

**Report for Big Thought:  
Dallas City of Learning Summer 2020  
Preliminary Data Inventory Report: Program  
Partners, Youth & Family Participants, & Partner  
Support from Big Thought**

November 2020



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# 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 in summer 2020 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.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, adaptations to the out-of-school time system are necessary to accommodate the new realities on the ground. While the overall aims of the ongoing evaluation remain the same, some additional evaluation activities and changes in data collected capture how Big Thought and DCOL programs have adapted to changes brought on by COVID-19. **Findings from summer 2020 represent a unique and unprecedented time, and are not to be generalized to typical circumstances nor compared with prior or future summers out of the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**This report provides an initial data inventory and report of traditional DCOL metrics. A forthcoming report in November 2020 will provide a deeper dive into three additional data elements: Learning Pathways, professional development feedback surveys, and COVID-specific surveys responses from program leadership.**

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, and documents from Big Thought. Site observations used in prior summers were *not conducted in summer 2020*. The quality of the DCOL data continues to advance. While there were overall fewer individuals rostered into programs, the cleanliness and thoroughness of the data continues to improve compared to prior summers, providing evidence that the DCOL “system” is strengthening and becoming more a more fluid system. For example, surveys and professional development data is more easily matched within programs and with scheduled program listings in the DCOL system. Moreover, the unique challenges presented by summer 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities for the DCOL system to activate its assets – connecting programs to valuable resources and information, connecting programs to each other and combining efforts, and providing unique program access to youth.

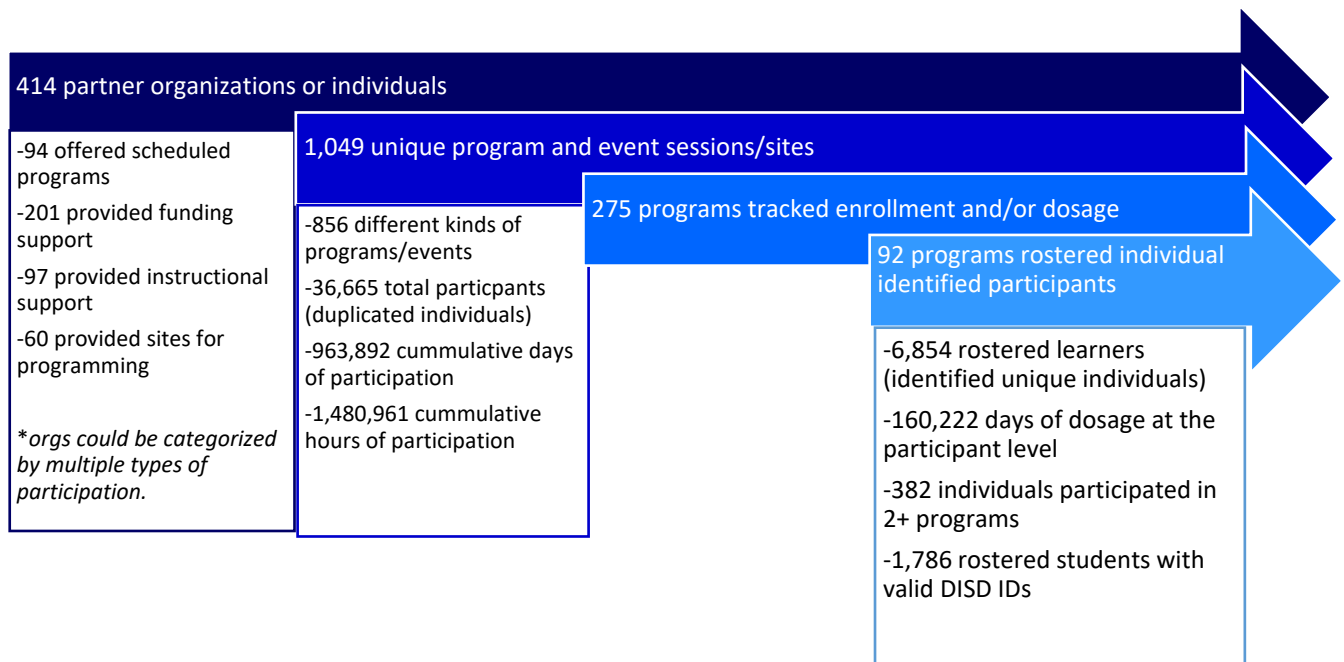
Big Thought adapted the strategy for the Neighborhood Resource Initiative (NRI) in summer 2020, which provides a variety of targeted supports to programs. Fifty-nine program providers submitted applications for financial support through the NRI fund. Requested amounts ranged from \$1,890 up to \$50,000. For summer 2020, each applicant was awarded a flat amount of \$3000, paid out in two \$1,500 increments (3 orgs were awarded \$2000 because they originally requested that amount or less). 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 950 surveys were collected from students, caregivers, program front-line staff and program lead staff (compared to 4,149 in 2019): 444 from students, 292 from caregivers, 162 from program staff and 52 from program leadership. This represents a substantial decrease from the 4,149 surveys collected in summer 2019. However, it's notable that the number of responses from program lead staff increased from 7 to 52. Despite unprecedented circumstances in summer 2020, students and caregivers continue to provide positive feedback about programs. In fact, both rated programs as higher quality and more valuable compared to prior summers. Overall, both agree that the programs they attend are valuable, high quality, engaging, and that they enjoy being around their peers and the staff at the programs. The most common program focus was “academics”, followed by “social-emotional learning” and “other”; this is a shift from prior summers when “cultural enrichment” and “fine arts” were a top program focus. The most commonly reported benefit of programs was “social skills”, followed by “character and leadership skills” and providing “a fun and safe space”; also representing a shift from prior summers when “creativity/personal expression” was reported as a primary benefit rather than fun and safe spaces. Program leadership also described social and emotional learning as the primary focus of programming and summer 2020. Interestingly, while “academics” was the most common program focus according to staff, the same staff did not report that “academic support” was a primary benefit of programs. 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.

A total of 414 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 is a decrease compared to 738 partners in 2019. A total of 856 different programs and events were offered across the city during summer 2020: 2 events were held across the city, 763 online programs were offered (compared to 93 in 2019), and 95 in-person programs were offered (compared to 697 in 2019) across a total of 1,049 unique sessions or sites. Most programs, about 90%, were free to participants.

A total of 275 programs (26% 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 2019's rate of 59% and 2018's rate of 81% of programs with some enrollment. Among all 275 programs with individual or aggregate dosage, 963,892 cumulative days and 1,480,961 cumulative hours of programming were provided during summer 2020 by DCOL partner organizations (compared to 927,253 days and 2,993,300 hours in 2019 and 1,217,089 days and 3,689,834 hours in 2018). Specifically, 92 of these different program sessions and/or sites, or 9% of all scheduled programming across DCOL, had individual participant-level enrollment and/or dosage records for summer 2020 (compared to 33% in 2019). Across these 92 program sites with individually rostered participants, a total of 6,854 unique individuals are matched to one or more programs (compared to 35,134 in 2019), and 382 of those participated in 2 or more programs. Of the individually rostered participants, 1,786 have valid school ID numbers for later matching to student outcome metrics; down significantly compared to prior years' rates of around 28,000.

Finally, related to partner supports provided by Big Thought, 90 different organized meetings or training sessions were scheduled and facilitated by BT staff and/or DCOL partners in summer 2020 (compared to 241 in 2019, 205 during 2018, and 87 during summer 2017); 26 (29%) of these were classified as training/professional development (compared to 67% in 2019 and 63% in 2018). Representing 81 different partner organizations or programs, 399 staff participated in these sessions for a cumulative 564 hours (participants are duplicate individuals). In 2019, there were 123 organizations and 1,819 participants for a cumulative 5,211 hours. The average number of hours for the 81 organizations or programs that participated was 6.6 hours per organization (compared to 42 hours per org in 2019 and 2018).

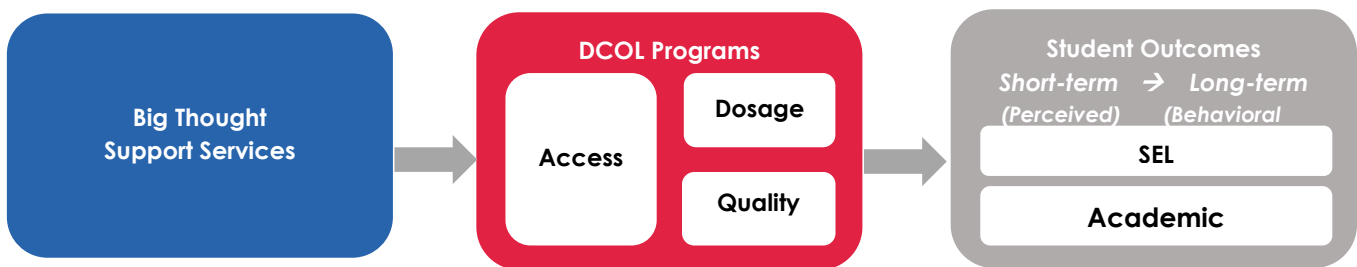


# Evaluation Framework and Data Sources

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. Year 3 (summer 2019) further examined trends in system processes and outputs explored how student participation in multiple summers of DCOL programming is associated with student achievement.

This current report focuses on what occurred during summer 2020 – how programs and program supports were adapted and implemented, how youth and families participated, and what youth, families, providers, and DCOL staff said about program access and quality and the needs of families and the community in light of COVID-19.

**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) <sup>1</sup>				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 <sup>2</sup>						X				
Document Review <sup>3</sup>	X		X					X		X
Extant DISD Data							X			X

Note: Sources in blue are not summarized in this current report.

<sup>1</sup> Program observations were not conducted in summer 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

<sup>2</sup> May include Deveraux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) or the Student Strengths Indicator System (SSIS) which was administered at select program sites over the course of summer 2018

<sup>3</sup> Documents for review may include evidence of transportation and financial resources allocated to DCOL partners.

# Summary of Data Collected & Initial Findings

This report provides a descriptive summary of the overall findings by data source for programs within the Dallas City of Learning (DCOL) network in summer 2020. This includes any pre-summer events and programs that occurred after September 1, 2019 as a “lead in” to summer 2020 programming. Individual programs will receive reports of this data for their own organization.

## Surveys

**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. Surveys were not administered at all DCOL program sites. Rather, surveys were strategically distributed to a specific cohort of DCOL programs including sites receiving strategic supports through the “Neighborhood Resource Initiative” (NRI). These programs received supplementary resources from Big Thought matched to needs expressed through a pre-summer application process, and thus, agreed to participate in the more intensive components of the evaluation that included these surveys.

Table Two describes 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 Three provides a summative snapshot of parallel responses from both students and caregivers on common survey items. Compared to summer prior summers, the number of surveys collected is much lower; this was expected with reduced programming and reduced in-person programming (surveys are more difficult to collect when there are not in-person touch points with youth and families). However, the overall cleanliness of the survey data continues to improve and a larger overall percentage can be confidently matched to program listings. This points to **ongoing improvements in the organization and consistency of the DCOL system.**

**Table Two.** 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
<i>Difference From 2019</i>	-1804	-1091	-349	+45
Number Surveys Matched to Program (unique session)	425	284	157	51
<i>Difference From 2019</i>	-1823	-1099	-354	-44
Number Surveys with Valid Format Student IDs (7 digit)	203	109	n/a	n/a
<i>Difference From 2019</i>	-913	-514	n/a	n/a

**Table Three.** Summary of Student and Caregiver Survey Results; summer 2020

	Overall Quality	Engagement in the Program	Quality of Programs (6DQ)	Value of Programs	Perception of SEL Skill (self-assessment)
Student (n=444)	9.1 (out of 10) n=390	3.37 (out of 4) n=409	3.44 (out of 4) n=409	3.37 (out of 4) n=407	3.18 (out of 4) n=394
Caregiver (n=292)	9.4 (out of 10) n=289	5.43 (out of 6) n=292	5.57 (out of 6) n=292	5.37 (out of 6) n=292	5.14 (out of 6) n=292

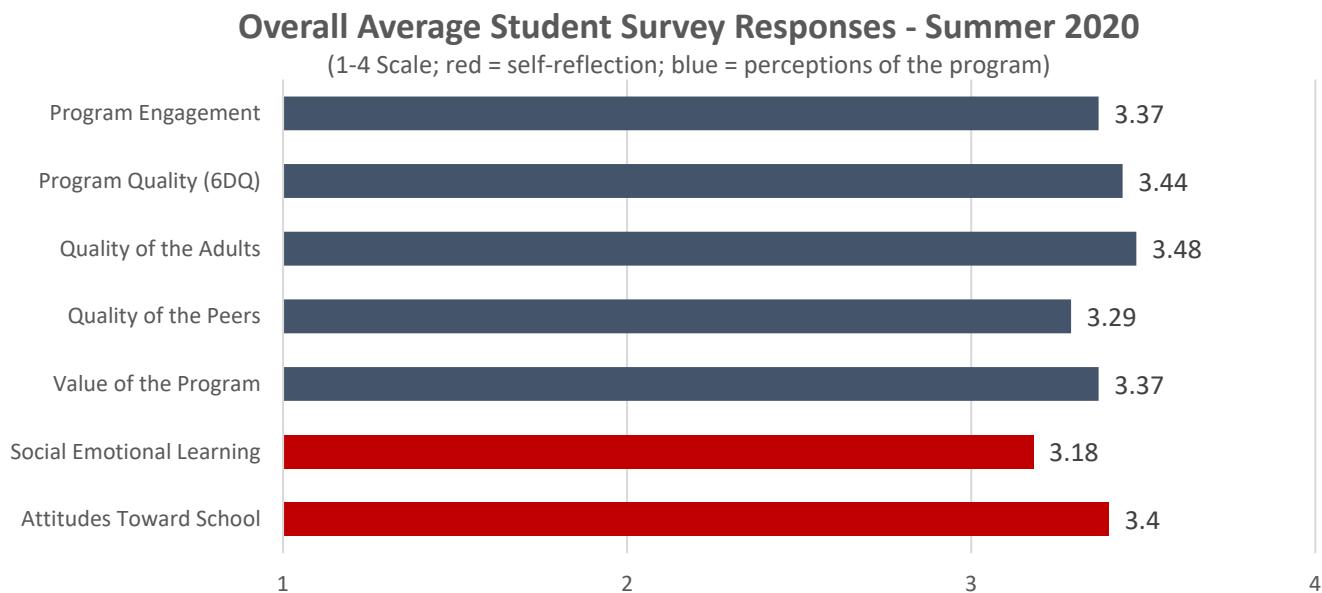
Students rated overall program quality nearly a full point higher than they did in summer 2019 (8.2 out of 10); parents rated overall program quality one-tenth of a point higher. Parents reported that their students were about as

engaged in the programs as in previous years, but students reported one-tenth of a point higher engagement than in 2019. Youth and parents both agreed that the quality of the programs (6DQ) during summer 2020 was higher by one to two-tenths of a point than in 2019. Parents reported about the same value as in 2019 (5.36), but students found the programs more valuable in 2020 (compared to 3.18 in 2019).

## Student Surveys

Students continue to have positive perceptions of summer programming in Dallas. The surveys were administered to student participants in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or above. The survey asked the student about how the student perceived the value and quality of the program. Additionally, the survey asked the student about their own attitudes and motivations toward school (e.g., If I try hard, I believe I can do well in school) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills. 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.

**Figure Two.** Average student survey responses for DCOL; summer 2020 (n=444)



### Program quality according to students

Students were asked how much they agree with statements about the quality of the program they attended, such as “this program teaches me new ways to learn things” and “this program gives me chances to revise and improve my work”. These questions were scored on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) scale. Students responded positively regarding program quality with an average quality score of 3.44 (compared to 3.20 in summer 2019, 3.25 in summer 2018 and 3.24 in summer 2017).

When asked to rate the program on scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “awesome”, students rated programs 9.1 (compared to 8.2 in summer 2019, 8.4 in summer 2018 and 8.3 in summer 2017).

Additionally, students had positive perceptions of the adults leading the program. When asked how much they agree with statements like “the adults at this program are supportive of me” and “the adults in this program are interested in how I am doing,” students rated the adults an average of 3.48 out of 4 (an increase compared to 3.25 in summer 2019, and 3.3 in summer 2018).

Students also perceive their peers in the program in a positive light. When asked how much they agree with statements like “the other students in this program are my friends” and “I enjoy being around the other students in this program,” students rated their peers an average of 3.29 out of 4 (no meaningful change compared to 3.3 in summer 2019 and summer 2018).



### ***Program value according to students***

Students were also asked about whether the program was beneficial to them, in terms of exploring new interests and improving their ability to succeed in school (e.g., “because of this program I am learning things that will help me do better in school” and “because of this program I am going to explore a new interest based on things I learned”). On a 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) scale, students rated the value of their program a 3.37 (compared to 3.18 in summer 2019 and 3.25 in summer 2018).

### ***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 on the fence 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).

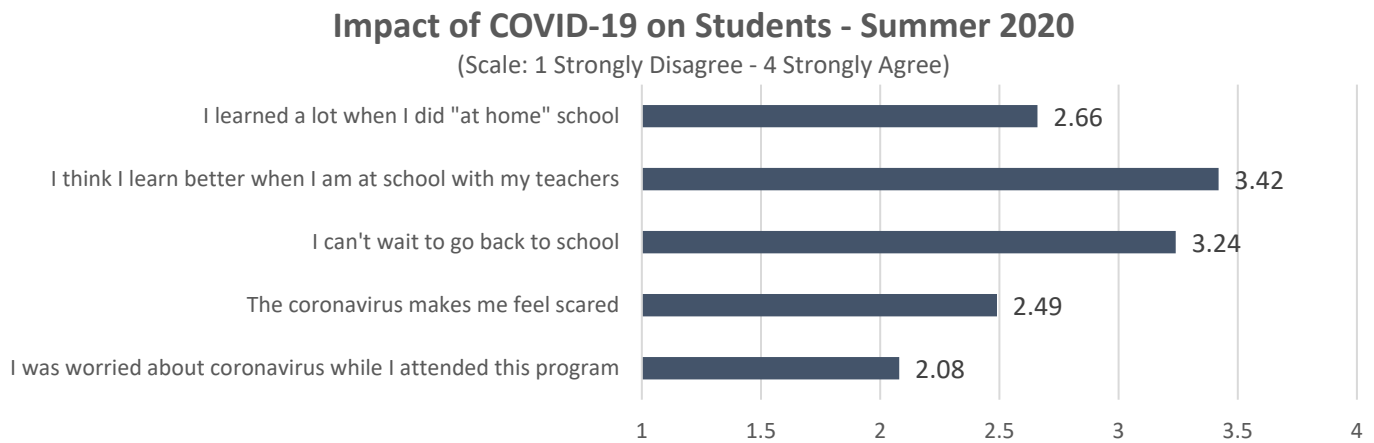
Additionally, students were asked about their access to the technology required for virtual learning. Seventy-four percent (74%) said they have a computer all to themselves that they can use at home. Ninety-three percent (93%) reported that they can get on the internet easily.

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



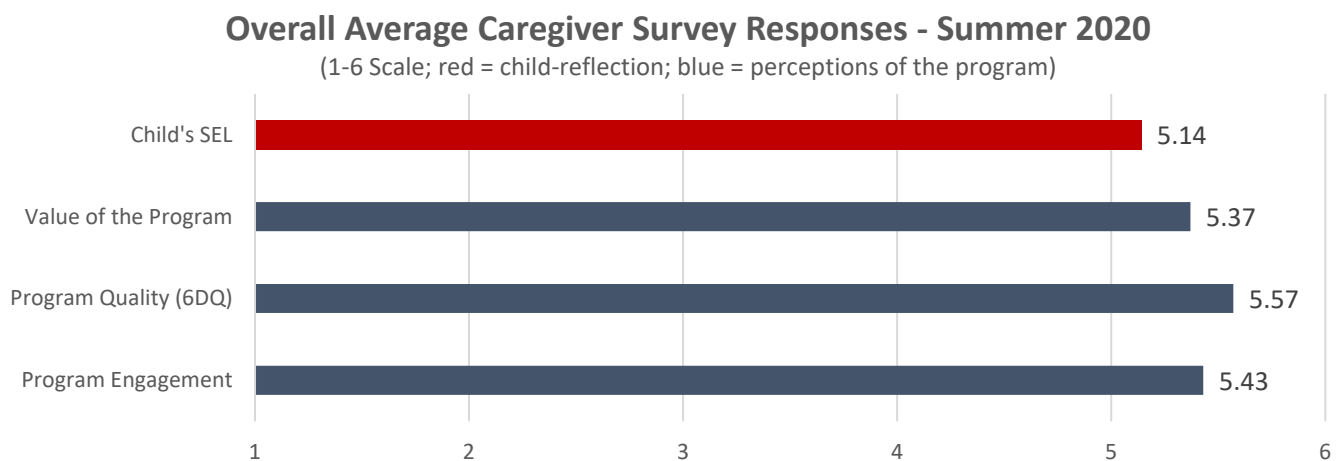
**Table Four.** Rate of student survey responses for the influence of COVID-19 (n=444)

	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

Like students, caregivers also continue to have positive perceptions of DCOL summer programming. These were administered to the main caregiver of students in select DCOL programs. The survey asked the caregiver about the "value" and "quality" of the program their child participated in, including their child's engagement level in the program. Additionally, the survey asked the caregiver about their own perceptions of their child's motivations toward school and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills. For 2020, additional items were added to address the COVID-19 pandemic conditions. CORE received a total of 292 surveys from caregivers and parents (compared to 1,383 in 2019).

**Figure Four.** Average caregiver survey responses for DCOL; summer 2020 (n=292)



### Program quality according to caregivers

Caregivers were asked how much they agree with statements about the quality of the program their child attended, such as "this program teaches my child new ways to learn things" and "this program gives my child chances to revise and improve their work". These questions were scored on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale.

Caregivers tend to agree or strongly agree with statements that the program exhibits a variety of indicators of quality, with an average quality score of 5.57 out of 6 (compared to 5.45 in summer 2019 and 5.41 in summer 2018). When asked to rate the program overall on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being "awesome", caregivers rated programs 9.4 out of 10, on average (compared to 9.3 in summers 2018 and 2019 and 9.0 in summer 2017).

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 engagement according to caregivers***

Caregivers were asked how much they agree with statements related to perceived effort and engagement their child gave during the program, such as "The things my child is learning in this program are interesting to them," and "My child is trying hard to learn during this program." These questions were scored on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale. Caregivers also responded positively regarding their child's perceived effort and engagement in the program they attended, with an average score of 5.43 out of 6 (compared to 5.43 in summer 2019 and 5.39 in summer 2018).

#### ***Program value according to caregivers***

Caregivers were also asked about whether the program was beneficial to their child, in terms of exploring new interests, improving their child's ability to succeed in school, and accessing new opportunities (e.g., "My child is learning things at this program that will help them do better in school" and "My child says they are going to explore a new interest based on the things they learned in this program"). On a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale, caregivers rated the value of their child's program a 5.37 (compared to 5.36 in summer 2019, 5.35 in summer 2018, and 5.21 in summer 2017).

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 Five 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 Four.** 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%

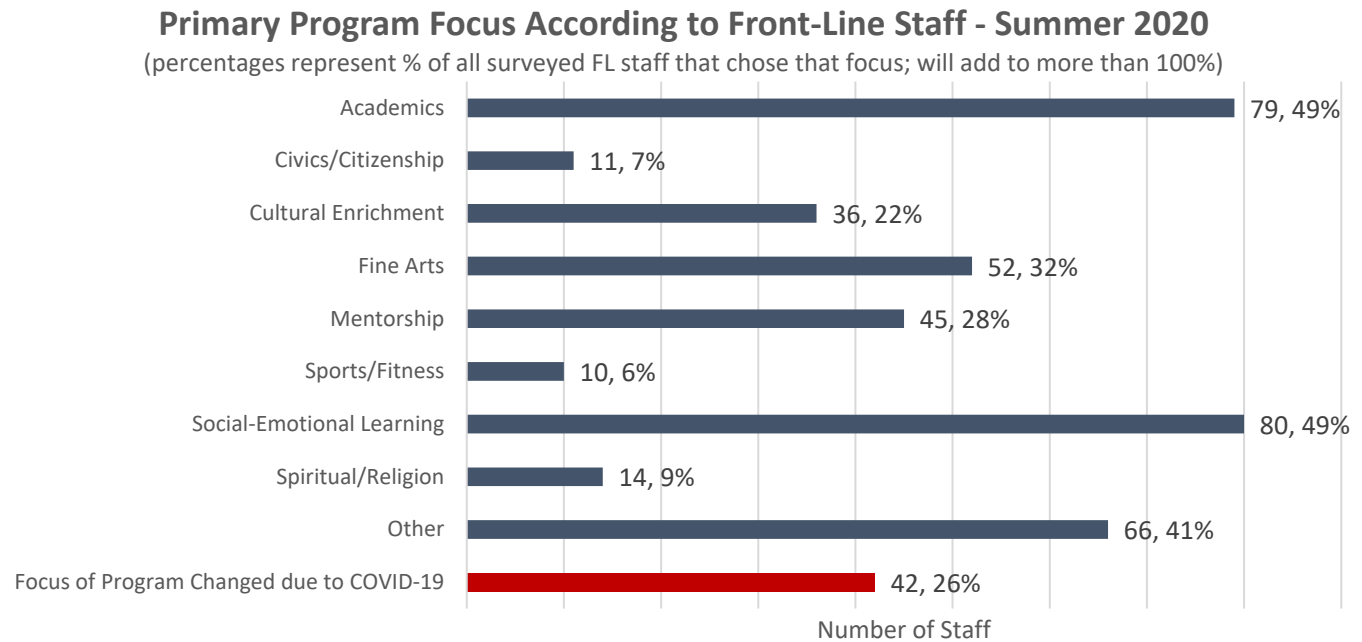
## Frontline Program Staff Surveys

“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. Survey questions asked about the “value” and “quality” of the program and the students’ engagement level in the program. CORE received a total of 162 surveys from front-line staff at program sites.

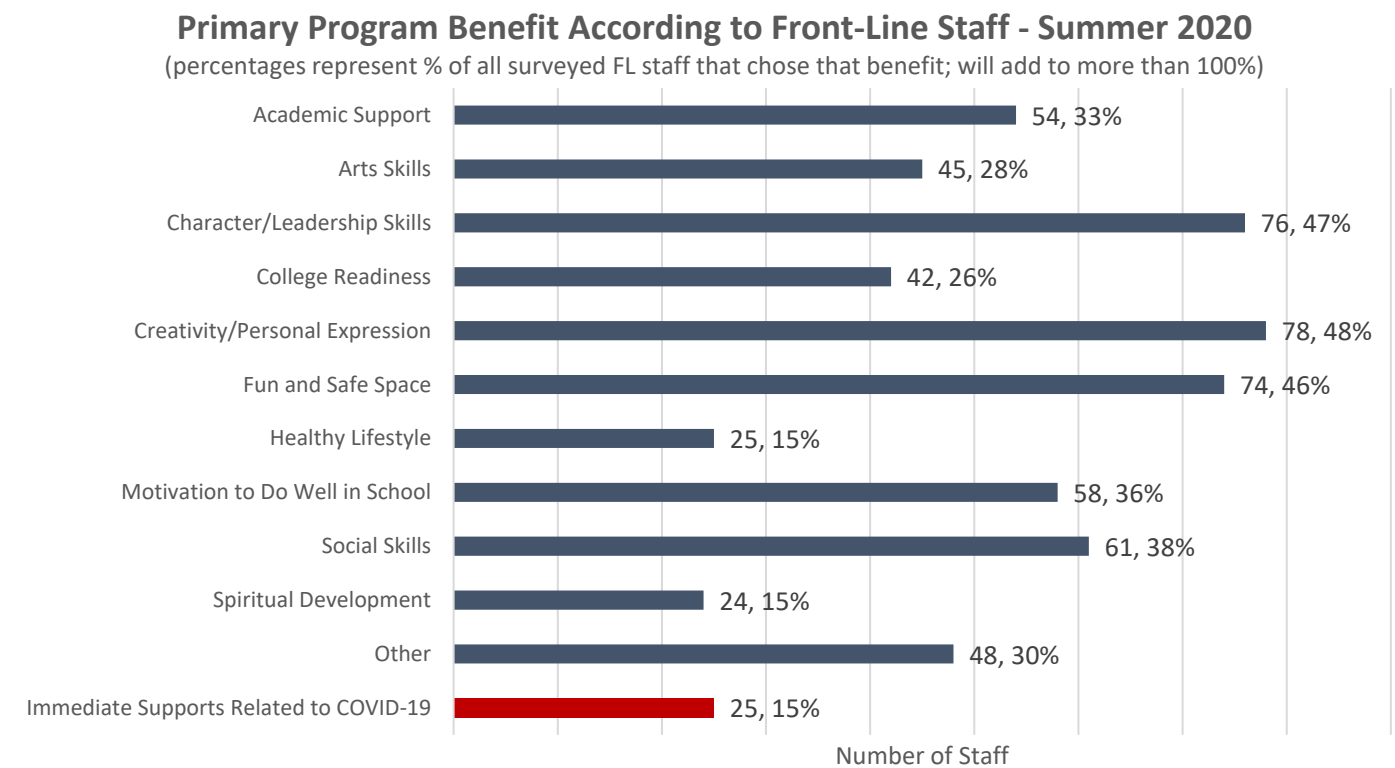
To determine how staff perceive the overall purpose and benefit of their programming, front-line staff were asked about the (1) primary focus of the program and (2) how they hope children will benefit from participation. Each staff respondent chose up to three options for each question. Figures Four and Five show how staff described their programs. The most common program focus was “academics”, followed by “social-emotional learning.” These were the same top two as in summers 2019 and 2018. The third-place focus during summer 2020 was “other” (“fine arts” in summer 2019 and cultural enrichment in summer 2018). This category included write-in focuses such as college readiness, general enrichment, career readiness and job skills, financial literacy, and other specific combinations of topics.

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



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



Front-line staff also responded to a series of questions that focus on two of the components the DCOL evaluation is primarily concerned with: program engagement and program quality. These questions were scored on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale. Overall, frontline staff responded positively regarding their perceptions of participants' effort and engagement in the program, with an average of 5.33 (compared to 5.2 in summers 2018 and 2019). Responses regarding quality were similarly positive; frontline staff tend to agree or strongly agree with statements that the program exhibits a variety of indicators of quality, with an average of 5.58 (compared to 5.46 in summer 2019 and 5.42 in summer 2018). Also related to quality, when asked to rate their program on scale of 1 to 10,

with 10 being "awesome," front-line staff rated programs 9.4 out of 10, on average (three-tenths of a point increase from 9.1 in summers 2018 and 2019).

Front-line staff were also asked about whether they perceived that their program was valuable to the participants, in terms of exploring new interests, improving their ability to succeed in school, and accessing new opportunities. On a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale, frontline staff rated the value of their program a 5.34 (compared to 5.24 in summer 2019 and 5.28 in summer 2018).

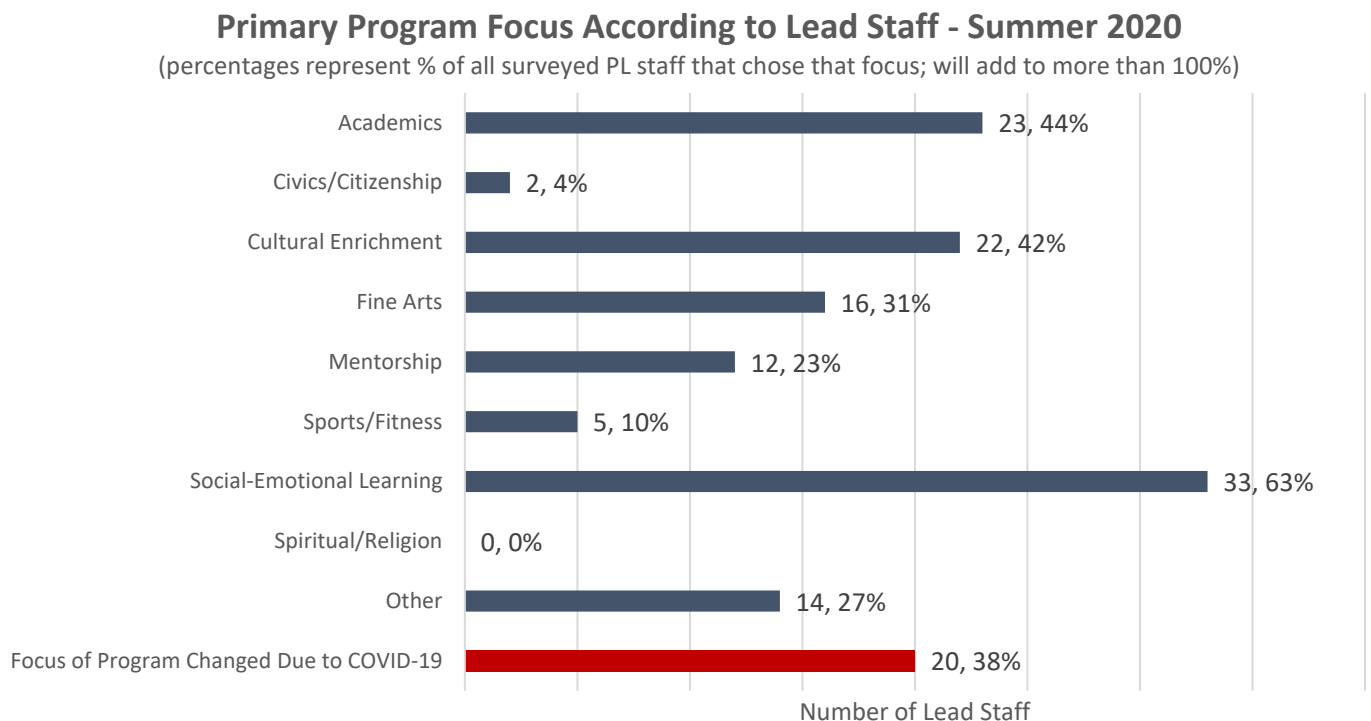
For summer 2020, additional COVID-specific items were added to the frontline staff survey. These items will be described in-depth in a forthcoming supplement to this report.

### Lead Program Staff Surveys

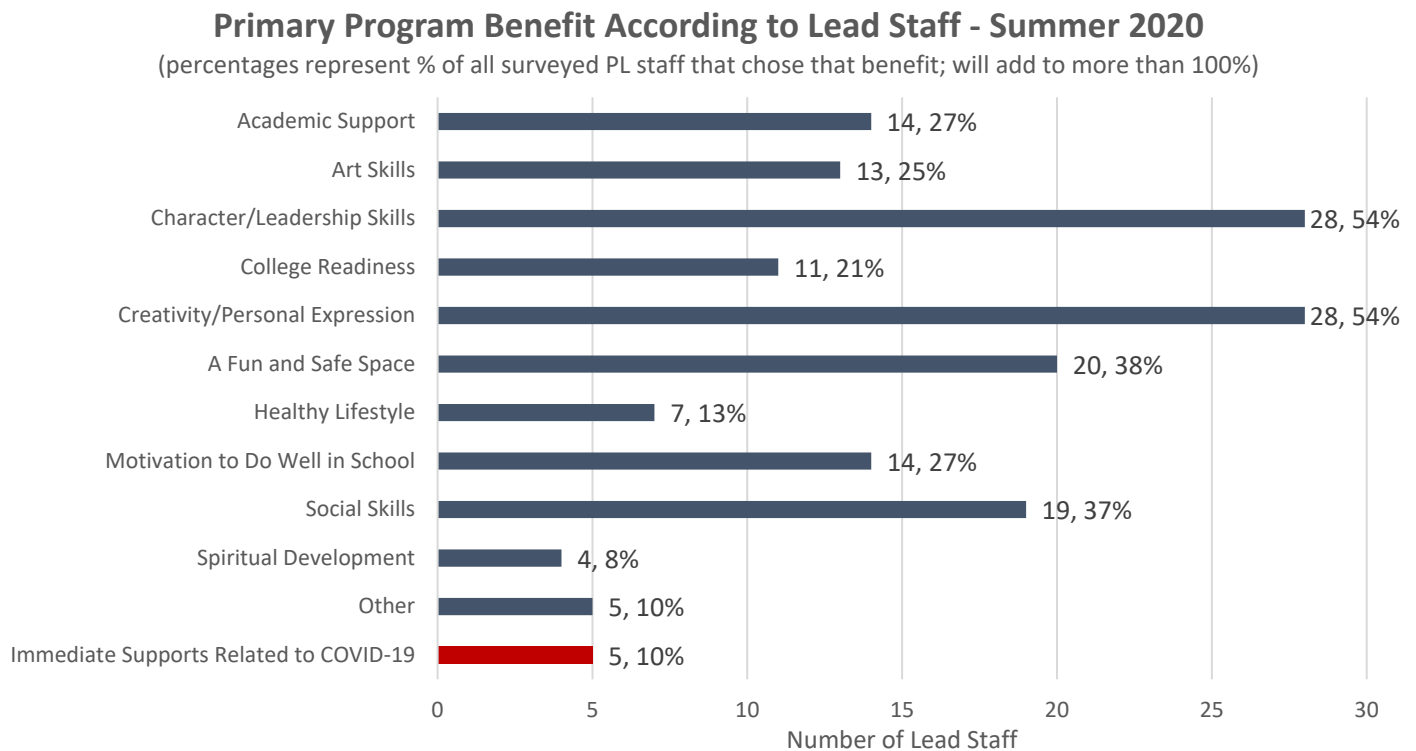
The lead program staff surveys were provided to the staff members that hold leadership positions in some of the programs that worked directly with Big Thought as part of the Neighborhood Resource Initiative. Survey items asked similar questions about the program as were asked of front-line staff. Additionally, this survey asked questions that pertain to the relationship between Big Thought and the program, including the perceived benefit Big Thought support services and resources had on the program. 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 Seven and Eight 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 Seven.** Focus of Programs, According to Program Lead Staff; summer 2020 (n=52)



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



As a follow up, leadership staff were asked about any social-emotional learning that their program might offer. Five out of the fifty-two leadership staff reported using Sanford Harmony for their SEL curriculum, while seventeen lead staff said their program uses no social emotional learning curriculum. Twenty reported using another SEL curriculum<sup>4</sup>. Of those that use SEL curriculum, 49% use it daily (down from 60% in 2019). Sixty-five percent of sites report that their staff have received training related to SEL in the past school year (similar to the 69% in 2018 but down from 100% in summer 2019).

**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.

**Experiences with Support from Big Thought via DCOL**

Unique to the program lead survey, leadership also responded to questions about their experiences with Big Thought and the Big Thought support team. These questions were directed at this audience because Big Thought reported that the majority of any interactions between Big Thought and DCOL program partners directly involved the program leadership rather than front-line staff.

The lead staff were asked whether they agreed that the goals of DCOL were clearly defined; respondents rated the goal clarity as 5.19 out of 6 (up from 4.67 in summer 2019 and 4.96 in summer 2018). They were also asked whether they agree that the goals of DCOL remain valid during COVID-19 and lead staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement on average (5.16 out of 6).

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

<sup>4</sup> Other SEL curriculums identified by lead staff include: Frog Street, Everfi, exSEL for Children with Disabilities, Habits of Mind, Lights Camera SELI, PureEdge, #withme, LitCamp's 7 Strengths, VariQuest Visual and Kinesthetic Social and Emotional Learning Suite, yoga, We Are Family Educational Consulting's curriculum, and a variety of curriculums or resources compiled by the organization.

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.

Program leads were asked many of the same questions regarding engagement, dosage, and quality that front-line staff were asked. These questions were scored on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale. Overall, lead staff responded positively regarding their participants' perceived effort and engagement in the program, with an average of 5.26 (compared to 5.07 in summer 2019). Responses regarding quality were similarly positive; lead staff tend to agree or strongly agree with statements that the program exhibits a variety of indicators of quality, with an average of 5.42 (compared to 5.1 in summer 2019). Also related to quality, when asked to rate their program on scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being "awesome," lead staff rated programs 7.4 out of 10, on average (down from 8.5 in summer 2019). Finally, lead staff were also asked about whether they perceived that their program was valuable to the participants, in terms of exploring new interests, improving their ability to succeed in school, and accessing new opportunities. On a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale, lead staff rated the value of their programs 5.15 on average (compared to 4.86 in summer 2019).

## **Observations**

### ***Six Dimensions of Quality Program Spot Observation***

The 6DQ Partner Spot Observation (PSO) is a multi-indicator tool used to observe the overall quality of environment, culture and activities at a summer program site. The PSO is a tool of the 6 Dimensions of Quality (6DQ) framework that primarily focuses on six key program quality indicators: climate that supports learning; engagement and investment in learning; classroom dialog and sharing; skills, techniques, knowledge of the discipline; creative choices; expectations, assessment, and recognition.

CORE did not conduct program observations in summer 2020 due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Data from DCOL Platform and Big Thought**

### ***DCOL Partner & Program Information***

The DCOL partner & program information comes from the DCOL online platform. This DCOL program listing is supplemented by a list of all official DCOL partners provided by Big Thought and includes funding partners, strategic partners, organizations that provided facilities for programming, and media support among other affiliations. Scheduled programs and partner organizations are organized into three levels: (1) the organization, (2) the "Program", and (3) the unique scheduled program session and/or site. Some organizations have just one program conducted at one site and/or one session, while other organizations have many different programs, each conducted at many sites and for many different sessions throughout the summer.

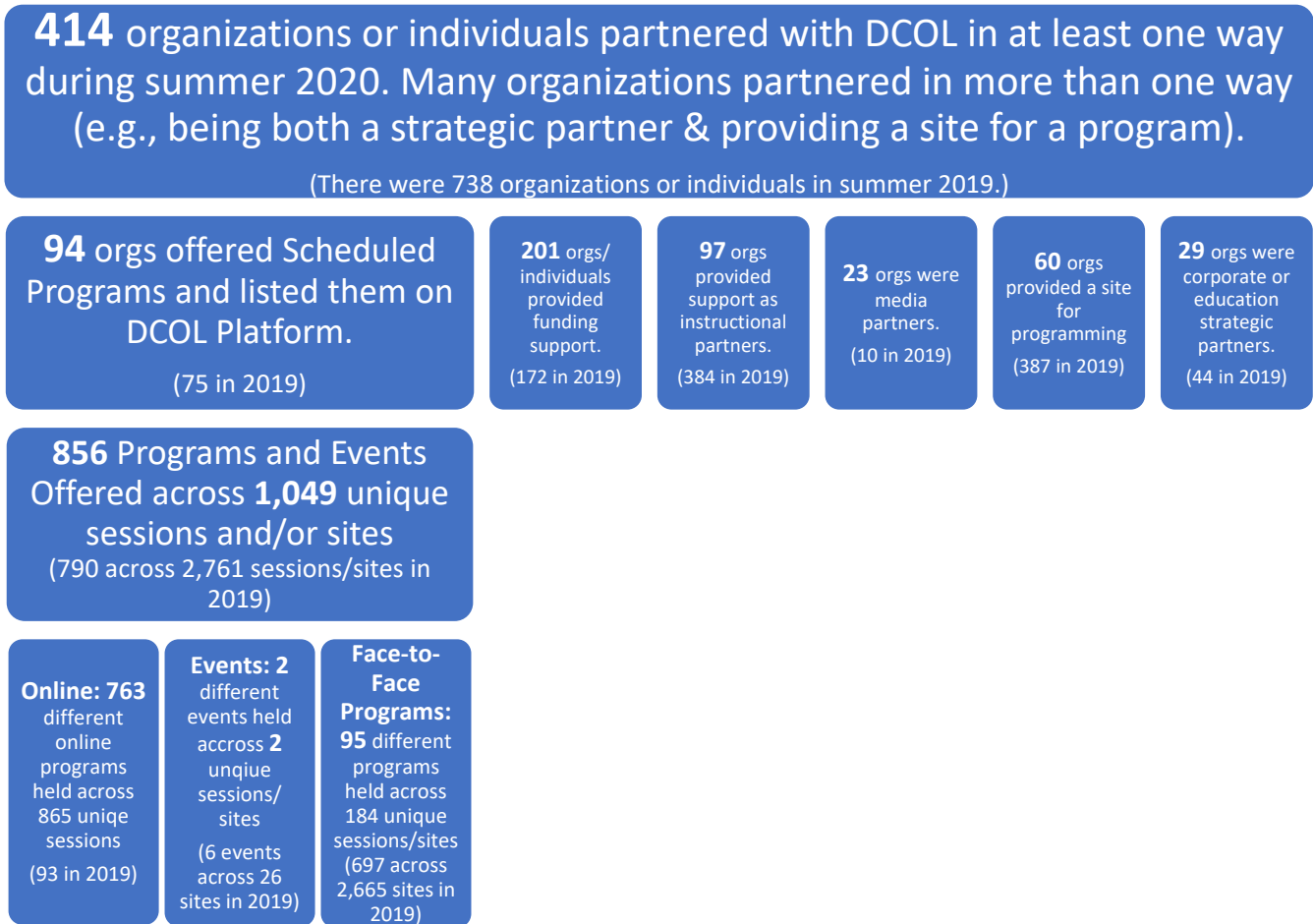
CORE compiled data from 6 key sources to create a comprehensive master list of all organizations or programs that participated in DCOL in various ways. The anchoring source was the list of scheduled programs on the platform, which includes all of the scheduled programs on the DCOL online platform. An additional 5 sources were analyzed to determine if other programs or organizations appear in those sources that were *not* already included in the list of scheduled DCOL programs: (1) organizations registered as an "org" within DCOL that did not list a specific program, (2) head-count information about number of program or event participants, (3) the partner tracking log, which tracks engagement between Big Thought staff and partners such as meetings and site visits, (4) participation in scheduled trainings held by Big Thought, and (5) the official partner listing from Big Thought. This created a comprehensive listing of organizations and programs within Dallas City of Learning for summer 2020. Figure Nine summarizes how many



organizations, programs, and sessions participated. Not all participating organizations listed a face-to-face program on the DCOL platform. Numbers from 2019 are provided for comparison.

**Most interesting, there were several hundred fewer DCOL partners involved in summer 2020. However, there was more variety of scheduled programs, more organizations providing scheduled programming, more organizations or individuals providing funding support, and more media partners. There were also, as expected, far more online/virtual programs in 2020 – 865 scheduled opportunities compared to just 93 in 2019. Also as expected, the number of face-to-face programs was far less in summer 2020 – 184 scheduled programs compared to 2,665 in summer 2019.** In addition to the programming and partner information provided in Figure Nine, there were also 19 available program playlists.

**Figure Nine.** Breakdown of Number of Organizations, Programs and Events offered; Summer 2020



**Duration**

The start and end-date for each program were derived from the scheduled programs list extracted from the DCOL platform. Programs and events lasted anywhere from less than one day (several hours) up to a full year for ongoing events and online programs. Program duration was available for all 1,049 unique program and event sessions/sites.

**Sixty-eight listed programs occurred entirely during the 2019-20 school year** (ended before May 31, 2020), and an additional 515 began during the school year (before May 31, 2020) and continued into or through summer 2020. **Fifty-nine of these were “Digital Explorations” programs** that occurred during the school-year as an immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic (occurred between March 13 and May 31, 2020).

**466 listed programs occurred entirely during the summer of 2020** (began on or after June 1, 2020). Most (80%, n=374) were online virtual programs. The remaining 20% (n=11) were held face-to-face.

**Among the 981 programs that were provided wholly or in part during the summer, 815 (83% were virtual)**, and most (72%) of these virtual programs were available for more than 50 days as an ongoing engagement opportunity.

Another 11% of these virtual programs were available between 10 and 50 days, 5% were available about a week, and the remaining 12% of virtual programs were just one day.

**One hundred and sixty-six of the 981 summer programs (17%) were provided face-to-face.** Some (17%) of these were just 1 or 2 days, 20% lasted between 1 and 2 weeks, 29% lasted three weeks or less (5 - 15 program days), 29% were between 20 and 50 days, and 34% lasted longer than 50 days. This contrasts with summer 2019, when the most common program duration was 1 day.

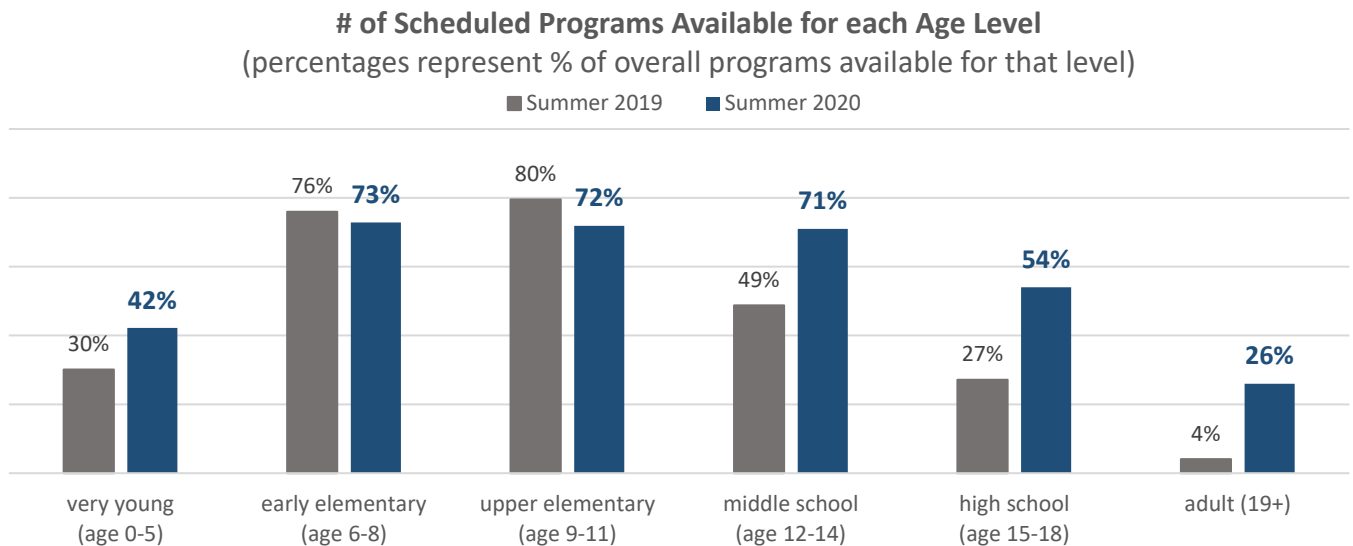
**Cost**

The majority of the 1,049 programs were free – 90% (n=945) with a listed price point were no cost to participants. This is a lower ratio compared to 95.3% in summer 2019. The cost for each program was derived from the scheduled programs list extracted from the DCOL platform.

**Age Levels**

Programs were provided for a variety of age levels. The number of programs provided per age level is illustrated in Figure Ten. The age levels for each program were derived from the scheduled programs list extracted from the DCOL platform. All listed programs and events provided age-level information and each of these could have been available for one, few, or all age levels. Therefore, a single program may be accounted for in the sum for multiple age levels (e.g., a program may be for middle and high school students). Unlike summers 2017 through 2019, **the most common age-level of scheduled programming is equal across early elementary (ages 6-8), upper elementary (ages 9-11), and middle school (ages 12-14). Upper elementary was the most common age level in all prior summers. In general, compared to prior summers, there were more programs available across all age levels. The largest increase was for high school students – only 27% of all listed programs were available to high school students in 2019 compared to 54% in 2020. Availability for very young children, middle school students, and adults aged 19+ also had notable increases.**

**Figure Ten.** Count of Programs per Age Level; Summer 2020 (2020 n=1,049 programs; 2019 n=2,737 programs)



**Content Categories of Programming**

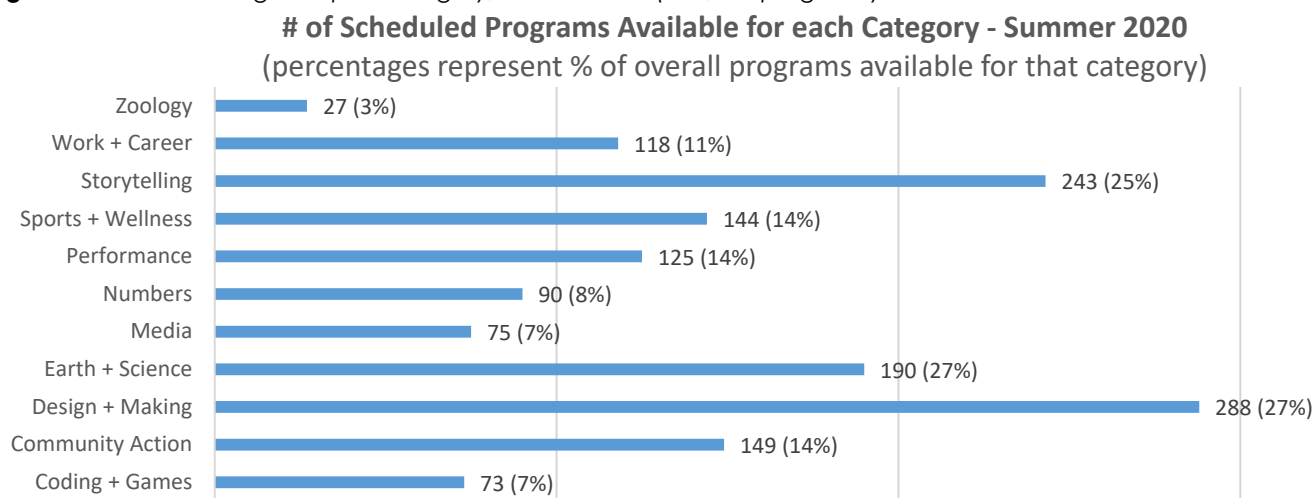
A final factor related to DCOL program information is the type of content, or “category”, of programming. A total of 1,036 of the listed programs were flagged with at least one category. The number of programs provided per category is described in Table Five and Figure 11. A single program may be accounted for in the sum for multiple categories (e.g., a program may be categorized as both “performance” and “story telling”). Digital Youth Network created the 10 program categories for Dallas City of Learning.

In summer 2020, the highest frequency program categories were “Earth & Science”, “Designing + Making”, and “Storeytelling”. This is notably different from prior summers, when the highest frequencies are “Work + Career” and “Storeytelling”. There is also more even variety of programs compared to prior summers, with proportionately more programs available across different categories. Far fewer programs were focused on “Work + Career”, and relatively more programs were focused on “Community Action”, “Performance”, and “Sports + Wellness” compared to prior summers.

**Table Five. Program Category Descriptions; summer 2017 – summer 2020**

		S20 (n=1,036)	S19 (n=2,714)	S19 (no DPL) (n=1,078)	S18 (n=2,134)	S17 (n=2,130)
<b>Earth &amp; Science</b>	Investigating the world around us	28%	2%	5%	12%	13%
<b>Designing + Making</b>	Creating visual graphics and physical structures; Building things with electronics, craft materials; Creating fashion	25%	6%	14%	15%	18%
<b>Storytelling</b>	Crafting and understanding fictional + historical stories	23%	63%	7%	37%	19%
<b>Community Action</b>	Addressing personal and community issues	14%	2%	5%	5%	5%
<b>Sports + Wellness</b>	Playing sports, helping the environment, and other healthy activities	14%	2%	6%	5%	2%
<b>Performance</b>	Participating in live music, theatre, and dance performances	12%	4%	11%	8%	7%
<b>Work + Career</b>	Learning about careers, business, and financial planning	11%	28%	71%	28%	31%
<b>Numbers</b>	Using math to explore the world	9%	1%	4%	2%	2%
<b>Coding + Games</b>	Digital and web literacy; Creating websites, apps, video games, interactive stories, etc	7%	2%	5%	7%	5%
<b>Media</b>	Creating animations, movies, music, podcasts, and two- and three-dimensional artworks	7%	<1%	<1%	1%	6%
<b>Zoology</b>	Learning about and interacting with all kinds of animals	3%	<1%	<1%	3%	4%

**Figure 11. Count of Programs per Category; Summer 2020(n=1,049 programs)**



## DCOL Program Roster & Dosage

Individual student rostering and program dosage was compiled from a variety of formats. Each of the 1,049 programs listed were categorized into three enrollment & dosage categories: (1) individual participants rostered, (2) aggregate head-counts of participants only, and (3) no dosage or enrollment available. A total of 275 listed programs had some level of enrollment data available: 183 programs had aggregate head-counts only (compared to 702 in 2019), 92 programs had some individual participants rostered (compared to 918 in 2019), and 774 programs did not have any enrollment data available. Overall, **there are fewer programs with any enrollment (headcounts for individuals rostered), but overall more programs with individual participants rostered.**

About 9% of all scheduled programming across DCOL had individual student-level enrollment and dosage records (down from 33% in 2019 and 30% in 2018). Figure 12 shows the number of programs with each enrollment and dosage data type.

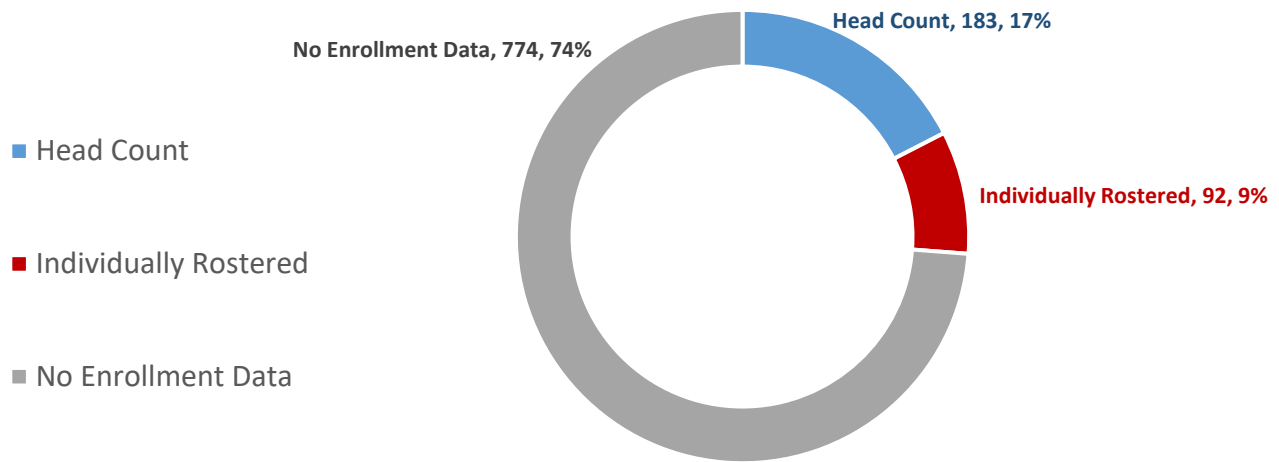
**For all DCOL programs with enrollment and dosage data available at either the aggregate or student-level, 36,655 total participants enrolled in 275 DCOL programs or events** (down from 68,303 participants across 1,620 programs in

2019, and down from 96,143 in 2018). **Among all 275 programs with individual or aggregate dosage, 963,892<sup>5</sup> cumulative days and 1,480,961 cumulative hours of programming were provided during summer 2020 by DCOL partner organizations** (compared to 927,253 days and 2,993,300 hours in 2019 and 1,217,089 days and 3,689,834 hours in 2018). These differences compared to prior years point to two programmatic differences: although there were fewer programs and fewer participants, programs for the summer began in mid-Spring due to COVID-19 school closures in March 2020, and programs were shorter on average by hours-per-day (i.e., the total “days” and “hours” of dosage are closer than similar years, indicating that individual days of programming were short).

The 36,655 total participants does not represent unique individuals. Rather, individuals that participated in more than one program or event are counted for each program or event in which they participated.

**Figure 12.** Proportion of DCOL Programs & Events with Aggregate or Student-level Enrollment; summer 2020

### Proportion of Programs & Events by Enrollment Type



#### Events

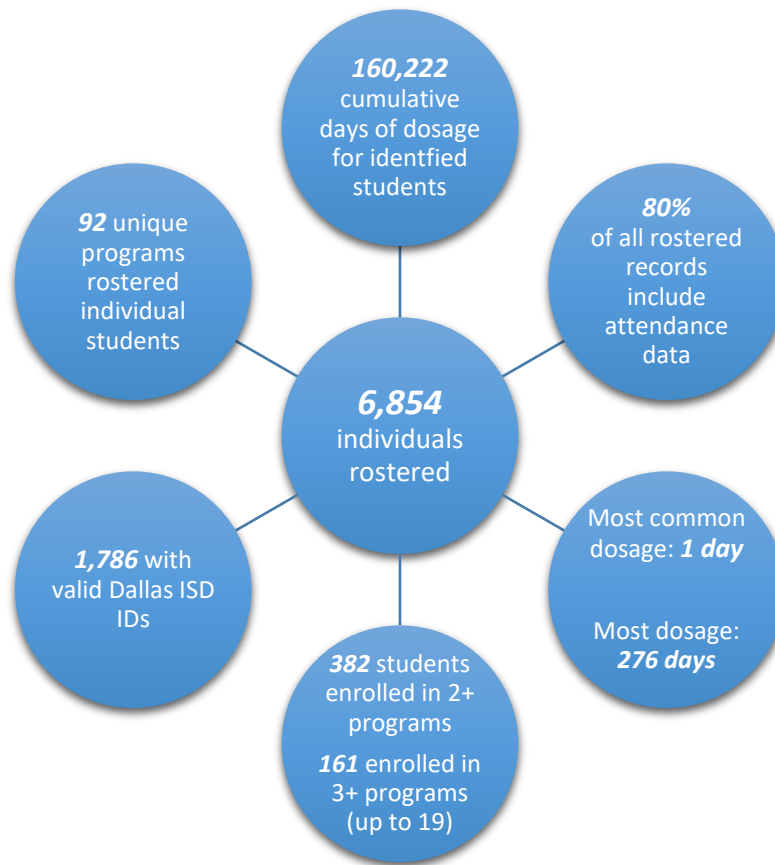
There were 2 individual programs during summer 2020 that were classified as “events”. Both were Turn Up events –a virtual Turn Up with the Frontiers of Flight Museum and a Digital Turn Up by Big Thought. The virtual Turn Ups occurred on August 15, 2020. A total of 1,400 people were reported to have attended the digital Turn Up at the Frontiers of Flight Museum.

#### Individual Student Enrollment and Dosage

Program rostering and dosage data was utilized to determine how many identifiable (meaning having valid ID user ID numbers for program matching and individual records) individual students enrolled and participated in programs. Figure 13 shows how students were enrolled in and across scheduled programs. There were 6,854 unique individuals rostered into one or more programs (down compared to 35,134 in summer 2019).

<sup>5</sup> There were cumulatively 1,832,275 days and 5,650,611 hours of programming received according to the data. However, 868,383 of these days and 4,169,650 of these hours are accounted for by just three programs with 10,524 rostered participants, each running a total of 75-89 days. Analyses assume that these three programs, Big on Self Care, SMART Summer: Reading Challenge, and SPARK!TV, were not “attended” by each of these thousands of participants for the days available.

**Figure 13.** Individual Student Enrollment and Dosage across DCOL; summer 2020 (n=6,854 individuals)



During summer 2020, 6,854 uniquely identified individuals enrolled in the 92 programs with individual student-level enrollment and/or dosage records (compared to 35,134 individuals enrolled in 921 programs in 2019 and 37,923 rostered individuals in 2018), for a total of 7,840 roster records. Most of these students (n=6,472, or about 94%) completed one program, and the remaining 382 students (~6% of individuals rostered) completed 2 or more programs (compared to 19% with 2+ in 2019); 161 completed 2 programs, 106 completed 3-5 programs, 37 completed 6-10 programs, and small group of 18 students completed more than 10. The maximum number of programs for any individual student was 19. The number and proportion of students participating in 2 or more programs decreased compared to summer 2019. In 2017, just 4% of all enrolled students attended 2 or more programs. In 2018 the rate was 14.5%, and in 2019 the rate was 19%.

Of the 7,840 roster records (students rostered into more than one program is duplicated in this number), at least one day of dosage was registered for 5,974 of the records<sup>6</sup>. Among these, the highest amount of dosage for any one student was 276 days (1 student; all Vickery Meadow virtual experiences). The most common number of days of dosage is 1 day (n=708, or about 10%), followed by 50 days (n=229 students, or 3%), 10 days (n=207 students, or 3%), and 5 days (n=161 students, or 2%). This sample of individually rostered students with documented attendance averaged 31.5 days of programming and accumulated 160,222 total days of attendance at summer 2020 programs (compared to an average of 13.9 days per student and 561,393 total days in 2019 and an average of 16.6 per student and 628,211 total days in summer 2018).

Of the 6,854 individuals rostered into at least one scheduled program, valid student ID numbers are available for 1,786 of them, or about 26% (compared to 24,928 in summer 2019). This is fewer students proportionately compared to 71% of all rostered students in 2019 and to 69% of rostered students in 2018.

<sup>6</sup> The remaining records did not have individual dosage information (days of attendance), but the enrolled students were marked as "enrolling" the program.

## Activity Log of Big Thought Support Services

Big Thought tracked real-time, ongoing interactions with DCOL partners through 3 tools: (1) the DCOL Partner Tracking tool, which tracked meetings held with partners, including the date, participants, and objective, (2) the PD Training Roster, which tracked professional development sessions facilitated for DCOL partners, including participants, date, and objective, and (3) a log of partner technology requests.

Data from these three tools was compiled into a master comprehensive record of logged interactions and organized at the program level so that any partner that participated in trainings or meetings appears on the master roster and the total number of hours of engagement of any type is linked to that program.

### Meetings and Trainings

During summer 2020, 90 different organized meetings or training sessions were scheduled and facilitated by BT staff and/or DCOL partners (compared to 241 in 2019, 205 during 2018, and 87 during summer 2017); 26 (29%) of these were classified as training/professional development (compared to 67% in 2019 and 63% in 2018). Representing 81 different partner organizations or programs, 399 staff participated in these sessions for a cumulative 564 hours (participants are duplicate individuals). In 2019, there were 123 organizations and 1,819 participants for a cumulative 5,211 hours. Big Thought and Dallas Parks & Recreation accounted for the most hours of meetings and/or training – similar to prior summers. The average number of hours for the 81 organizations or programs that participated was 6.6 hours per organization (compared to an average of 42 hours per org in 2019 and 2018).

Regarding trainings/PD specifically, the 26 training sessions had a total capacity of 490 spots and had 227 participants – PD offerings were attended at about 46% capacity (compared to 72% in 2019). The highest number of participants in any one training was 40. The average length of all meeting or training sessions was approximately 1.2 hours (compared to 1.7 in 2019), with meetings averaging just under one hour each and trainings averaging 1.8 hours.

The meetings and trainings held for summer 2020 were categorized by CORE into 3 broad categories: (1) coordinating and connecting, (2) technical assistance, and (3) content. Content includes topics such as curriculum, program planning, program quality, and SEL. All of the 64 meetings focused on coordinating and connecting. The trainings and PD sessions were more split between technical assistance and content – 58% were about content and 42% were focused on technical assistance. This is a slight shift from summer 2019, when 82% of all trainings focused on content and just 15% focused on technical assistance. This increase in technical assistance is reflective of more time focused on the Expanded Learning Information System and transitioning from in-person to virtual programming. More specific than the category of each session, Big Thought staff assigned each session to one of 12 program focus areas. A summary of the program focus areas is described in Table Six.

**Table Six.** Program Focus of DCOL Meetings & PD; Summer 2020 (n=90 sessions)

Program Focus	# Sessions
DCoL General	46
Learning Pathways	20
ELIS	6
NRI Evaluation	6
Creative Voices	5
Soars	3
Thriving Minds SC	3
SEL	1

Following 65 of the training/PD sessions provided, participants were asked to complete a brief feedback survey (compared to just 15 sessions with surveys in 2019). The survey asked participants for their perspectives about three key categories: (1) training content, (2) training execution, and (3) projected session outcomes. Specifically, respondents gave the degree to which 11 statements were true for them. The findings from that survey are provided in Table Seven. Overall, participants had very positive feedback about the PD provided.

**Table Nine.** Summary of Responses to BT PD Feedback Survey; summer 2020 (2020 n=463; 2019 n=233)

		Absolutely	Mostly	Somewhat	Barely	No
Training Content	The training met my expectations.	81%	15%	4%	0%	0%
	The training was simple and easy to understand.	87%	11%	2%	0%	0%
	I found the training content to be relevant to my work.	86%	10%	4%	1%	0%
	The training effectively addressed the topic that it was designed for.	86%	11%	3%	0%	0%
Training execution	I was kept engaged throughout the session.	80%	14%	4%	2%	0%
	Activities were fitting to content area and session purpose.	85%	11%	2%	0%	0%
	Session provided opportunity to learn from colleagues.	81%	12%	6%	0%	1%
	Facilitator involved participants in the learning process.	87%	10%	3%	0%	0%
Projected session outcomes	I can and will apply strategies and information from this session into my future work.	88%	7%	4%	0%	0%
	This session is important to my growth as a professional in this field.	86%	10%	3%	1%	0%
	The time that I invested in this session was worthwhile.	86%	9%	3%	0%	1%

### Activities Specific to Learning Pathways

Twenty meetings were held to plan for and coordinate the Learning Pathways cohort of providers. These 20 meetings occurred between April 17 and July 23, 2020, and included a total of 60 participants engaging for 52.5 total hours. These virtual meetings covered design, a Wave 1 cohort kick-off, office hours, and bi-weekly meetings among the Wave 1 cohort.

### Financial Resources and Investment

Big Thought invested a total of \$527,757 into DCOL for summer 2020. This is less than prior summers - \$1,653,107 in 2019 and nearly \$1.8 million in 2018. The lower investment is mostly reflective of substantially less programming investment due to COVID-19 restrictions. Individual programs received direct financial support from Big Thought. Programs were required to apply for this financial support through the Neighborhood Resource Initiative of DCOL. The financial stipends provided to partners totaled \$173,500 in summer 2020 (compared to \$100,000 in summer 2019). In addition to these stipends direct to programs, Big Thought invested an additional \$15,695 into the Coordinated Neighborhood work through in-person and virtual Soars programming and community engagement initiatives.

A total of \$260,173 were invested into strategic partnerships, including Thriving Minds, Creative Solutions, Fit & Faithful Living, Dallas Community Fellowship, Inc., The Writer's Garret, and Creative Kits.

Finally, a total of \$98,889 was invested in city-wide strategies, including the DCOL platform, Turn Up! Events, STEM Expo, and partner convening events.

### Technology & MXP Resources

The Mobile Tech Experience (MXP) truck was not utilized in summer 2020 as it was in previous summers due to COVID-19 restrictions on in-person gatherings.

Aside from the MXP, Big Thought provided program partners with DCOL Technology Kits. These kits were provided to 1 program for a total of 102 hours. The kit included 8 laptops and 1 hot spot.

## Program Staff Interviews

**CORE interviewed program leadership from 13 programs that participated in Dallas City of Learning during the summer of 2020.** The list of partners to interview was created by Big Thought staff after giving consideration to accessing partners of varying program sizes, years of DCOL participation, type of program content and duration of programs. Four CORE staff members conducted the interviews via Zoom or phone calls. All 13 programs that CORE contacted, agreed to participate in interviews. There was a total of 25 interviews. Several factors determined how



many times each leader was interviewed including when the first interview took place, the leaders' availability, and the leaders acknowledgement that their feelings about the program and participants' needs did not change significantly from week to week. Five program leaders were interviewed one time. Five program leaders were interviewed two times. Two program leaders were interviewed three times and one program leader was interviewed four times.

### **Professional Development and Training**

When asked "What role did Big Thought staff play in supporting your program this summer specifically?" there was a wide-variety of responses. Seven out of 13 (54%) responded that funding was at least one area of support from which their organization benefitted. Six out of 13 (46%) pointed to receiving professional development and trainings in areas such as the initial kick off meeting, Lunch and Learns, workshops on virtual learning and a book, "Brain Power Classroom." Five out of 13 (38%) responded that they gained support in the way of making connections to others in the community: sometimes with children and parents and sometimes with other organizations. Two out of 13 (15%) pointed to the support they received in getting and staying organized by receiving answers to logistical questions about DCOL as well as spreadsheets to track attendance. Other answers given once included tech support and dropping off surveys.

Program leaders were asked about the quality and helpfulness of the professional development and trainings they joined as well as any that were specific to COVID-19. The adjective used most frequently to describe the PD and trainings was "Helpful" – helpful in **preparing for set up and checkpoints**, helpful in **guiding them to focus more on the big picture and improvement**, helpful to **learn about virtual learning and virtual platforms and the necessary software**, and helpful to **get the perspective of veteran DCOL leader participants**. The PD and trainings were also considered professional, informative and useful. **Pointed out as a PD topic that was "just right," was the topic of mental health so they could use the information provided to comfort their students**. A webinar of COVID-19 safety measures was also appreciated as a measure to make sure children were kept safe.

A few matters were mentioned that were seen as possible areas for improvement such as following up with leaders to provide more technical assistance, and having more parents present "as they are the best stakeholders." While it was clear the virtual format was appreciated, it was mentioned a few times that allowing more time to share out with other participants would have also been beneficial.

### **Program Supports and Supports for Families**

Before summer 2020 programs began, leaders received several sources of information regarding specific needs of families and students due to COVID-19. These included results from Big Thought community survey, access to an email chain where partners shared their thoughts on what their communities needed, and a resource sheet to share with families illustrating where they could go for help with educating and feeding their children, as well as resources for childcare and paying bills. This sheet also had Center for Disease Control information.

Two partners said they did not receive COVID-19 related information and one could not recall if they did or did not. When asked "From your perspective, what are the greatest needs of families and youth during this time?" one leader said they "haven't noticed any new mental or physical health needs. The kids are ok but antsy and uncertain whether they are going back [to school] and what it means for their friendships." Another leader said, "Our families need a lot always; this is not new trauma for them and is really the least of their worries. The needs of our families haven't changed with this because it's always bad." One leader said they don't know what is the greatest need right now, but all others were definitive that their students' needs were clear and immediate. There were eight mentions of social, emotional and/or mental health needs. There were eight mentions of either basic needs and resources, the need for information, and the need for academic support. Other needs mentioned include technology including WiFi, virtual experiences and simply "something to do."

When asked, "Specifically, what are the most persistent social and emotional needs for families?" and "Specifically, what are the most persistent social and emotional needs for youth?" the answers to both questions were much the same. Families, including youth, need breaks from each other and more time with people outside of their families. Leaders reported stress among parents around their children being on computers too much with little else to do and little connection to others. The leaders recognize families need their community and relationships with others. Leaders

reported that youth need mental health support and therapy as well as opportunities to get out of their homes and to not spend too much time alone.

**Though the virtual program format is new to them, program leaders have created many ways for their programs to address the social and emotional needs of their youth and families.** While online and in-person, leaders encourage their students to talk to one another and work together. That said, one leader pointed out that their program faces barriers in that they are afraid of risk and uncomfortable with adults speaking online with students without a guardian present. However, another program does have their students journal with the adult leaders. Two programs stated that they integrate social-emotional learning activities into their program including picking one student per day to receive “shout outs.”

Program leaders are addressing social and emotional needs in a variety of ways with several stating they felt they could use additional support. Areas in which additional support was noted as necessary include funding, technology (e.g., a more intuitive interface and partnerships with organizations like AT&T that can impact technology access for families). Additional support could also be utilized with more adults at the program site as well as help hiring talented people. Training on mental health and a speaker or counselor to speak with students were also noted as possible additional supports that would be utilized and appreciated. One leader noted, “We have all the resources we need, we just need to be able to utilize it and get back to programming.”

**Leaders verbalized wanting additional support from Big Thought on getting the word out about their programs, getting information on other programs and contact information to contact potential students, as well as creating opportunities for them to collaborate with other organizations. Leaders would also like more training on technology.**

Some leaders stated that they do benefit from other support services in the community as well. The YMCA, Booker T Washington High School and Hunger Busters were all mentioned as organizations that provide or food or the space to pick up food. One organization hired an “Opportunity Advisor” to help them build relationships and get new partners. Another organization is part of the Fair Park South Dallas cohort which provided training and PPE. Pan African Connection provided a venue for one of the DCOL programs. Another program leader stated they work with a lot of social service agencies to connect art organizations to social service organizations.

### **Program Access**

Overall, while recruiting new and former participants, leaders felt as if they were able to reach the youth their program targeted. This was true except in cases where they wanted to put out the word at schools and public libraries which were closed due to COVID-19. Most leaders felt they could reach their target participants. Some program leaders stated that they had low capacity due to the state ordinance limiting the number of people who can gather together and the safety guidelines of keeping six feet distance between people. One sports program had to close several locations due to the rise in COVID-19 cases, so enrollment went down. **One leader stated they were able to have a broader reach since the program was virtual and they could reach students all around the city. Across camps that had been a part of DCOL previous to this summer, the leaders seemed pleased that many of their former participants returned this summer.**

Leader feedback concerning whether or not advertising was different than in previous years was mixed. Two leaders said their programs paid for advertising through social media outlets because they could not leave flyers at schools, restaurants or apartments. **One leader did not find an issue with advertising, stating that, “Advertising was less of a need this year - you could whisper and the whole city would know it was happening.”**

Precautions due to COVID-19 were not the only barrier for caregivers and youth accessing DCOL programs this summer. Access to, and anxiety about, technology and transportation and language issues were stated as barriers to enrollment in programs this summer. COVID-19 safety measures caused disruptions in communicating and advertising and almost certainly resulted in less families knowing what programs were available. Of course, the main barrier was indeed fear of contracting COVID-19.

Though there were several minor and major barriers to DCOL running “as usual” this summer, **Big Thought is credited with providing multiple benefits in terms of increasing access to programs for learners from low-income/underserved communities.** Youth and families were able to navigate the DCOL website to find available programs. DCOL programs are generally considered accessible in that they are affordable and help break the language barrier when

children find programs in their communities where people speak their languages. **Big Thought aids in communicating between families and organizations indirectly as well by providing leaders with rosters of all participating organizations to aid in connecting with each other and referring students to each other's organizations.**

When questioned about modifying the number of days programming was provided this summer, the 10 answers were varied. **Four leaders stated their programs added additional days. Four programs' days stayed much the same and two programs offered less programming.**

### ***Program Adaptations***

Adaptations were made to program content as well as program delivery at many sites this summer. In general, **the topic and themes of programs stayed the same as last year and as planned for this year, but some components were added that recognized the difficulty people are going through during the COVID-19 period.** Some sites increased or added an SEL component and/or "life class" to deal not only with the reality of the virus, but also the repercussions such as the financial impacts at home. In order to do this properly, adults at the sites required training and conversations with experts. In at least one site, these classes were opened up for participants' families. One program created a YouTube Channel and family engagement activities online. Another program spent a lot more time this summer on relationship building than in previous summers.

Naturally, much work was done to adapt programs to be implemented virtually mainly on Zoom and Google Classroom. In order to accommodate children's attention spans on technology, sites emphasized implementing engaging activities with more participation than one might expect of a virtual program. These involved students leading discussions in Zoom Breakout Rooms and brain breaks such as scavenger hunts. Some sites had to cancel off-site field trips while at least one site took virtual field trips.

**Making the transition to virtual programs clearly took a lot of time, energy and creativity. Descriptions of the process included the following: painful, hard, stressful, not fun, and "a lot of work but worth it because our kids had something to do."** Some online activities required materials that students may or may not have at home, so instructors had to brainstorm common household items most would have available. Leaders had to consider issues they hadn't before such as technology available to youth as well as the instructors and training their instructors on technology necessary for program implementation. In-person camps required learning COVID-19 safety measures. Some of this information came from Big Thought and some came from the CDC, World Health Organization, and Texas and National trends.

### ***Program Connection to DCOL***

The CORE interviewers presented that "Some of the aims of DCOL include connecting youth to programs, connecting programs to each other, offering resources to programs, and collecting student-level data." Leaders were then asked if any of these areas were also a priority for their programs. In general, leaders expressed the value in receiving data from Big Thought. Most say they feel it is "super valuable" – the key to understanding youth and families' needs and they learn from it. One leader feels Big Thought is not doing anything to support data collection at this point. His/her organization feels the need to have qualitative data to show their donors so they are using Hello Insight to collect their own survey data. Another organization values the data Big Thought provides but also does their own longitudinal research.

Leaders also expressed their desire to connect their own organizations with other organizations. One leader felt this was easy to do due to weekly Zoom calls with his/her cohort. While another expressed some frustration trying to make connections with other organizations because he/she is reaching out but not hearing back. Another leader recognizes that connections were being made but COVID-19 interrupted these efforts.

Big Thought received much praise for their effectiveness of DCOL coordination. Below are a few quotes from leaders:

- "I would not be able to do half of what I do without the help of Big Thought. They are not only focused on DCOL they also connect us to other things we may need."
- "Still doing a great coordination job. The follow up is strong and are very professional. This is one of my favorite experiences with them."
- "It went well this summer. Between COVID and having to do everything at the height of the pandemic, it wasn't the easiest but it was a coordinated effort they made to ensure we understood what was available and how they could reach out. Communication via email was key and they did their best just using those

tools to get info out as quickly as possible. It was good in spite of the pandemic and everything going on with people personally."

- "Very effective. They have been really diligent about emails, notifications."
- "The whole data effort is great."

Two leaders did express some frustration:

- "I would like to add the invoice system has been a roadblock and challenging due to the lack of guidance and delay in the process for successful delivery."
- "Not sure I can speak to that because I have little to no engagement with DCOL over the past few weeks. We helped each other previously to build kits, etc."

Below are leaders' responses to the question, "What would you change about DCOL if you could?"

- "More of the same - more connecting with other programs."
- "More get-togethers with other programs especially while some are shutting down - they could combine efforts."
- "Convening to swap ideas would be good."
- "More year-round communication."
- "Grant process - too over the top. Shouldn't have to present in person like you for City of Dallas."

## **Big Thought DCOL Staff Interviews**

A focus group interview with ten Big Thought staff was conducted in September 2020, following the completion of DCOL summer programs. The focus group involved support staff that worked directly with DCOL partners and leadership staff in charge of systems-level work. Staff were asked a series of questions to understand the approach taken by Big Thought over the summer, including the types of supports provided and lessons learned.

### **Approach to Summer 2020**

Like many other organizations, Big Thought found itself with a need to adapt to circumstances brought upon by COVID-19. Several of Big Thought staff found that the primary focus heading into summer was to provide technological and financial assistance to summer programs, while also assessing the needs of families and youth. Other considerations for Big Thought staff was around how to support youth with learning difference and providing programming to students in neighborhoods that are historically underserved. One staff member emphasized that while Big Thought found itself with less capacity at the start of summer than normal, it became more important in Summer 2020 to strategically allocate resources in a targeted manner. When asked about the goal of the targeted resources, staff indicated that the aim was to make sure programs were still happening during the summer in order to provide families with opportunities and support. One Big Thought staff member emphasized that the usual metrics by which program quality was assessed did not take as high priority given the new virtual format for programming and the limited technological skills of partners to adapt program content for online learning.

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*"COVID affected pretty much everything we do. We had to do a lot packing and un-packing about how we should respond. We had to let go around 160 staff before summer started. This was our direct program team, our boots on the ground."*

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### **Resources & Supports Provided**

With citywide partners such as the Dallas Public Library and Park & Recreation closing their doors in response to COVID-19, Big Thought staff felt the responsibility to do more for the community. When it came to supporting partners and their summer programs, Big Thought leveraged the Neighborhood Resource Initiative (NRI) program to provide

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*"We were also hearing a lot of SEL resources for online learning. Learning how to recognize this or leverage these SEL practices in a virtual session."*

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\$3,000 grants to approximately 51 programs. According to Big Thought, these funds for this summer were unrestricted and could be used for any purpose that supports continuation of the program whether it is to buy materials or pay the light bill to keep the power on. Additionally, professional development and technical assistance was provided to help partners utilize new virtual software and platforms for their summer programming. Some Big Thought staff mentioned how many of their partners were at first frustrated with learning new technology as there was a steep learning curve. However, according to Big Thought, partners eventually felt comfortable using technology for the new virtual format for their programs. When it came to supporting families, Big Thought helped organize food assistance program to provide lunch to students, including any essential materials needed for their summer program activities.

*"The systems we usually rely on, like the library system, was out. We found ourselves having to take up more responsibility for the community and try to find how to respond. We did a lot of inquiry such as the family need survey and town hall to see where we are at."*

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### **Access, Quality, & Dosage amid COVID-19**

Although Access, Quality, and Dosage are the key things that Big Thought measures year after year, staff indicated that these areas of focus have manifested very differently in a virtual setting as a result of COVID-19. For Access, staff usually defined this by how accessible a program was to low-income and underserved communities. However, as one staff member mentioned, "access" in 2020 now meant meeting families at the school so they can pick up the materials their children need to participate in remote activity. Another staff member also defined "access" in 2020 as a need to close technology gap that prevented families from having consistent and reliable internet to participate in virtual experiences.

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*"Keep in mind that there were fewer programs on paper but that's because programs consolidated their program for online that can still reach out to similar number of students."*

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For Quality, Big Thought staff in general expected programs to have a lower quality compared to previous summers. Several staff attributed this to the perceived difficulty in adapting in-person hands-on activities to a virtual format, including difficulty in how to best measure quality in a virtual space. Nonetheless, Big Thought leveraged the existing Learning Pathways micro-credentialing tool with 6 partners to help programs measure student growth of skills and to assess if the program thought their kids what they intended to teach them. Although this tool was not broadly applied in all summer programs, some of the staff indicated that this could be a potential tool to measure a component of quality in the future that can be applied to virtual and remote programming.

*"Quality was a casualty of COVID this year. We also did not have the right quality tool that fits the virtual environment. We just have qualitative stories about quality."*

For Dosage, staff also anticipated fewer student in summer programming. Staff attributed this to a lower number of partners able to provide summer programming in 2020. Several staff also indicated that of the partners that did proceed with summer 2020 programming, the length of programming was shortened and condensed, leading to less time for student to participate in these same programs.

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*"Students just needed a space to vent and talk and when we look back at this in a few years, I think quality is just responding to the needs of families and creating spaces that were not widely present."*

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## Looking Forward

When asked about whether virtual experiences are here to stay for future summers, Big Thought staff had mixed feelings. Some indicated that the preference will still be to hold in-person programming, since they have also heard the same preference echoed by families over the summer. Other staff agreed with preference for in-person programming but saw the virtual option as an opportunity to scale and expand DCOL to a larger

audience of students. Nonetheless, in general, Big Thought staff agreed that any effort in scaling virtual opportunities was not something Big Thought should take up on their own. Rather, it requires a larger collaboration with multiple partners according to Big Thought staff. Ahead of Summer 2021, Big Thought staff will continue to uplift and leverage their partnerships and find ways scale the Learning Pathways tools to measure continuous improvement.

*"Virtual is here to stay in some form or another. It's prominent this year and maybe less next year, but we are learning to put resources behind virtual learning. It's going to be a way for large systems to expand reach going forward. Getting families connected was a big investment of money, time, and staff. BT cannot do this by our own. This would need to be a bigger response in collaboration with the city and others."*

## DCOL Participant Family Interviews

### Methodology & Sample

Four families from the SOARS summer camp were invited to participate in an interview to understand their Summer 2020 Dallas City of Learning (DCOL) experience. Of the four families that were solicited, three agreed to participate in the interviews. Each family had their own interview whereby the parent and their children were asked questions about their summer experience, along with any feedback they had for program improvement.

The SOARS summer camp was help virtually via Zoom over the course of a 7-week period. Kits with hands-on materials for guided activities were provided in advance at a few pick-up locations around Dallas neighborhoods. These kits were used for collaborative activities during scheduled Zoom sessions. Activities covered a variety of content areas including STEM, arts, financial literacy, writing, and more. This summer camp was tailored to students ages 6 – 12 years old.

Summer 2020 was the first time these families participated in both SOARS and DCOL. Only one other family has participated in DCOL the year prior. Each of the families heard about summer camps in different ways. One family was able to find information from a flyer at a local recreation center, the other received an informational email, and the other was able to find the summer camp through an online search. They all expressed the ease of access to both the summer camp information and connecting online to the programming via Zoom.

### Family Perspectives on Program Content

When asked about the quality of the program, both parents and students expressed a high favorability and excitement for the summer camp. There was a consensus that the activities were fun, highly engaging, and interesting. In particular, families enjoyed the virtual tours around the world where a knowledgeable guide provided information about the location. A few of the parents pointed out that it is typically expensive to take in-person trips to the same locations with the whole family that they appreciated bringing the location to them virtually. They also expressed that the locations that were part of the virtual tours were places that they would have otherwise not have been able to see or know about. All of the families also enjoyed the activities where there were hands-on materials to create arts & crafts projects. One example provided was the terrarium that students were asked to build and then share their creativity with other students in the summer camp during a Zoom session. One of the families, also enjoyed the financial literacy component whereby students logged onto a web-based game created by Fidelity Investments. This game gave students a set budget and opportunity to decide how to spend that money to cover household expenses. The parent appreciated that the program was giving life-lessons to students. However, students who were older appreciated this activity more than the younger students.

*"My son was at first stressed that I signed him up for the summer camp, but once he started, he really loved it. I saw that the staff were nice and friendly, and made me very happy as a parent."*

- DCOL Parent



### **Family Perspectives on Staff Performance**

Both parents and students viewed the summer camp staff as exceptional from their communication to how they ran the program to making students feel welcomed. Some of the parents believed that there was not going to be any summer programming this year and were pleasantly surprised that SOARS continued their programming virtually. Parents said that they valued this continued programming in order to occupy their children's time and distract from the reality of being in quarantine. Parents also mentioned that the summer camp also allowed for students to learn something new instead of just playing video games or watching Youtube videos all day. Student, in particular, mentioned that this was the first opportunity for them to get to talk with other students the same age as them since school was closed. When asked if staff were able to address any needs their families had, whether it was resources or emotional support, families said yes. Some of the students mentioned how staff seemed to notice when they were having a bad day and how staff tried to cheer them up by asking about how the student was feeling and engaging them more in the activities.

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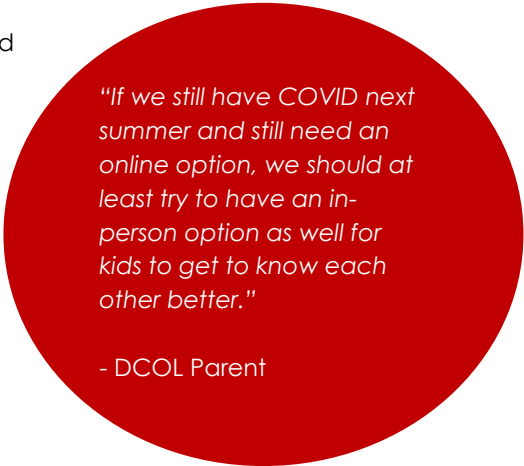
*"They did help me when I was having a real hard day and helped me have a better day throughout the day especially while we are in quarantine. Staff didn't really approach me directly but they just kind of knew and just asked me questions to help find out what was wrong and they did a really good job at cheering me up. They made me feel part of the family."*

*- DCOL Student*

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### **Considerations for Next Summer**

Families enjoyed every aspect of the summer camp, although it was virtual. In general, the families hope there is at least a hybrid version whereby both a virtual and in-person options is offered in the scenario where an fully in-person option is not available. The main reason that families provided for this recommendation is to allow students to have better opportunity to talk and get to know each other. Another recommendation offered by one of the parents is to break down the summer camp into different age groups to foster more connection between students. This particular parent noticed that for some of the activities, it was usually the older kids who were engaged in conversation than the younger kids. Additionally, another family noticed that at times staff were the ones mainly talking while the students listened. This family recommended to have more opportunity for students to talk to each other. Nonetheless, families do not have particular recommendations in changes to program content, schedule, or length.



*"If we still have COVID next summer and still need an online option, we should at least try to have an in-person option as well for kids to get to know each other better."*

*- DCOL Parent*