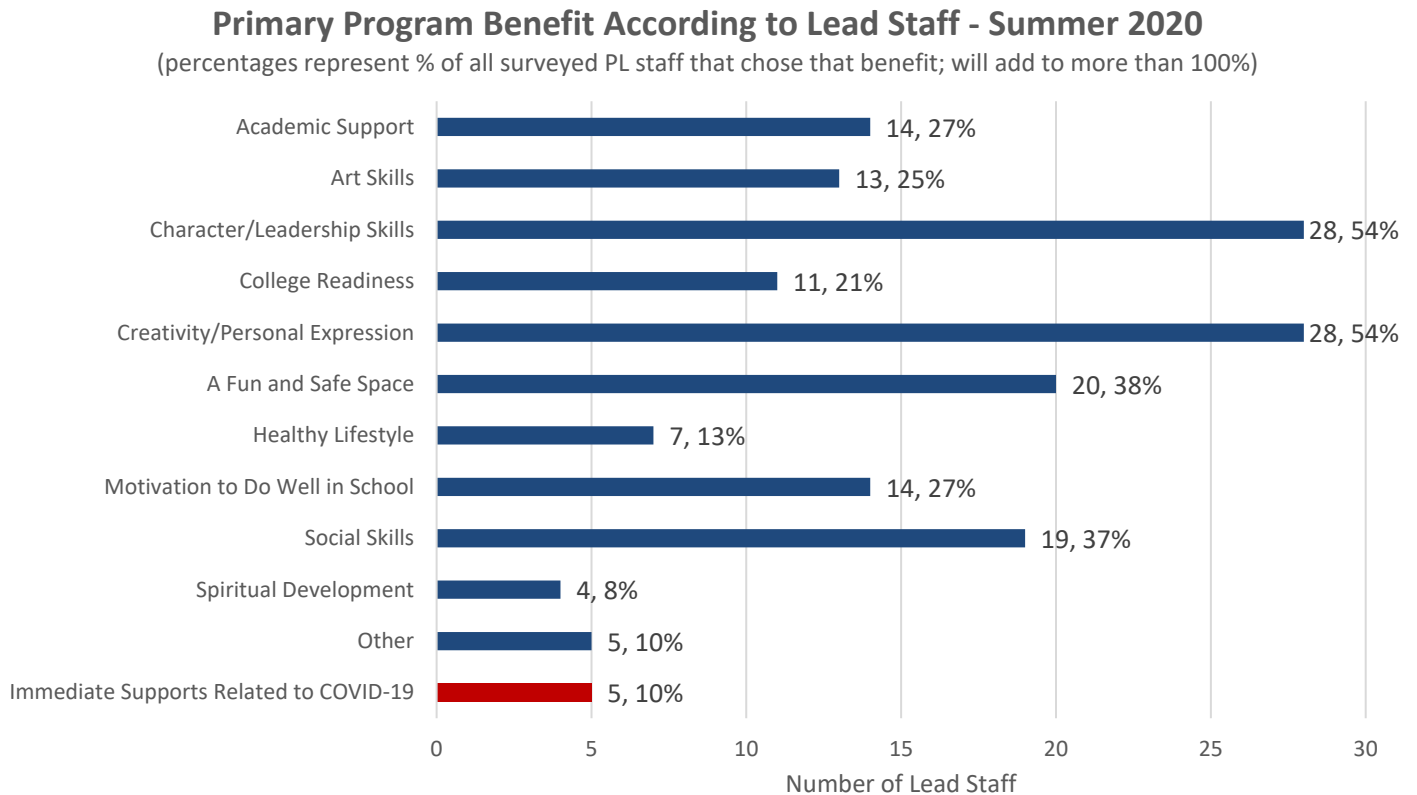
and "social skills" (In 2018 and 2019 the most commonly reported benefits of programs were "creativity/personal expression," "a fun and safe space," and "academic support").

Figure Five. *Focus of Programs, According to Program Lead Staff; summer 2020 (n=52)*

Primary Program Focus According to Lead Staff - Summer 2020
(percentages represent % of all surveyed PL staff that chose that focus; will add to more than 100%)

Category	Value
Academics	23, 44%
Civics/Citizenship	2, 4%
Cultural Enrichment	22, 42%
Fine Arts	16, 31%
Mentorship	12, 23%
Sports/Fitness	5, 10%
Social-Emotional Learning	33, 63%
Spiritual/Religion	0, 0%
Other	14, 27%
Focus of Program Changed Due to COVID-19	20, 38%

Number of Lead Staff

Figure Six. *Benefit of Programs, According to Program Lead Staff; summer 2020 (n=52)*

Primary Program Benefit According to Lead Staff - Summer 2020
(percentages represent % of all surveyed PL staff that chose that benefit; will add to more than 100%)

Category	Value
Academic Support	14, 27%
Art Skills	13, 25%
Character/Leadership Skills	28, 54%
College Readiness	11, 21%
Creativity/Personal Expression	28, 54%
A Fun and Safe Space	20, 38%
Healthy Lifestyle	7, 13%
Motivation to Do Well in School	14, 27%
Social Skills	19, 37%
Spiritual Development	4, 8%
Other	5, 10%
Immediate Supports Related to COVID-19	5, 10%

Number of Lead Staff

Reported Program Changes due to COVID-19

38% of program leads said that the focus of their programming changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most program leads, 66%, reported that they made significant alterations to their programming for summer 2020, 68% said that they are likely to continue with the adaptations they have made well after the COVID-19 pandemic ends. 70% said that making these program changes was difficult, and 12% said it was extremely difficult.

Half of program leads said that they began using a new SEL program or activities as an immediate response to the stressors of COVID-19. This rate was higher for programs held virtually, with 59% saying they began a new SEL program/activities.

Some specific changes related to SEL are described in Table Four.

Table Four. *Specific SEL Program Changes According to Program Lead Staff; summer 2020 (n=23)*

Being very careful with the amount of time spent online, keeping the youth interacted and making sure they understood their assignment before logging off
Building relationships by asking interns to take interest in the student's families. Also, asking interns to engage more in the scholars project and to ask questions.
Going out to schools to facilitate SEL programs and activities with children and teachers
I developed the camp around book, "This Promise of Change," we used for our book study. In it, we identified emotional stressors and ways of coping the characters used as they integrated the first high school in Clinton, TN in the 1950s. We then related it to the present and gave discussed current events, their emotions/feelings, and gave several SEL strategies. I made certain that my staff honed in on SEL with every single activity daily. In the past, SEL was not a daily focus. And given that our camp was entirely virtual, we gave campers plenty of opportunities to socialize and collaborate with each other on projects.
Increased time at the start of each day instead of middle of class to address the needs of students first.
Just making sure the students are being safe & practicing safety measures when out. Letting students share or feel comfortable to talk about whatever is bothering them or on their mind. Let them know that this is only a phase that will pass & things will eventually get better with time.
Our objective is Self-Mastery, looking in the mirror (cinematography/photography) and looking out the window. We also incorporate for those that are available, Kung Fu techniques to reinforce lessons.
Small Wonders is designed to reframe the experience of being "stuck at home" in a way that expands imaginative possibilities rather than restricts them. The project asks students to examine the way they interact with the objects they engage on a daily basis, and then, through discussion and expressive writing, potentially redefine that relationship. By sharing about the items they hold as personally valuable, and recognizing the value of their relationship with those objects (and the value of others have with their own respective objects), students develop their capacity for empathetic understanding and imagination.
Typically our Habits of Mind is incorporated into the daily announcements, activity, and discussions. With the asynchronous approach, we pre-recorded the videos, digitized the activities, and made the content/feedback accessible.
We created 18 fifteen minute sessions that focused on self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.
We created a 2-week virtual summit addressing various topics and allowing youth to voice their opinions and concerns with trained professionals and their peers.
We created digital comics to write about students fun adventures they went on PreCovid. They {wrote} created digital stories of their adventures and we watched Youtube videos of content from their favorite shared adventure: theme park rollercoasters! We discussed how it made them feel and what a new experience would feel like Post CoVID.
We did several different activities for scholars, yoga, writing and exercise options
We focused on reaching the whole person while making sure art is at the center of our work.
We had 17 options for 15-minute mini sessions called #withmes for our scholars and staff to interact with.

We had daily sessions that allow children to share their feelings, which allowed us to affirm and express/show empathy. Staff practiced being intentional to take time to listen affirm understand and express support to families and children.
We held a training at the beginning of summer for our instructors with special focus on reaching kids during COVID-19 to ensure they infused SEL into their summer curriculum.
We provided content to parents and also incorporated daily activities before instruction.
We provided more periodic individual check-ins and created a weekly zoom "hangout" for youth to build community and just socialize. There were no programmatic objectives of the call besides connecting with peers. We also spent more time on community resource research and referrals.
We used kindness, fairness, respect, self discipline, perseverance, courage and coping SEL units to meet SEL needs.
We were able to have more staff and volunteers to work with youth in smaller groups to focus more so on individual needs.

Program Quality During COVID

Lead staff were asked if they believe the quality of their programming had declined due to the changes necessary for summer 2020. 33% of respondents agreed to some extent (somewhat or strongly) that quality declined; most did not agree that quality declined. On a scale of 1-6, with 6 being strongly agree, respondents were neutral on average (average of 2.59 out of 6), indicting they didn't generally agree or disagree strongly that quality declined. Leads from virtual programs were less likely to agree that program quality declined (average response of 2.48 out of six compared to an average of 2.75 for in-person programs).

Reported Program Changes due to COVID-19

Most program leads, 66%, reported that they made significant alterations to their programming for summer 2020. This was more true for programs that held in-person/face-to-face; 79% said that they made significant alterations. 55% said that they are likely to continue with the adaptations they have made well after the COVID-19 pandemic ends. 51% of programs held virtually said they would continue with the adaptations. 65% said that making these program changes was difficult, and 15% said it was extremely difficult. For programs held in-person, 17% said making the adaptations was extremely difficult compared to 13% of online programs reporting this difficulty.

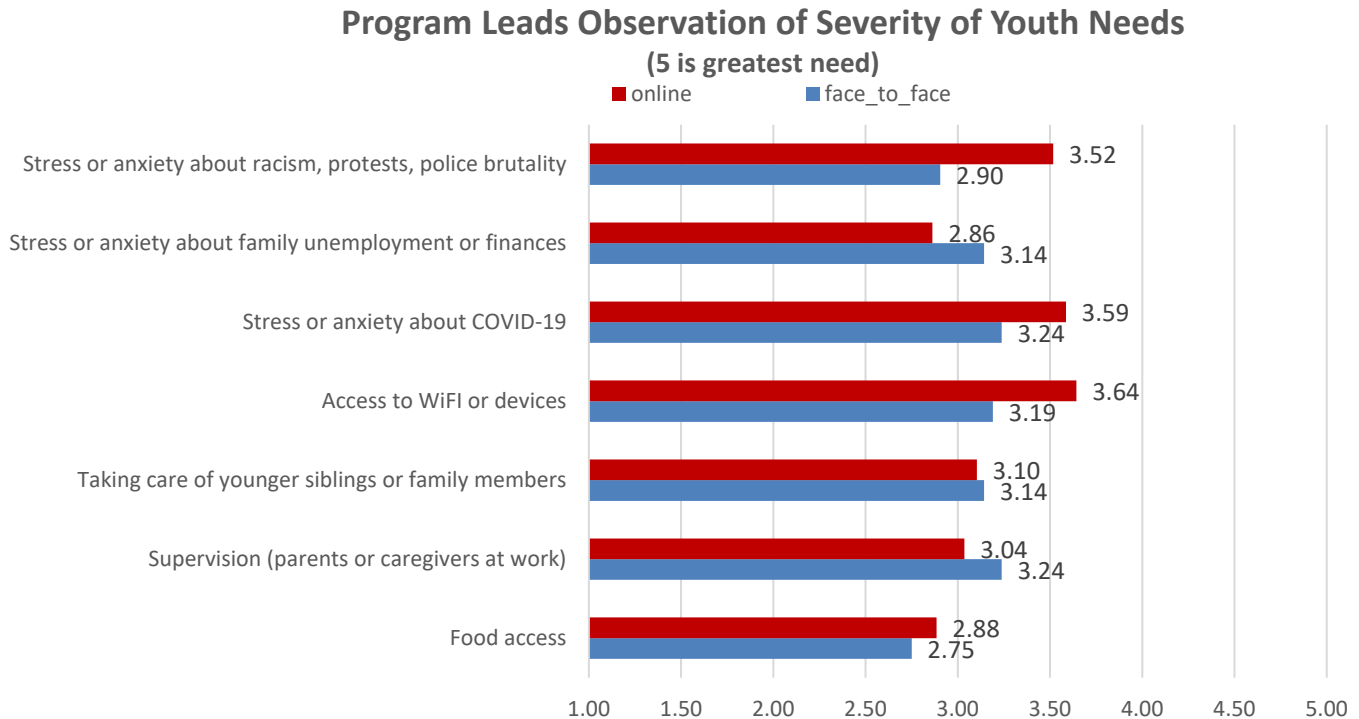### Program Access and Dosage During COVID-19

44% of all program leads agreed that youth and families had significant challenges accessing their program due to COVID-19. This rate was 43% for in-person programs and 46% for virtual programs. Sixty-two percent of program leads said they had to reduce the number of youth served by their program due to COVID-19. For in-person programs, 86% of leads said they reduced program capacity compared to 45% of leads at virtual programs. Finally, 48% of program leads reported that they reduced the number of days that they provided programing. Program leads disagreed with program staff on this item. For staff, his response was the same for both in-person and virtual. However, for leads, just 28% of leads of online programs said they reduced program days, while 76% of leads of in-person programs reported reducing days.

Staff Perspectives of Youth Needs During COVID-19

Finally, leads were asked "What needs of youth have you observed or heard about this summer?". Staff responded on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating "never" and 5 indicating "a great deal". Across all leads, the greatest reported youth need was "access to WiFi or devices", followed by "stress or anxiety about COVID-19" and "stress or anxiety about racism, protests, and police brutality". Like frontline staff, leads of

virtual programs perceived needs to be slightly greater compared to staff at face-to-face programs. At face-to-face programs, the most reported needs were "supervision" and "WiFi access".

Figure Seven. *Youth Needs During COVID-19 According to Program Leads; summer 2020 (n=52)*

Program Leads Observation of Severity of Youth Needs
(5 is greatest need)

■ online ■ face_to_face

Need	online	face_to_face
Stress or anxiety about racism, protests, police brutality	3.52	2.90
Stress or anxiety about family unemployment or finances	2.86	3.14
Stress or anxiety about COVID-19	3.59	3.24
Access to WiFI or devices	3.64	3.19
Taking care of younger siblings or family members	3.10	3.14
Supervision (parents or caregivers at work)	3.04	3.24
Food access	2.88	2.75

(x-axis: 1.00 – 5.00)

Experiences with Support from Big Thought via DCOL

Lead staff also rated how they prioritize six key areas of focus for DCOL. Lead staff consider their programs to prioritize, in order: (1) increasing the amount of dosage for students, (2) increasing the number of different programs, in addition to their program, that learners experience, (3) meeting youth and families' immediate needs related to COVID-19, a new option for summer 2020, (4) increasing the quality of programs, (5) increasing the level of student engagement in their program, and (6) increasing program access for students. The prioritization lead staff indicated this summer is roughly flipped in order from summer 2019, when staff reported priorities in order: (1) access, (2) quality, (3) engagement, (4) dosage, and (5) program variety.

Lead staff were also asked to identify the resources their program received from Big Thought through DCOL, the value they place on that resource, and how much positive impact that resource had on their programming. Among programs surveyed, financial stipends (42 programs), training and resources for virtual or online programming (28 programs), and professional development (17 programs) were the most frequently received. Programs that received financial stipends found the resource to be moderately to very valuable and impactful, while training and PD were moderately impactful.

When asked whether their program received training and resources for addressing COVID-related stressors for youth and families, 13 program leads (25%) said that they did receive additional training specific to COVID-related stressors. For in-person programs, this rate was higher at 38%.

Most (98%) agreed that the goals of DCOL remained valid during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 33% saying that they strongly agreed.