



**TARGET
GRADUATION**

2012

***End of Year
Results***

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INTRODUCTION

TARGET GRADUATION MISSION

In order to boost the high-school graduation rate in Central Texas Target Graduation, a program of United Way for Greater Austin (UWATX), focuses on broad, system-wide interventions to positively impact not just individual student performance but the culture of learning in schools and programs. The program develops and coordinates interventions and supports, which emphasize collaboration to prepare students for success in college, work and life.

WHY WE DO IT

Adolescence is a pivotal period that determines patterns for adult behavior. Unfortunately, many students often drop below academic and behavioral standards in middle school due to mounting stress and responsibility, combined with a general lack of resources such as emotional support and adult role models. In many cases, students may need additional support - such as mentoring, behavioral health services or case management services - that their school neither can provide nor has the capacity to develop. These barriers can lead to our most vulnerable youth not receiving much-needed intervention services.

HOW WE DO IT

UWATX's Target Graduation program is changing the ways in which children experience both in-school and out-of-school time (OST) programs. Through our work with schools and service providers, we are creating and coordinating systems, implementing and funding evidence based services, and tracking and monitoring progress to positively impact students' performance and development.

INITIATIVES

Middle School Matters

Coordinate all services on 3 middle school campuses in Greater Austin

6 services:

- > Behavioral Health
- > Case Management
- > Mentoring
- > Out-of-School Time
- > Parent Education
- > Tutoring

Out-of-School Time

Produce OST Agenda with stakeholders at all levels - plan to improve quality and access to OST programs in Travis County

Assess areas of improvement in OST programs

Train OST staff to provide higher-quality services through Youth Program Quality (YPQ)

Plan for continuous program improvement

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS

OVERVIEW

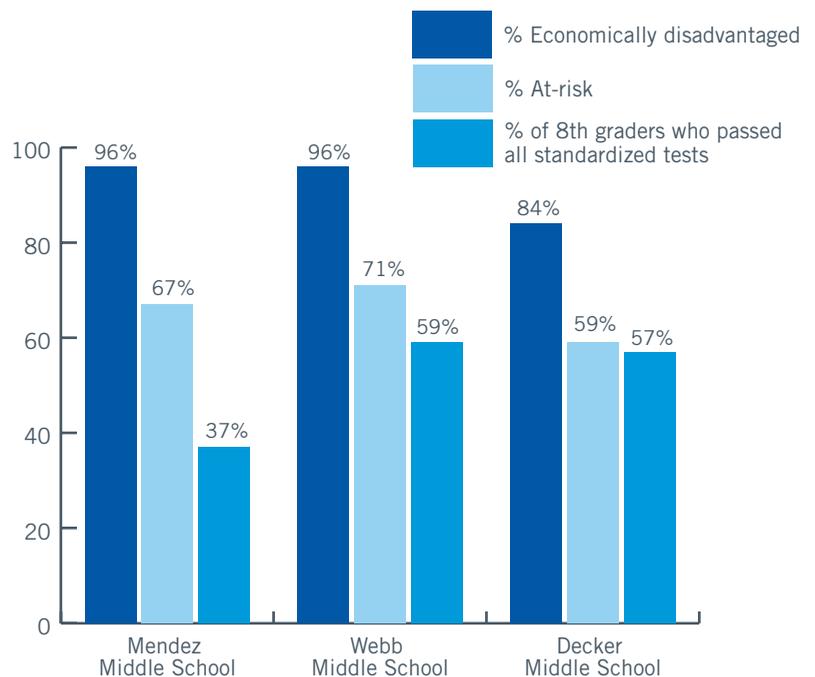
In the 2011 - 2012 school year, Target Graduation launched the Middle School Matters pilot program in Austin, creating and refining a system of broad-spectrum services to change the trajectory of three high-needs middle schools in the Greater Austin area. At Webb, Mendez and Decker Middle Schools, Middle School Matters coordinates a wide array of evidence-based services, including behavioral health, case management, mentoring, tutoring, out-of-school time and parent education, and provides campuses with integrated coordination to ensure these services are available to meet the specific needs of students.

THERE IS A COMMUNITY NEED

UWATX selected these three middle schools based on the percentage of students identified as being at-risk of dropping out, standardized test passing rates, percentage of youth eligible for free/reduced lunch and campus accountability ratings.

On these campuses:

- › 90% of students are eligible to receive free or reduced school lunch and more than 65% have factors that identify them as at-risk for dropping out of school.
- › Less than half of the 8th grade students passed all their required state assessment tests.



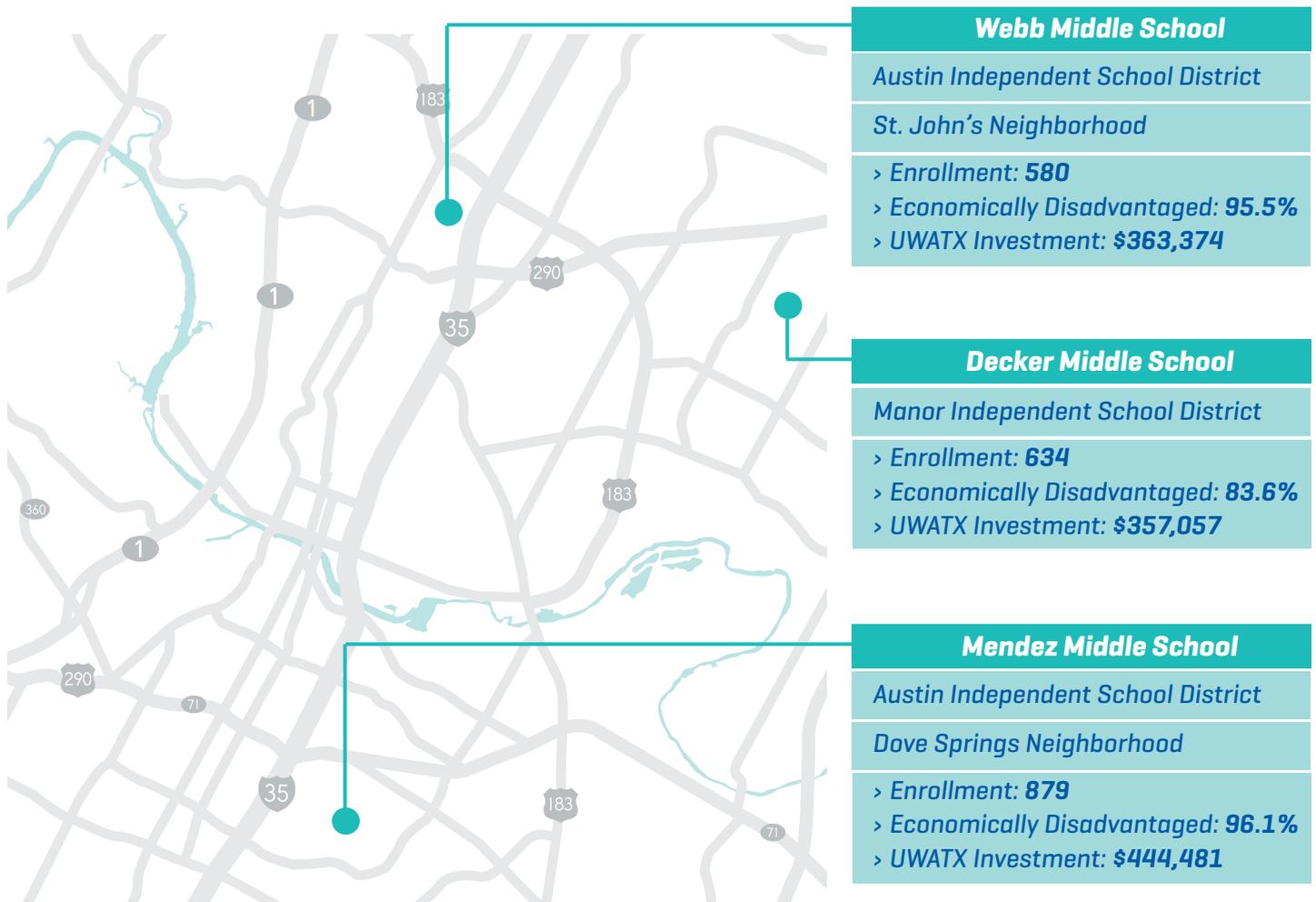
SERVICES

To make an impact, Middle School Matters provided campus coordination for the following services:

- › Behavioral Health
- › Case Management
- › Mentoring
- › Out-of-School Time
- › Parent Education
- › Tutoring

“Middle School Matters has been a great resource for our school. Teachers and students lives have been changed for the better based on the services provided. I don’t think our school would have been as strong as it is in terms of student support if United Way was not here.”

- Webb Middle School Teacher



WHY THESE STRATEGIES ARE IMPORTANT

Middle school is a critical point for intervention.

- > E3 Alliance data shows that at the critical transition points into and out of middle school, academic achievement, attendance and discipline all worsen, especially for the most challenged students.ⁱ
- > During the middle grades, students in high-poverty environments either launch on the path to high school graduation or are knocked off-track.ⁱⁱ

Behavioral health services can improve youth attitudes about school.

- > Students who receive social and emotional learning instruction have more positive attitudes about school. In one landmark study, students improved an average of 11 percentile points on standardized achievement tests compared to students who did not receive such instruction.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ E3 Alliance analysis of 2007-2011 AISD Public Education Information Management System

ⁱⁱ http://www.amle.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research_from_the_Field/Policy_Brief_Balfanz.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Durlak, J.A., Dymnicki, A.B., Schellinger, K.B., Taylor, R.D., and Weissberg, R.P. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions.

Case management can improve a students school experience.

- › During the 2010 - 2011 school year, UWATX partner Communities in Schools served 6,669 students with intensive case management services. Of those served:
 - › 99% remained in school;
 - › 92% advanced to the next grade level or graduated; and
 - › 88% improved their grades, attendance and/or behavior.

Mentoring has a positive impact.

- › Middle school students with at least one supportive adult in their lives are almost twice as likely to graduate.^{iv}
- › It's been noted that mentoring has a positive impact on the number of unexcused absences, increases students' attitudes about school, decreases the incidences of disruption in class and increases the likelihood of being engaged in what is going on in the classroom.^v

Self-esteem can be impacted by out-of-school time programming.

- › Research indicates youth who participate in out-of-school time (OST) programs improve significantly in three major areas: feelings and attitudes, behavioral and school performance. More specifically, OST programs succeeded in improving youths' feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, school bonding, positive social behaviors, school grades and achievement test scores.

Parental involvement during middle school is positively related to achievement.

- › Parent involvement that creates an understanding about purposes, goals, and meaning of academic performance; communicates expectations about involvement; and provides strategies that students can effectively use has the strongest positive relation with achievement.^{vi}

Tutoring has positive effects on academic performance.

- › Tutored students outperform their peers in examinations and express more positive attitudes toward subjects in which they are tutored.^{vii}

"The Middle School Matters initiative has been a blessing for our students and our campus. Last year my options in terms of helping my students were so limited - I could provide consequences but no real plan with resources to address the issues. This year, with the support of Middle School Matters, I have quality services to offer my students and their families."

- Valerie Torres-Solis, Assistant Principal at Webb Middle School

iv Gambone, M.A., Klenn, A.M. & Connell, J.P. (2002). Finding out What Matters for Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development.

v <http://www.serviceleader.org/new/vis/articles/2003/04/000194.php>

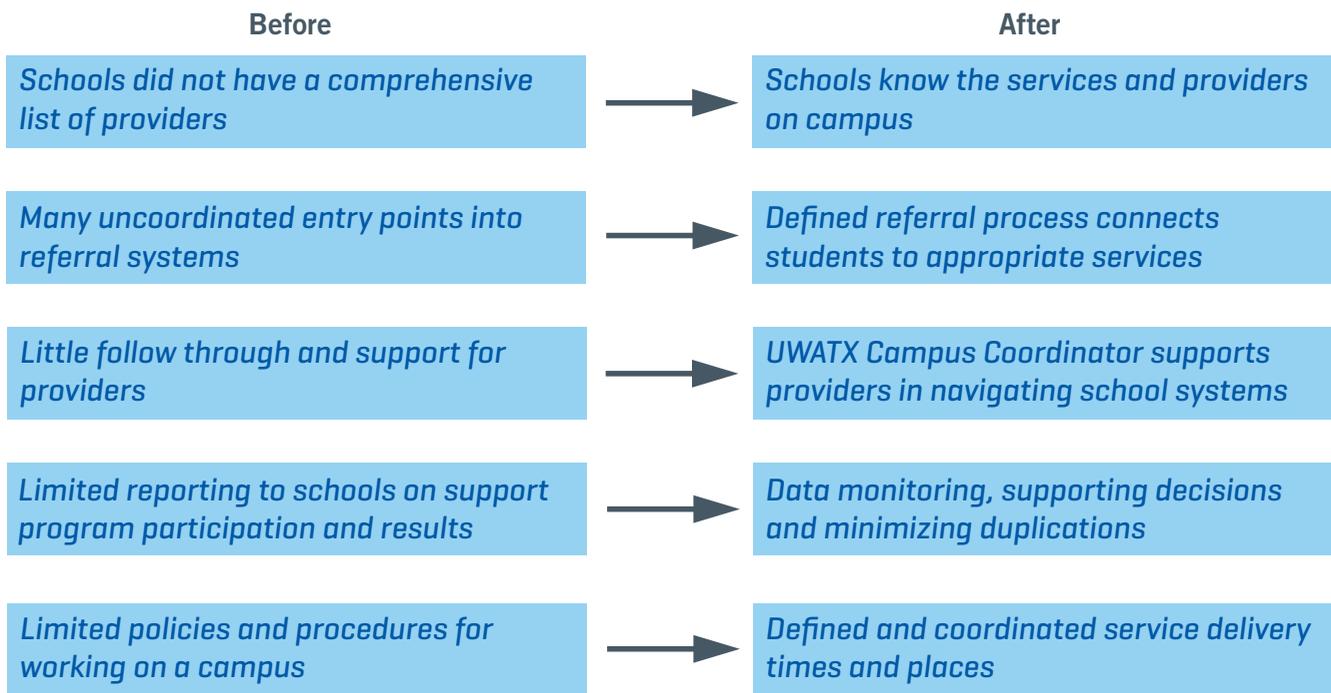
vi Q4 CTK Report

vii California Research Bureau; California State Library

OUR WORK: MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS

Prior to the 2011 - 2012 school year, Austin and Manor Independent School Districts (ISDs) did not have capacity to develop a system that integrated external providers with their current processes to address students' needs. Without coordination, the schools were risking duplicating services, mismatching of services and providing little follow through on service delivery.

With the assistance of Middle School Matters, Webb, Decker and Mendez Middle Schools have implemented systems that help students receive much-needed services and allow providers to distribute services efficiently to where they were most needed. Additionally, better coordination now allows for sharing of practices between partner agencies within and between campuses.

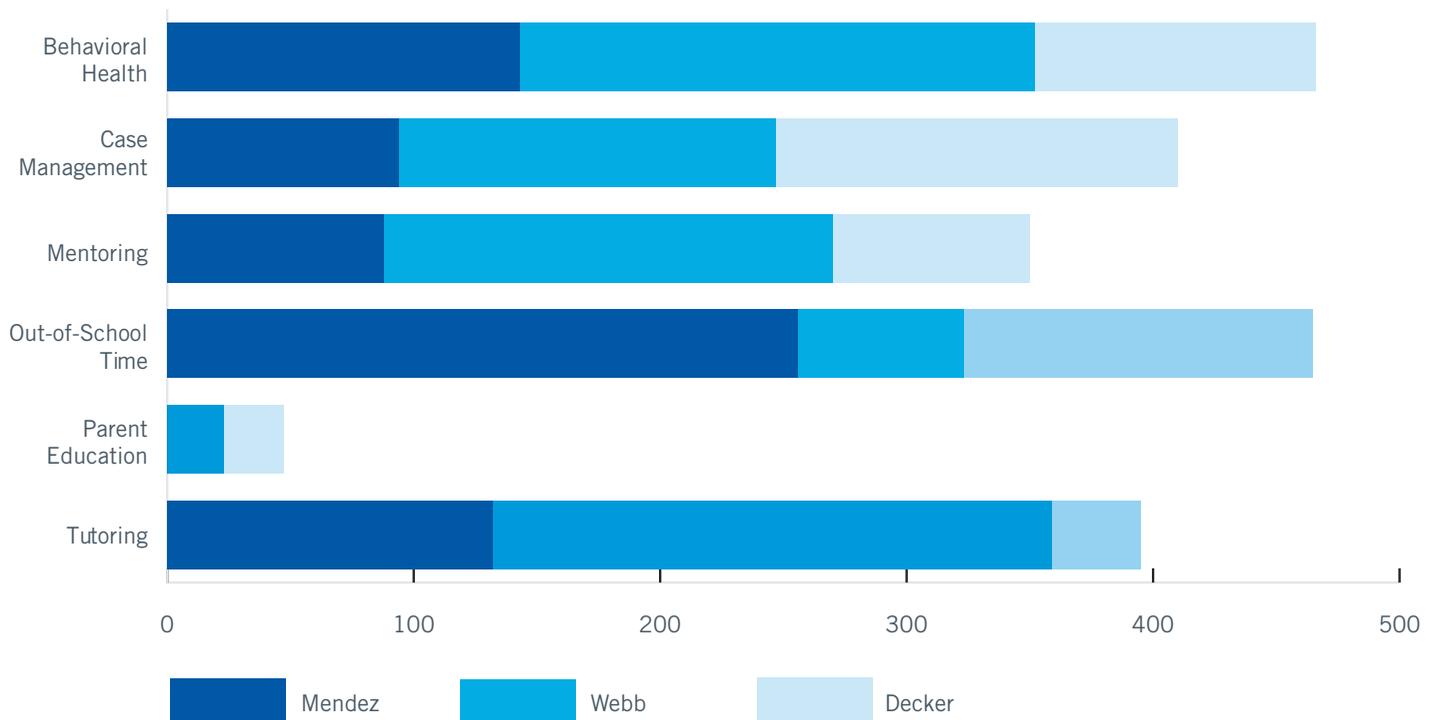


INCREASED NUMBER OF SERVICES PROVIDED

As a result of UWATX coordination and funding, UWATX partners delivered more than 2,100 interventions in the 2011 - 2012 school year at Mendez, Webb and Decker Middle Schools. From this success and planned future support, we anticipate attendance rates to increase, behavioral referrals to decrease and test passing rates to increase.

The graph below outlines the number of interventions that took place at each school during the 2011 - 2012 school year.

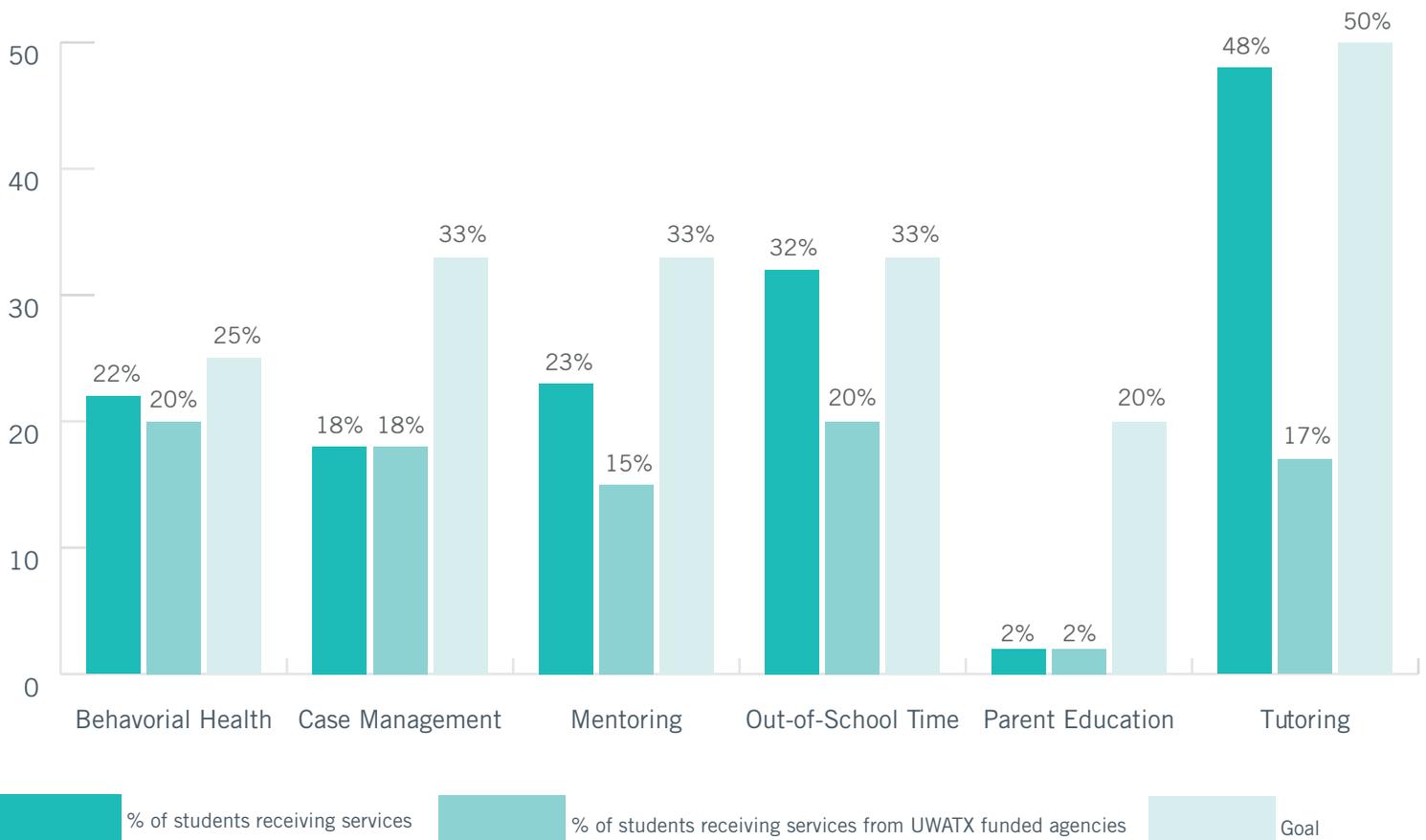
83%
of teachers reported an improved experienced as a teacher.
 - Decker Teacher Survey 2012



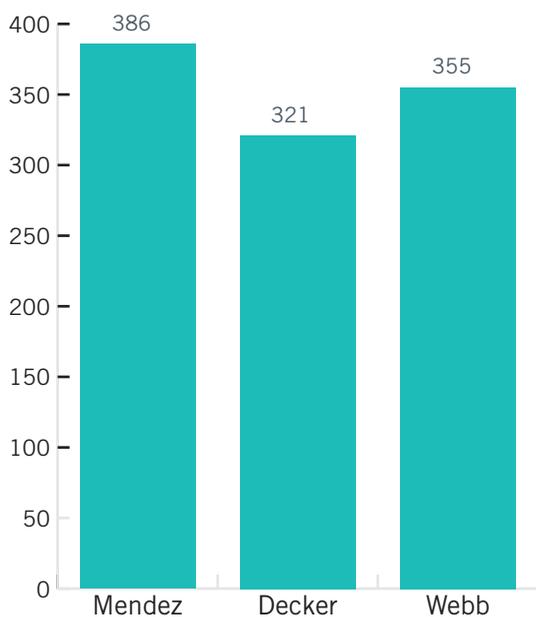
From this success and the planned future support, we anticipate the attendance rate to increase, behavioral referrals to decrease and test passing rates to increase.



2012 Target Graduation End-of-Year Results



Estimated number of students that received services at each middle school (unduplicated):



LONG-TERM GOALS

Ultimately, Target Graduation's goal through Middle School Matters is to impact the culture of an entire campus. Accessing the data and refining the data collection methodology will take a few years but in the meantime, Target Graduation identified and are tracking the saturation levels of students receiving services. Over the course of the next two years, we expect to see increases in attendance and decreases in behavior referrals because of the services identified and invested in. It will take 3-5 years and the assistance of a dedicated research team to be able to make definitive conclusions about the overall impact of Middle School Matters. Based on qualitative data from students, teachers and administrators, Middle School Matters is making a profound difference in their every day lives.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

OVERVIEW

Out-of-school time (OST) describes a range of structured programs for school age youth outside of traditional school hours. Often referred to as “afterschool,” these programs also take place before the school day, on weekends and during school breaks and holidays. OST programming takes a variety of forms, from tutoring and fine arts to fitness and social development.

THE EFFECTS OF OST

Assuming children spend an average of seven and a half hours per day in school for 180 days a year and get an average of eight hours of sleep a night, middle school students spend more than 75% of their waking hours outside of the classroom. This provides a huge opportunity for community programs that encourage positive youth development. Studies have shown a number of important benefits of OST programs for both the students involved and the greater community. Benefits include:

- Increased academic performance
- Reduced risk taking behavior and delinquency
- Increased school attendance
- Increased self esteem
- Increased student engagement and motivation^{vii}

OUR WORK: OST ACTION AGENDA

Through OST work, UWATX strives to improve the quality, availability and outcomes of youth development programs in Central Texas. In 2011, UWATX was one of 10 organizations nationally to receive funding for development of an OST Action Agenda. By engaging community partners, families and students, UWATX is identifying community priorities to create a unified and coordinated OST system that will allow high-quality, sustainable, and developmentally appropriate programs be available where they are needed.

The OST Action Agenda will include:

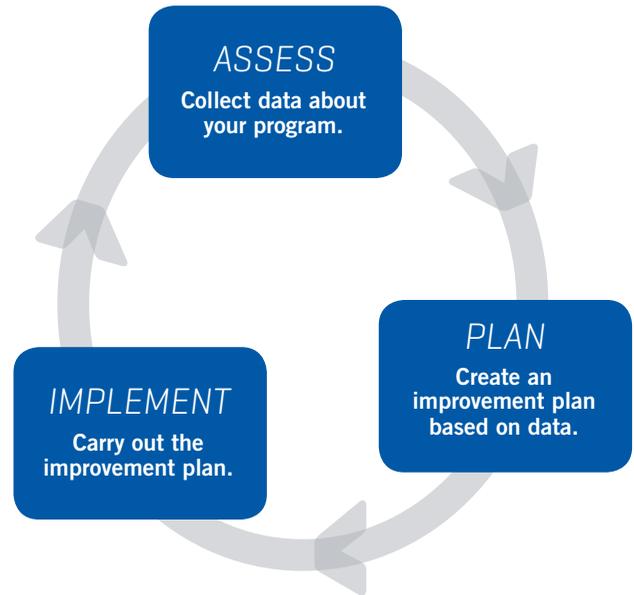
- Detailed implementation plans for creating the OST system, and
- Calculations of the resources needed to be successful.

vii Durlak, Joseph A. & Roger P. Weissberg. (2007). The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills.

OUR WORK: YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY INITIATIVE

In an effort to ensure students have access to high-quality OST programs, UWATX leads and coordinates the Youth Program Quality (YPQ) initiative, a comprehensive system for improving the quality of youth programs. The system begins with the YPQ Assessment, a validated tool designed to evaluate the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. After evaluators complete the assessments, managers participate in a planning session to learn how to use the assessment results for program improvement.

Once specific needs are identified and a plan is in place, program managers send their front-line staff to Youth Workers Methods Trainings, interactive workshops designed to empower staff with the tools to improve the quality of their programs. Once staff has been trained, programs are again assessed to find further opportunities to facilitate youth development, creating a cycle of continuous improvement.



THE NEED FOR YOUTH PROGRAM

While OST programs and staff want to provide what is best for children and youth, there are limited validated tools to identify and measure the quality of programs and once measured, consistent and clear steps to plan and improve. The YPQ initiative is the first step for programs and staff to have clear and consistent measures for quality and aligned professional development opportunities that lead to better outcomes for youth.

YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Target Graduation offers several trainings each year. In the past year, Target Graduation facilitated:

- 75 assessments;
- 23 professional development courses;
- 108 individuals trained.

76.9%

Percentage of waking time middle schoolers spend outside of school.

LOOKING AHEAD

UWATX and our partners are implementing research- and evidenced-based models and tracking results to improve the outcomes for children and youth in Greater Austin. In looking ahead, Target Graduation will focus on the following efforts to make the largest impact:

- **Refine data collection and reporting with continued support from the individual middle schools and school districts:** Target Graduation will obtain accurate and concrete information about the impact of our work on campuses.
- **Develop external assessment and validation processes:** Target Graduation will make changes in student outcomes as well as comparing outcomes to similar schools not receiving coordinated services.
- **Implement long-term sustainability:** Given the initial successes of Target Graduation, we will focus on further developing programs that can be easily integrated into and evolve with existing systems.
- **Continue to raise awareness, resources and funding for Target Graduation:** Staff and strategic advisors will act as ambassadors focused on raising funds.

Looking forward, we are excited about the future potential of Target Graduation and all UWATX could do for Greater Austin, our stakeholders and our community's students. With your support, we can measurably improve the graduation rate and help our community thrive.

With Special Thanks to all of the Target Graduation Partners --

4-H	Central Texas Afterschool Network	Latinitas
Afterschool Centers on Education/Austin	Children and Youth Mental Health	Lifeworks
21st CCLC	Planning Partnership	Manor Independent School District
Afterschool Centers on Education/	City of Austin - Health and Human	Meadows Center for Preventing
Bastrop 21st CCLC	Services	Educational Risk
Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life	City of Austin - Parks and Recreation	Mendez Middle School
Afterschool Centers on Education/Manor	College Forward	Mercury Mambo
21st CCLC	Communities in Schools	Ready By 21 Coalition
Austin Chamber of Commerce	CommunitySync	River City Youth Foundation
Austin Child Guidance Center	Council on At Risk Youth	SafePlace
Austin Film Society	Decker Middle School	Side by Side Kids
Austin Independent School District	Deloitte	Texas State University
Austin Learning Academy	E3 Alliance	The Arc of the Capital Area
Austin Partners in Education	Flextronics	The Austin Project
Austin Voices for Education and Youth	Foundation Communities	The Seedling Foundation
BeHive	GENaustin	Theatre Action Project
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas	H-E-B	Travis County Health and Human
Boys and Girls Clubs of the Austin Area	Housing Authority of the City of Austin	Services
Breakthrough	IBM	United Way Worldwide
Camp Fire USA Balcones Council	Ikard Golden Jones	Webb Middle School
Center for Child Protection	Keep Austin Beautiful	Younglife
		Youth Pathways