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Report to Ballmer Foundation

The ZONE Expanded Learning Initiative

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Background

[The ZONE](#) is a collective impact organization dedicated to increasing social connections, developing employment pathways, improving access to healthy food, supporting housing stability and expanding student extended learning opportunities for residents in Northeast Spokane. [Ballmer Group](#) has supported collective impact initiatives through work at the ZONE since 2019. Ballmer Group is a national and regional funder committed to improving economic mobility for children and families in low opportunity neighborhoods throughout the United States.

Initial Ballmer Group funding for the ZONE partners focused on improving student outcomes related to learning performance, school engagement and connection and growth in social-emotional learning (SEL) measures. Together with funding from a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant (DOE), the ZONE served an increasing number of students in NE Spokane schools growing from 858 in 2020 to 1,988 in 2023. During these initial years, Ballmer Group funding supported six youth-serving community groups that reached over 400 students with extended learning opportunity programming. Outcomes and results for this previous work are shared in submitted reports to the Ballmer Group.

This report focuses on the new ZONE Expanded Learning Initiative (ELI) supported with a community impact grant from Ballmer Group. The initiative aims to increase access to quality, community-based expanded learning programming, social and health services to meet the diverse cultural, learning and whole child needs of students in Northeast Spokane. The ELI started in 2024 and includes \$2.6 million in Ballmer Group funding that will be invested over the course of three years to support students and families served by the ZONE.

During the first year (2024), eleven nonprofit community organizations received competitive grants through the ZONE to expand and coordinate quality after-school and summer programming and improve support for families to help meet the social, emotional and learning needs of young people in Northeast Spokane. This report highlights the work of these grantees and outcomes of students served by the initiative. The report includes the following sections:

Section 1: Introduction to Grantees and Funded Programs

Section 2: Program-Specific Results and Bright spots

Section 3: Student Outcomes and Survey Feedback

It is important to note that this report is meant to serve as an introduction to the ongoing work of this multi-year initiative. While we report results gathered from the first year of operation (2024) to date, the cumulative impact of these efforts will be measured over the course of upcoming years, as grantees extend their reach and build out models to better serve students. While we include *quantitative* outcomes based on recorded participants, we also spent time collecting important *qualitative* data to share the story of how expanded learning can reshape futures for students and families in the ZONE.

SECTION 1 – Grantee Programs

Grantees for the Expanded Learning Initiative worked with wide-ranging, community serving missions to meet the unique needs of diverse students throughout the city. While the efforts of these community service providers may extend across the city, we focus on the grant-funded programming that could be directly accessed by students in Northeast Spokane schools. Two organizations are also serving students in Spokane’s West Central Neighborhood, another region with a lack of expanded learning resources and opportunities (see <https://zonedashboard.urbanova.org> for neighborhood opportunity indicators).

Grantee organizations are presented in alphabetical order with additional program data for each organization provided in Section 2.

College Success Foundation

College Success Foundation (CSF) represents the only statewide organization in Washington that is ‘hyper-focused’ on increasing college access and providing completion supports to underserved youth. CSF programs include a school wide model primarily for students in grades 6-12. Coaches in each school provide programming that includes structured college awareness and readiness lessons. CSF Spokane currently has staff in three middle schools – Yasuhara, Garry and Shaw. At the high school level, CSF staff provide direct services to youth to aid on their path to college and prepare for a successful college experience. CSF Advisors are located, full-time, in each of Spokane Public Schools comprehensive high schools including: Rogers High School, North Central High School, Shadle Park High School, Ferris High School and Lewis & Clark High School. The programs operate on a schoolwide basis, with meetings and workshops on college planning and admissions as well as ensuring students have the knowledge, resources and assistance with finding financial assistance for college (FAFSA/WAFSA, scholarships, etc.). The program has adopted an approach of ‘targeted universalism’, with outreach to all students, but work with teachers, counselors, school staff, and data from the Education Research Data Center (ERDC Washington) to determine the students that my benefit the most from CSF programming and support.

www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/regions/spokane - *“our vision is that a college degree is attainable for all.”*

If You Could Save Just One

If You Could Save Just One is a grass roots organization launched in 2019 to provide a safe, nurturing and accepting after-school environment for youth in Northeast Spokane. The Just One location, a converted garage, sits in the heart of the neighborhood and provides space for recreation, games, and music/artwork. Just One started in 2019 serving about 50 youth. During COVID-shutdowns (2020-2022), the program offered ‘projects in a bag’ (including cosmetology, gardening, art, music) and expanded its reach to over 200 youth per month. In 2022, the program also received a \$30,000 OSPI grant to begin offering tutoring services. This grant, as well as the Ballmer award and support from Inatai Foundation, Innovia Foundation and United Way have helped the program grow to 10 part-time staff. Just One

engages and connects with students through simple steps like providing snack bags or putting on fun events like a haunted house. A range of prevention-based activities, tutoring (via zoom) and supports now allow the program to consistently reach a significant number of students, and provide multi-language tutoring (including Arabic, Marshallese and Russian).

ifyoucouldsavejustone.org - “empowering youth and their families to write their own stories”

Manzanita House

Manzanita House is a relatively new (2022) community-based organization launched for the purpose of 1) providing immigration legal aid and assistance, 2) empowering immigrant and refugee families by building community and providing relevant education programs, 3) offering cultural education and implementation workshops, and 4) serving as a referral hub to connect families to essential services. The Heritage Language and Teatime Programs are two offerings resulting from a survey asking immigrant families how Manzanita House could best serve their needs. The first Heritage Language program included 45 children with an Arabic language focus. The Teatime for parents grew out of a desire to foster community while children were taking part in Heritage Language. While the Teatime is a social gathering, important and relevant topics like digital navigation or accessing civic services are also introduced to parents during Teatime. This format started with Arabic families, and quickly grew to include another cohort with the Afghan community centered around Farsi & Dari language classes. Cohorts with Latina community were underway in the summer of 2024 and events for Swahili/French families are currently in the exploratory stages.

The central mission of Manzanita House is building trust to welcome community, whether families are recently arrived or longstanding residents that may have not yet formed wider bonds. To build trust, it is important to respect the privacy and cultural norms of the individuals and groups welcomed by Manzanita House. Trust is also built by consistently following through with promises. A trusted organization can serve as a community asset by forging stronger relationships with schools and other community institutions (e.g. law enforcement, health care). Manzanita House is growing with a team of 22 employees and events that have connected with an estimated 600 residents.

hwww.manzanitahousespokane.org - “rooted in welcome”

River City Youth Ops

River City Youth Ops (formerly Project Hope Spokane) was formed in 2018 with a mission to connect youth in Spokane’s West Central neighborhood to job training, education, and community engagement opportunities with emphasis on the environment through food and farming during the summers.

For many summers, youth, volunteers, and staff farmed produce on plots of land in the West Central neighborhood and sold them at the Emerson-Garfield and West Central Farmers markets. In addition to marketing and communication skills, this program is meant to educate youth about environmental and sustainability issues through partner organizations and exposure to open-air farmers markets.

In 2021, RCYO continued a partnership with Stone Soup Cafe, an entity organized by St. Andrew's Episcopal Church staff and EWU social work students with the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to provide meals (through a commodity food program) to any children in the area. That summer, RCYO's Farm-to-Future program benefited from free breakfasts and lunches for the 20 plus participants who joined that season. In 2023, the Farm-to-Community program was redesigned to include youth-made meals and in addition to skill-building activities such as knife safety and food safety.

www.youthops.org - *"when we plant seeds, people grow"*

Slingshot

Slingshot is a Spokane-based career coaching and skills development organization helping young people discover their path and purpose. The coaching curriculum and programming is based on founder Tyler Lafferty's book, *Be More Like You: A Guide to Answering the Ultimate Question "What do I want to do with my life?"*. The program operates within Spokane Public Schools (principally Rogers) using Ballmer Grant funds and also is working in East Valley and Riverside High School using a grant from Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). The program is based on two key tracks: 1) Encouraging participants to find and follow their purpose and passion. The goal for each participant is to arrange and complete five informational interviews. Program staff often assist in arranging these interviews and preparing participants; 2) long-term coaching and leadership development as participants work to forge their path. The IDEAS framework (Introspection, Design, Exploration, Adaptability, Service) serves as the guidepost for assessment, planning and activities related to goal formation.

www.helloslingshot.org - *"coaching purposeful direction"*

Spark Central

Spark Central in West Central Neighborhood grew from two collaborations – The Spark Center (developer Jim Frank, Greenstone) and Ink Artspace (author Jess Walter). Spark Central serves as a drop-in center with programming for music, art, literature and other creative activities for school-age children. In the post-pandemic period, Spark Central still staffs the drop-in center, but has now developed an in-school focus. Presently, Spark Central offers the 'Level Up' program in Holmes and Audubon Elementary, with plans to expand to Garfield Elementary in the Fall of 2024. Level up is a project-based learning program that helps students produce a newsletter centered around arts and writing topics that interest students. The newsletter is a vehicle to increase: 1) creative skills, 2) growth-mindset and 3) personal aspirations of youth in West Central. Level Up includes about 20 students per school and provides opportunities for self-directed work that give students a voice in sharing their perspectives and opinions. The in-school programming also includes a multi-generational component where experts and public figures in the community come in to share about their field and answer students' questions about their career path and day to day life in their field.

spark-central.org – *"igniting the creativity, innovation, and imagination necessary for people to forge the path to their best future"*

SWAG – Strong Women Achieving Greatness

Strong Women Achieving Greatness (SWAG) was started in 2017 in response to the need for mentoring programs in the Northeast community. With support from the Black Coalition Fund, founder, Jaime Stacy, developed the Preparing for Greatness curriculum in the wake of the Supreme Court decisions eliminating affirmative action criteria in the college admission process. This prevention program includes inviting BIPOC business owners and community members to speak and share with participants at Rogers High School.

The guest speakers highlight four distinct topics: 1) meta-cognition (how do you learn), 2) self-care (for empowerment and increased focus), 3) mental health care and movement, and 4) healthy relationships. The SWAG sessions are held every other week during student advisory sessions (Weds) and any student is invited to attend. In addition to the bi-weekly sessions, SWAG also hosts special events, such as a self-care summit, put on in conjunction with the YMCA. The organization is also preparing to hold a Women’s Empowerment trip to visit business leaders in Portland, Seattle or WA DC for a selected group of peer mentors (SWAG participants for two or more years).

www.strongwomenachievinggreatness.com – *“equipping young women today for a better tomorrow”*

SECTION 2 – Program Activity and Results

As demonstrated in Section 1, the Ballmer grantees serve in many different capacities to expand opportunity, meeting a range of needs for students in Northeast Spokane. Many of the organizations are newly formed, while others are long-standing organizations with a statewide network.

For the purposes of this review, it was important to allow these organizations to share their impact in a way that fits their unique purpose. This section covers a range of reported outcomes, activities, and quotes with participant feedback that illustrate the work underway in the community. These ‘bright spots’ are presented with the view that the programs funded each have their own level of complexity and take place in a variety of contexts.

We find it valuable to outline the practices and approaches that can contribute to positive results for students while data regarding long-term outcomes is still being gathered. Particularly in a collective impact network like the ZONE, programmatic interventions take sustained, cooperative and coordinated effort among and between organizational leaders. While the organizational reports listed below are presented separately, together these groups have received support and training in areas like positive youth development ([HOPE training](#)), [motivational interviewing](#), [youth mental health first aid](#), [cultural humility](#), [non-violent communication](#) and [demonstrating performance](#).

College Success Foundation

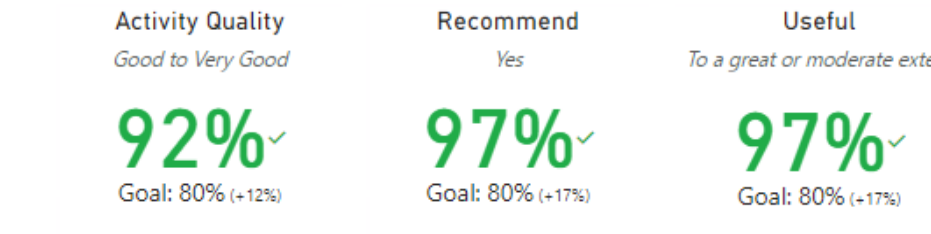
College Success Foundation (CSF) provides college coaching and programming focused on success for students following high school. CSF operates with a schoolwide model in under-resourced middle and high schools throughout the state where college enrollment rates may be low. Based on an anonymous satisfaction survey of participants:

- 54% were students of color
- 90% were from lower-income families (qualified for free/reduced lunch)
- 71% did not have parent/guardian that attended college (first generation)

The intentional nature of this program is unique. CSF engages with high school teachers and counselors to find out who may benefit from support. Then, staff provide interested students with a curriculum to meet the academic, emotional, financial and social needs of each participant (and their family). The program includes direct engagement and exposure through planned campus visits to area colleges.

During the 2023-24 school year, 1,800 students were served by CSF with 159 different service activities completed. Activities included topics like exploring college, career knowledge, preparing for college, paying for college, and applying for college. For younger students, CSF also focuses on 9th Grade Success activities to ensure students can access resources and support during their time in high school.

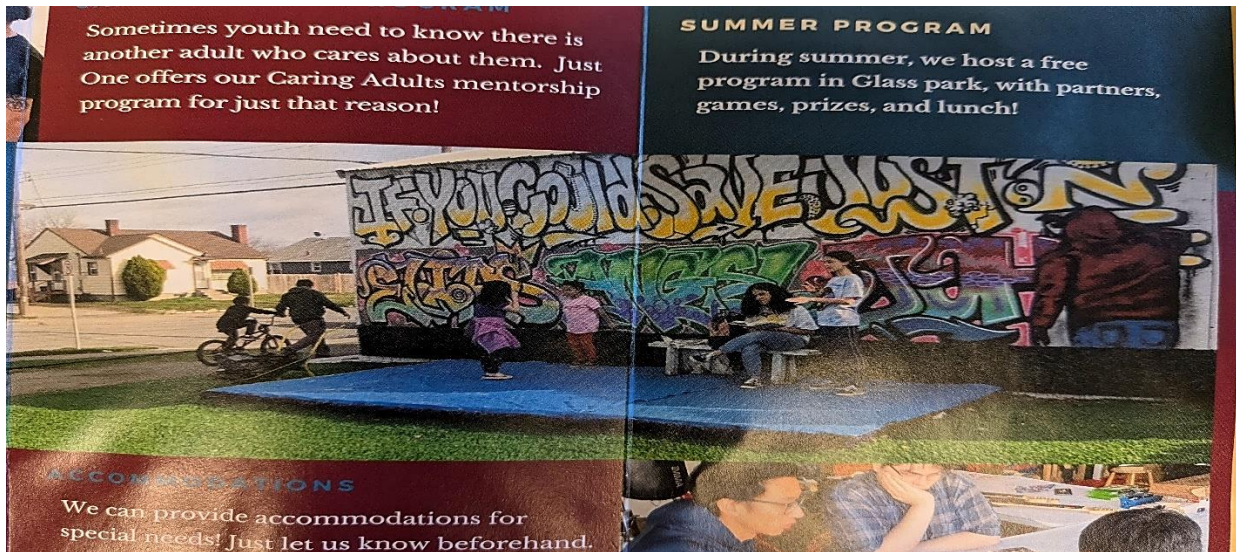
Importantly, students rated the quality of CSF programs highly. Nearly all (97%) of students surveyed would recommend the program and found it useful. Over 90% found the activity quality 'good' or 'very good'.



In 2024, CSF started working with Research Triangle Institute (RTI) on a statewide longitudinal study to measure outcomes for students involved with CSF. Results from this Gates Foundation funded study will be over the course of the three-year study.

If You Could Save Just One

If You Could Save Just One (Just One) started in 2019 when the founder’s son went missing. The literature and website for Just One asks the pressing question, “Every day 2,000 youth go missing. *What if you could save just one?*” The program is housed in a converted garage that provides a drop-in center where “youth can chill, learn and grow”. Just One offers hands-on activities like cosmetology, gardening, art and music and has grown from serving 100 to about 200 youth per month.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, operations at the drop-in center shifted to providing snack lunches that students could pick up on their way to school. This connection with students and families provided the opportunity to assist with mentorship and tutoring. With a grant from OSPI and area foundations, Just One began offering tutoring over zoom and then at local libraries. In 2024, Just One tutors served over 50 students in grades 5-12. Comments from parents/guardians describing student learning needs appear below.

She almost refuses to do any kind of homework. She is severely behind, after switching schools 5 times last year especially. We are very concerned she will not graduate

My student is in [elementary] grade. COVID has really messed with him. He needs to get his multiplication down. he is so far behind. They are doing fractions; he is so lost. I don't want him to get too far behind as he is going to middle school next year

[NAME] enjoys playing football and is a shy, sensitive kid. I'm his sister and am raising him, he struggles with reading and writing and is behind his grade level because of it. He wants to be a good student, but this affects his ability to learn and keep up with his class. He needs one on one tutoring to help him with writing the most.

[NAME] struggles with ELA English. He absolutely hates to write and has the handwriting of a 2nd grader; therefore, he doesn't do well with English. He struggles with big emotions at times. His father is deceased, and we don't know where his Mom is. He was taken from his Mom at [age] and put in foster care until I could take him in a year later. I have since adopted him.

Manzanita House

Manzanita House was founded in 2022 to create a space where “all immigrants have a place at the table to freely and fully participate in the community”. Manzanita House offers the following services and programs to immigrant families: immigration legal aide, family empowerment, cultural education and a referral hub that connects families to essential community services. As noted earlier, the family empowerment activities include a Women’s Teatime with childcare, so women and mothers can have culturally informed discussions about topics important to life in the community. These topics range from digital literacy, financial education, resources for mental health or family violence situations, conversational ESL practice, and job readiness. The Manzanita House focuses on parents and families, strengthening community cultural networks so children can be successful both in school and in a new neighborhood. The quotes below (provided with permission from staff interviews) illustrate the role of Women’s Teatime in deepening community connections.

Teatime Participant Quotes

“We’re telling all the women, the new arrivals, we’re telling them about Teatime and inviting them to join because they will benefit from the information that’s given here. Every time, they will learn a new thing and that will help them navigate life here.” – [Name], Syria

“Actually, this is a good opportunity for my kids and for me. This program has been a wonderful experience for my kids, for me. The Teatime is a great way to connect with other parents and share experiences. So overall, it is a positive experience for our family and I really appreciate for this kind of program for the kids...” - [Name], Afghanistan

“But I’m so happy Manzanita House is open because I’m thankful for this program...we can visit with each other, we can talk to each other. Because, you know, if you find some people from the same country, same language...you’re more comfortable. When your life is changed from one country to a different country, you have to start at zero. It’s hard. Especially for Afghan women, who don’t have any knowledge because, in Afghanistan, most of them are in the home...but now they are lucky because they have opportunities like Teatime.” -[Name], Afghanistan

“If MH wasn’t here I wouldn’t be connected to a lot of people who know Arabic. Spokane is big and people are spread out.” - [Name], Syria

The Heritage Language classes are designed to teach first- and second-generation youth (age 6-18) language skills from their home country. The classes continue heritage language development for young people that may have had their education disrupted or did not have educational opportunities available in their country of origin. The classes help both parents and students – as students progress in school, they can grow their own cultural identity and parents can provide educational support and encouragement in their heritage language. Feedback from student participants (provided with parent permission) appears below.

Heritage Language Participant Quotes

“I always look forward to Tuesdays afterschool because I’m really excited for class – I just really like it. I feel like I understand my culture more” - [Name], Iraq

“I would tell people to come and join the class – because if you don’t know how to read numbers or words you’ll benefit a lot. They will teach you how to read and write in Arabic.” - [Name], Syria

“I kinda just like how much I’ve actually like learned the language. Like now, when we go to the religious ceremonies, like Husani/Ashura, or when my parents are watching a movie in Farsi, I can actually read the subtitles for the most part. And like even at Hussani/Ashura, they were writing stuff on the candles and I was helping them because I knew how to write the words.” - [Name], Afghanistan

Building trust and helping immigrant families feel safe and secure in the community is a shared principle for Manzanita House. For the regular programming described above, Manzanita House served approximately 52 Students and 87 Women during the first part of 2024. To alleviate privacy concerns among participants, we decided not to request student identifying information from this group. Instead, for reporting purposes, we worked with staff to develop open-ended questions and a trusted staff member conducted several interviews. A recorded version of the interviews was available to researchers for review. Consequently, outcomes reports provided in Section 3 do not include Manzanita House participants.

River City Youth Ops

River City Youth Ops (RCYO) is a small community organization that has undergone several changes since its original founding in 2008. RCYO operates in Spokane’s West Central neighborhood, an area contrasted by high family poverty rates and areas of gentrification and development. In recent years, RCYO has focused programming on food security and connecting students to local food systems. Programs like GroundMakers and the Farm to Future program provide mentoring and connection through cooking classes, education on how food systems work and entrepreneurship and business training through a booth at the neighborhood food market.

Program feedback collected from student participants demonstrates the social-emotional benefits and leadership opportunities students received by using food as an avenue for community building:

One thing I learned about myself this week is...

- *I can lead a lot better than I thought.*
- *I'm able to bounce back quickly from working a long shift or both places quickly*
- *I enjoy community gardening*
- *I know how to support my team.*
- *I learned how to work with people I never worked with before.*

Do you feel connected to the food you eat? Please explain.

- *Kinda, because the food we eat can impact our body in numerous ways*
- *It's nice to know that I have helped grow this. And that it has grown from a garden I have cared for*
- *Being able to help and participate in different food cultures*
- *I have a connection with my food when I'm cooking, and all of them blend together and I'm able to eat the creations.*

Based on a 2023 participant survey, at the conclusion of the summer program, two-thirds of more of students ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that their participation was beneficial. Compared to responses from the same question taken at the beginning of the program, the greatest gains were seen in feeling ‘connected to the food I eat’ (37 percentage points) and ‘confident in my ability to make healthy meals for myself (24 percentage points).

RCYO Summer Program: 2023 Pre-Post Survey Responses

Question	% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' (pre)	% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' (post)	Difference
I feel connected to the food I eat.	31%	68%	37%
I feel confident in my ability to make healthy meals for myself.	76%	100%	24%
I have regular access to enough fresh vegetables and fruits to keep me full.	79%	89%	11%
I have positive relationships with other youth.	90%	100%	10%
There are adults in my life I trust when I experience a challenge.	79%	89%	10%
I feel healthy (physically, mentally, emotionally).	69%	79%	10%
I feel connected to my community.	62%	68%	6%
I believe that I have the skills and resources to reach the goals I set for myself.	69%	68%	-1%
I feel connected to my natural environment.	79%	74%	-6%
Total	30	19	

Slingshot

Slingshot has been in operation for three years, 'coaching purposeful direction' for young people aged 15-25 in Spokane and surrounding school districts. The goal of the program is to build agency as youth transition to adulthood by helping them define career paths, gain insights into various industries and obtain practical work experience. Programming activities are meant to help participants make informed decisions about their post-high school paths to increase personal opportunities and enhance personal growth. To that end, Slingshot strives to help youth arrange up to five informational interviews that can lead to one or two job shadowing opportunities. Slingshot offers mentorship and networking, interactive workshops and seminars, career exploration programs and networking opportunities through strong community partnerships.

In 2024, Slingshot staff worked with over 180 students in Spokane Schools, primarily at Rogers High School in Northeast Spokane. Program activity included:

- 1,078 total contact hours
- Average of 5.6 hours per youth
- 25 different activities serving between 1 and 92 students
- Informational interviews arranged for over 80 students

Slingshot continues to grow its offerings with a recently announced [Academy](#), a five-week program with remote group sessions to provide comprehensive career guidance and peer support. As the organization expands, Slingshot is building an impressive professional network with local and regional employers, increasing willingness to support the career exploration and journeys of program participants.

Slingshot Youth



Alicia

"Your advice on how to go about discovering one's passions and the path to fulfillment really stuck with me. Your words helped me realize I need to embrace the uncertainties and trust the process of self-discovery."



Gabby

"I love how you broke down the barriers to dreaming big and how to discover our professional fulfillment, as well as how we can identify our strengths and weaknesses in order to see the possibilities of what we can do and who we can become."



Andrew

"Before you came to our class, I was starting to lose hope and lost in my journey. Your book, that you gave me, really gave me inspiration and motivation to go on and find myself."

Slingshot Spotlights

[Name] started with Slingshot coaching in her Sophomore year at Rogers. She attended the Slingshot Coaching program the summer between Sophomore and Junior year. [Name] requested support for college applications and scholarship essays. Knowing there might be other students needing that support, Slingshot partnered with Rogers Career and College Readiness staff and CSF staff to create a 6-hour session called "Crushing the Common App". [Name] and 9 other students attended. Slingshot continued to coach [Name] her senior year and she recently accepted a full ride at Gonzaga University and earned over \$31,000 in scholarships for her 4 years at GU. We will continue to coach and support [Name] as a Freshman this fall.

[Name] and [Name] were Seniors at Rogers who attended the Academy. This program supports students who are unable to attend school regularly during the week. [Name] and [Name] attended Rogers Tues. and Thurs. mornings for instruction and completed their coursework on-line. Slingshot met with the girls to determine their post-high school plans. Both were interested in working with children in childcare or elementary education. Through Slingshot we were able to secure them both internships at [Local] Elementary with the district-sponsored Preschool program for one day per week. Both girls worked for 8 weeks at [Local Elementary] gaining skills and better understanding the types of careers in early learning and elementary education. Slingshot also worked with the girls to enroll at SFCC to pursue these areas beginning Fall 2024.

Spark Central

Spark Central launched its Level Up program at Holmes Elementary in the 2021-22 school year with a frequency of 2 days of programming per week. However, substantial sources of grant funding for program staffing expired in 2023, requiring Spark Central to leave a full time Program Manager position vacant and reduce the frequency of Level Up to a single day of programming per week. Funding from the Ballmer Foundation enabled Spark Central to restore program staffing and resume operating Level Up for two days per week in the 2023-24 school year.

With staffing rededicated to Level Up, Spark Central was able to increase enrollment caps at Holmes Elementary from the 2022-23 level of 15 students to 20 students in 2023-24. Staff time was invested throughout the school year in building on the program's project-based writing and arts curriculum. Holmes Elementary students enrolled in Level Up in 2022-23 had two opportunities to publish articles, comics, illustrations, and puzzles in the program's newspaper. After publishing a traditional West Central Express newspaper in December, Spark Central published their first ever West Central Express: Arts Edition in March 2024 to celebrate student cartoons, paintings, sculptures, collages, photographs, and poems. Staff also tailored the second annual newspaper of the year to be more culturally responsive to students' communities and interests, publishing the West Central Express: Summer Guide containing recommendations for summer events and activities, illustrations, and reader's theater scripts imagined, written, and edited by enrolled students.



NO COST • West Central, Spokane, Washington, USA, Earth, Solar System, Milky Way Galaxy • May 2024 • Issue No. 16

SPOKANE'S NEW MAYOR IS COOL!



In total, Spark Central provided **over 700 student-days of programming in the 2023-24 school year**. As noted, the Ballmer Group grant came at a critical time for the program and allowed Spark Central to add staff and resources needed to serve students in West Central Spokane. Beginning in June 2024, Spark Central program staff pivoted to preparing for an expansion of Level Up programming in the 2024-25 school year – adding Level Up programming at Garfield Elementary and piloting a program frequency of 3 days per week at Holmes Elementary. Spark Central intends to serve between 20 and 25 students at each of these schools during the 2024-25 school year.

Spark Central’s staff is also preparing to implement an outreach campaign focused on our Level Up programming this August. These will include sending staff to meetings and events in the West Central and Emerson-Garfield neighborhoods to learn more about our students’ neighborhood and community resources, to recruit new adult volunteer mentors, and to identify local professionals and experts who can join our students for interviews and special projects in the 2024-25 school year (see photo of visit from Spokane’s mayor above). Taken together, Spark Central anticipates that professional development, curriculum, and outreach efforts this Summer will help build on the high-quality enrichment delivered to neighborhood students.

SWAG – Strong Women Achieving Greatness

Strong Women Achieving Greatness (SWAG) provides a mentoring community for young women attending Rogers High School. More than a community, SWAG was founded to serve as a bridge to “connect girls and young women to their own path towards greatness”. SWAG programming includes ‘Preparing for Greatness’ sessions (held during student planning periods) where professional mentors from the community cover topics meant to help students reach their goals and aspirations. SWAG sessions empower students and let them know community members that they can relate to also care about their health, well-being and success. Examples of speakers include mental health counselors, business entrepreneurs, cosmetologists, educators and community leaders.

In a satisfaction survey following a Preparing for Greatness session, participants rated the contents and skills covered at SWAG very positively:

Question	Average Rating (Scale 1-5)
Based on your experience(s) how do you rate SWAG?	4.9
I understand what self-regulation is and why it is an important skill to have.	4.8
I gained new tools to help me develop my self-regulation skills	4.8
I understand how I learn.	4.9
I understand the importance of self-care.	4.9
I would like to attend future SWAG events	5.0
Total Students Responding	31

Feedback from these sessions was also enthusiastic as evidenced from the quotes below.

Preparing for Greatness Participant Quotes

Love you Mrs. Stacy, thanks for always inviting me and pls continue you to do so. All these events have helped me become a more mentally intelligent woman!! Thanks to everyone!!!!

This is great for girls and boys to attend and get what they do not get in class about everyday life and how to have better skills

WE SHOULD HAVE MORE CLASSES LIKE THIS

OMG! Best event I have been to and learned a lot! Thank you, Mrs. Stacy,

I love SWAG and Mrs. Stacy always has the best things for us to learn

In addition to the in-school Preparing for Greatness sessions, SWAG also sponsors events outside the school. One of these events, the [Self-Care Summit](#), is hosted in partnership with the local YWCA and “centers a self-care celebration around young women of color living in and around the Spokane area”. A similar post-event survey illustrates the high levels of satisfaction and learning experienced by participants of the Self-Care Summit:

Question	Average Rating (Scale 1-5)
How do you rate the Self-Care Summit event?	4.7
How do you rate the Self-Care Summit workshop facilitators?	4.9
I understand how to identify a healthy relationship, the importance of healthy relationships and mental health, and why it is an important skill to have.	4.5
I understand how movement may boost mental health, help to regulate my mood, and why it is an important skill to have.	4.6
I understand how self-care is connected to physical care, like grooming and hygiene, how it boosts mental health, and why it is an important skill to have.	4.8
I understand the importance of moving from self-care to community care.	4.6
I would like to attend future SWAG and Transformations events.	4.6
Total Students Responding	31

In addition to the survey ratings, participants expressed excitement and appreciation for the culturally specific content and genuine connection that was part of this summit:

Self-Care Summit Participant Quotes

What did you enjoy most about today?

Just being around people that I can relate to

I finally learned how to braid as an African American woman

Doing the hair and talking

Really enjoyed the raffle. all though I didn't win, it was exciting to see people get Broadway tickets and i feel it was generous! I want to do something like that one day

Being able to meet people who believe themselves and who are there for the community and the people

I enjoyed the experience, styling the hair was fun because I learned how to braid. I also liked making the poster. Finally, the yoga and goodie bags made me happy

The beautiful ladies who taught us about this thing and I won tickets with my BFF which made me love these lady's more and I learned how to do cornrows, which is so exciting, and I got help with my shoulder pain

That I learned that people tend to keep giving to others rather than themselves. The community helps everyone even if it's not noticed

This summer, SWAG will also hold a Transformations Camp – a free, weeklong empowerment camp for youth aged 11-16. The feedback and experience of youth participating in this, and other Ballmer Group-funded activities will continue to be followed to share the impact and reach of this grant award. For greater context, the next section shows the characteristics and school outcomes of participating students in Northeast Spokane, as shared from student record data.

SECTION 3 – Participant Characteristics and Outcomes

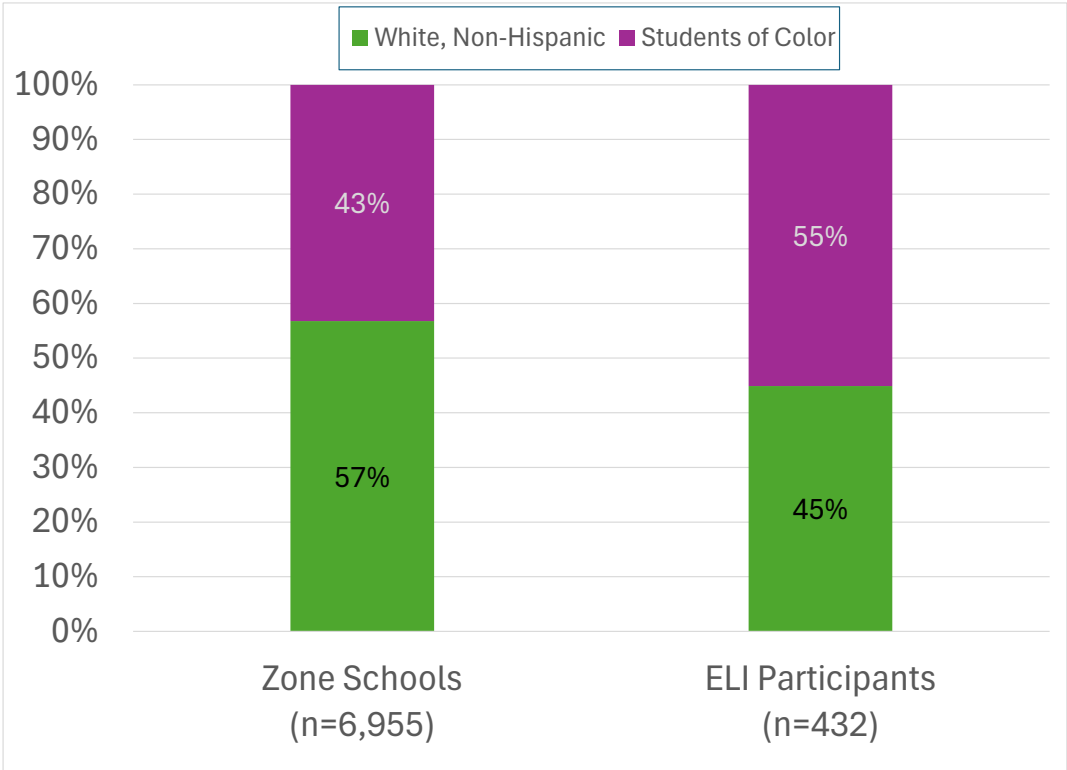
Ballmer Group funding for the three-year extended learning initiative will be granted to community groups committed to growing opportunities among underserved communities. To improve outcomes and reduce disparities between Spokane neighborhoods, the funding aims to expand services, grow support and increase resources to help students and families in Northeast Spokane thrive. To this end, community grants are designed to focus programming on young people that may be disproportionately impacted, either historically or currently, by socioeconomic or race/ethnic differences across the school district.

Specifically, the Ballmer Group ELI funding is intended to serve a student population that meets or exceeds the percentage population of students of color, free and reduced lunch (poverty), special needs, and English language learners for schools in the ZONE service area¹. This section describes the population served by the ELI grant and presents baseline data for student outcomes that will be tracked over the three-year grant period.

Participant Characteristics

In 2024, over half (56%) of students served in ELI programming were students of color, significantly higher than the 43% of students in the corresponding schools in the Zone.

Percent Students of Color: ZONE Students and ELI Participants
2023-24



¹ Rogers High School, Denny Yasuhara Middle School, Garry Middle School, Shaw Middle School, Arlington Elementary, Bemiss Elementary, Cooper Elementary, Garfield Elementary, Lidgerwood Elementary, Logan Elementary, Longfellow Elementary, Regal Elementary, Stevens Elementary, Whitman Elementary

As outlined in the table below, the percentage of students of color in each program ranged between 32% and 79%. While the programs are open to and serve students of all races and ethnicities, several programs like SWAG, develop programming specifically to empower and educate nonwhite students in a culturally relevant way.

**Percent Students of Color: ELI Participants by Program
2023-24**

Program	Students of Color	Student Total
Spark Central	10 (28%)	35
Girl Scouts	32 (32%)	100
Just One	34 (57%)	60
River City	12 (52%)	23
Housing Support	6 (67%)	9
Slingshot	125 (69%)	181
SWAG	41 (79%)	52
ELI Participants	260 (56%)	460

*Spark Central includes program reported data

Socio-economic status of students is typically reported based on families that meet federal income qualification criteria for free and reduced school lunches. Northeast Spokane represents one of the areas in the city with the highest income disparities – nearly half (46%) of adults have income under 200% of the federal poverty level, compared to 27% of adults in other areas of the city (US Census American Community Survey, 2022). Among enrolled students in ZONE-area schools, 84% qualified for free and reduce price lunches. As shown in the table below, this is only slightly higher than the percent of students in ELI programs that qualified for free and reduced lunches (81%).

**Percent Low Income (Free/Reduced Lunch): ZONE Students and ELI Participants
2023-24**

	Free & Reduced Total	Total
ELI Participants	348 (81%)	432
Zone Schools	5,852 (84%)	6,955

About one in five students enrolled in a ZONE-area schools qualifies for special needs services through an individualized education program (IEP). The 22% of total students with special needs is only slightly higher than 18% of students participating in ELI programs with special needs.

**Percent Special Needs (Individual Education Plan): ZONE Students and ELI Participants
2023-24**

	Special Needs (IEP)	Total
ELI Participants	79 (18%)	432
Zone Schools	1,531 (22%)	6,955

Finally, many of the programs funded by the Ballmer ELI grant can meet educational, career, academic and social needs of new English language learners. While student data were not directly available for participants in the Manzanita House programs, this program is geared specifically to support heritage and English language development in households and the school environment. For those programs where student data were available, nearly one in three (27%) of ELI participants were English language learners, compared to 13% in ZONE area schools.

**Percent English Language Learners (ELL): ELI Participants by Program
2023-24**

Program	English Language Learners	Student Total
Spark Central	0 (0%)	35
Girl Scouts	6 (6%)	100
Just One	3 (5%)	60
River City	2 (9%)	23
Skyhawks	9 (8%)	102
Slingshot	89 (49%)	181
SWAG	5 (10%)	52
Manzanita House	52(100%)	52
ELI Participants	166 (27%)	605
Students in Zone Schools	912 (13%)	6,955

The table above clearly indicates that Slingshot maintains a strong emphasis on supporting English Language Learner students, principally at Rogers High School. In personal communication, the program director confirms this emphasis, stating, “Working with a significant number of ELD students, we are able to build connections with them early in their time at Rogers and then continue to support them as they exit ELD and pursue post-high school options.” Through a close relationship with the English Language Development (ELD) counselor, Slingshot staff can identify students that may most benefit from their program.

Based on the review of participant characteristics, it appears that ELI programs are utilizing the award to reach out and meet the diverse needs of students in the ZONE.

Social Emotional Learning Outcomes

Students in Spokane Public Schools in grades four and higher take a validated assessment on social-emotional learning (SEL) measures each year. The survey, developed by [Panorama Education](#), measures a number of scales related to social-emotional factors, including:

- Grit – how well students are able to persevere through setbacks to achieve important long-term goals
- Learning strategies – how well students deliberately use strategies to manage their own learning processes in class
- School belonging – how much students feel that they are valued members of the school community
- School engagement - how attentive and invested students are in school

Given the emphasis of the ELI programs on community connection and belonging, the SEL survey represents a worthwhile metric to track progress. It is worth noting, however, that this assessment is not a required activity from SPS teachers. Furthermore, while the survey can be administered in the fall and spring of each school year, the survey is typically taken in the fall. During the 2023-24 school year, for example, 263 ELI participants completed the SEL survey in Fall 2023 and 75 completed it in the Spring of 2024.

The ELI grants went out to awardees in January of 2024 because there were issues getting checks out from Innovia that have now been resolved. Therefore, we would not expect reliable SEL measures for program participants to be available until a full semester (Spring 2024) was complete. We plan to report on changes in the SEL scores for the year two report. To establish a baseline for this change, the table below shows the Fall 2023 mean scores in each SEL scale for ELI participants and non-participant students in ZONE-area schools.

Average Social-Emotional Learning Scores: ZONE Students and ELI Participants
Fall 2023

SEL Measure	All Zone Students		ELI Participants	
	Mean	n	Mean	n
Grit	3.39	2,056	3.48	263
Growth Mindset	3.40	2,016	3.49	258
Learning Strategies	3.54	1,965	3.62	254
School Belonging	3.21	1,858	3.37	224
School Climate	3.46	1,869	3.49	227
School Engagement	3.14	1,899	3.28	233
School Rigorous Expectations	3.72	1,895	3.83	221
School Safety	3.38	1,897	3.56	210
School Teacher-Student Relationships	3.50	1,870	3.67	208
Self-Efficacy	3.62	2,029	3.32	249
Self-Management	3.75	1,948	3.78	244
Social Awareness	3.51	1,953	3.58	244
Valuing of School	3.43	1,948	3.65	221

Each SEL domain is comprised of several questions that measure responses on a five-point scale. The question scales typically include anchors such as

Not at all; A little bit; Somewhat; A lot; A tremendous amount
 Almost never; Once in a while; Sometimes; Frequently; Almost always

Across each of these scales, participants in ELI programming scored slightly higher than peer students in the same schools. We will examine the changes in scores for ELI participants following year one and year two of the program. Many of the measures, such as school belonging and valuing of school, are of particular interest given the ELI emphasis on fostering connections among participating students.

The ZONE has also incorporated a Youth Well-Being Survey into program offerings to gauge behavioral health needs of youth in the region. During the first year this survey was available, 37 students completed responses. The survey includes different measures of well-being, including the [Children’s HOPE scale](#), [Youth Quality of Life Instrument](#), and [Generalized Anxiety Disorder 2-item \(GAD-2\) screener](#). While not necessarily a generalizable sample, the responses below suggest that young people in NE Spokane can struggle with anxiety and depression symptoms, with 4 in 10 reporting feeling nervous, anxious on edge or not being able to stop worrying ‘more than half the days’ in a two-week period.

Generalized Anxiety Responses – ZONE Participants 2024

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

Statement	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day	Overall
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	13	9	9	6	37
	35.14%	24.32%	24.32%	16.22%	
Not being able to stop or control worrying	13	9	10	5	37
	35.14%	24.32%	27.03%	13.51%	

Attendance Outcomes

As mentioned previously, ELI grants are meant to strengthen connections between students, their school and the wider community. One of the ways this connection can be followed is through attendance rates and behavioral referrals in the school building. Spokane Public Schools categorizes student attendance across five groups that include:

- **Satisfactory attendance:** attended more than 95 percent of days in school year
- **At-risk attendance:** attended between 90 and 95 percent of days in school year
- **Chronic attendance:** attended between 85 and 90 percent of days in school year
- **Moderate chronic attendance:** attended between 80 and 85 percent of days in school year
- **Severe attendance:** attended less than 80 percent of days in school year

To gauge the extent to which student attendance patterns change from year to year, we identified a group of comparison students with a similar pattern of attendance to ELI participants in the year *before* programming (2022-23). Specifically, we focused on students in the prior year with moderate or severe chronic attendance (less than 85 percent of days attended). Results are presented below with primary (elementary and middle school) and secondary (high school) student listed separately.

**Moderate and Severe Chronic Attendance: ZONE Comparison Students and ELI Participants
2022-23 and 2023-24**

		Moderate-Severe 22-23	Moderate-Severe 22-23 AND 23-24	
Primary	Comparison Students	28	19	68%
	ELI Participants	28	20	71%
Secondary (HS)	Comparison Students	41	27	66%
	ELI Participants	77	53	69%

About 7 in 10 students with moderate or severe chronic attendance in the base year (2022-23) continued to have the same level of attendance the following year. The rate of persistent attendance issues was slightly higher among ELI participants (primary and secondary). It should be noted, however, that ELI participation programming did not start until mid-way through the year. This metric, therefore, sets a benchmark for a future evaluation of attendance outcomes related to ELI.

Another measure of attendance of interest to program staff is the percentage of students with severe chronic attendance that increase their attendance rate by 10 percentage points in the following year. Any increases in attendance among these students that are severely disconnected from school can be seen as a success.

**Severe Chronic Attendance Improvement: ZONE Comparison Students and ELI Participants
2022-23 and 2023-24**

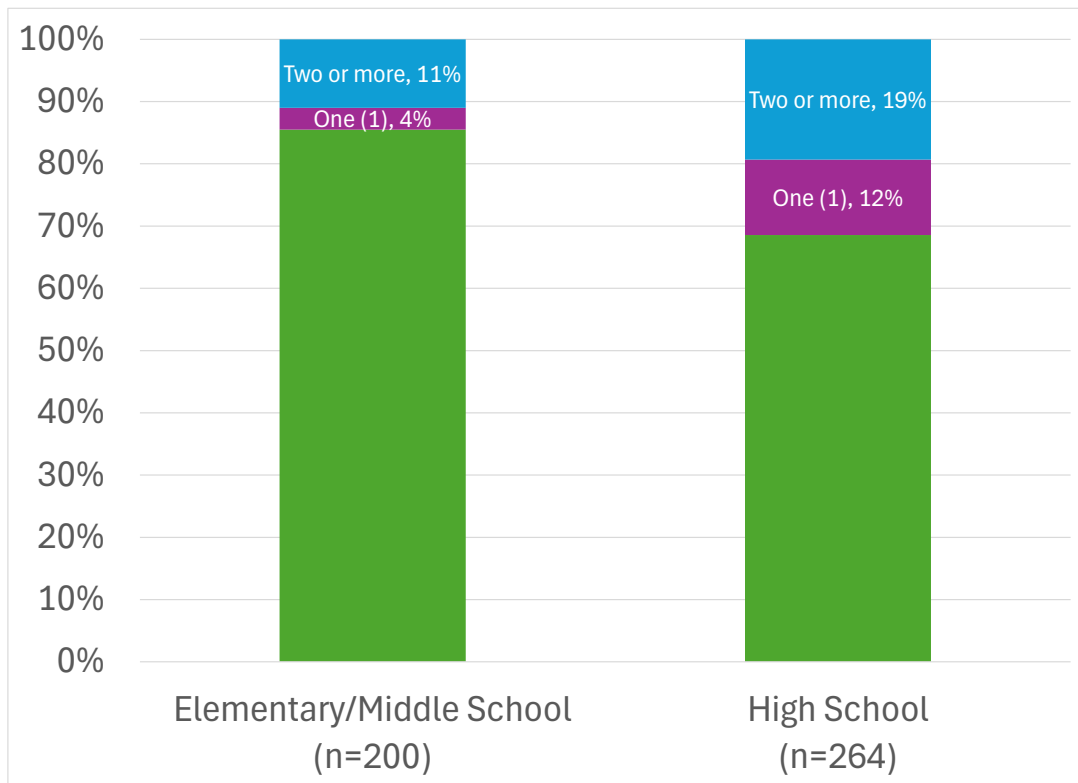
		Severe 22-23	10% improvement 23-24	
Primary	Comparison Students	16	4	25%
	ELI Participants	16	6	38%
Secondary (HS)	Comparison Students	22	7	32%
	ELI Participants	52	20	39%

On this measure, a higher rate of ELI participants with severe attendance in the previous year showed a 10-percentage point improvement, when compared to peer students. As shown above, 39% of secondary (High School) students improved while 32% of comparison students had this level of improvement. Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) of the primary (Elementary and Middle School) students with severe chronic attendance improved (10%+) the following year compared with 25% of peer students in primary schools. These attendance measures will continue to be assessed as ELI programs work to reconnect and re-engage students in the school environment.

Behavior Outcomes

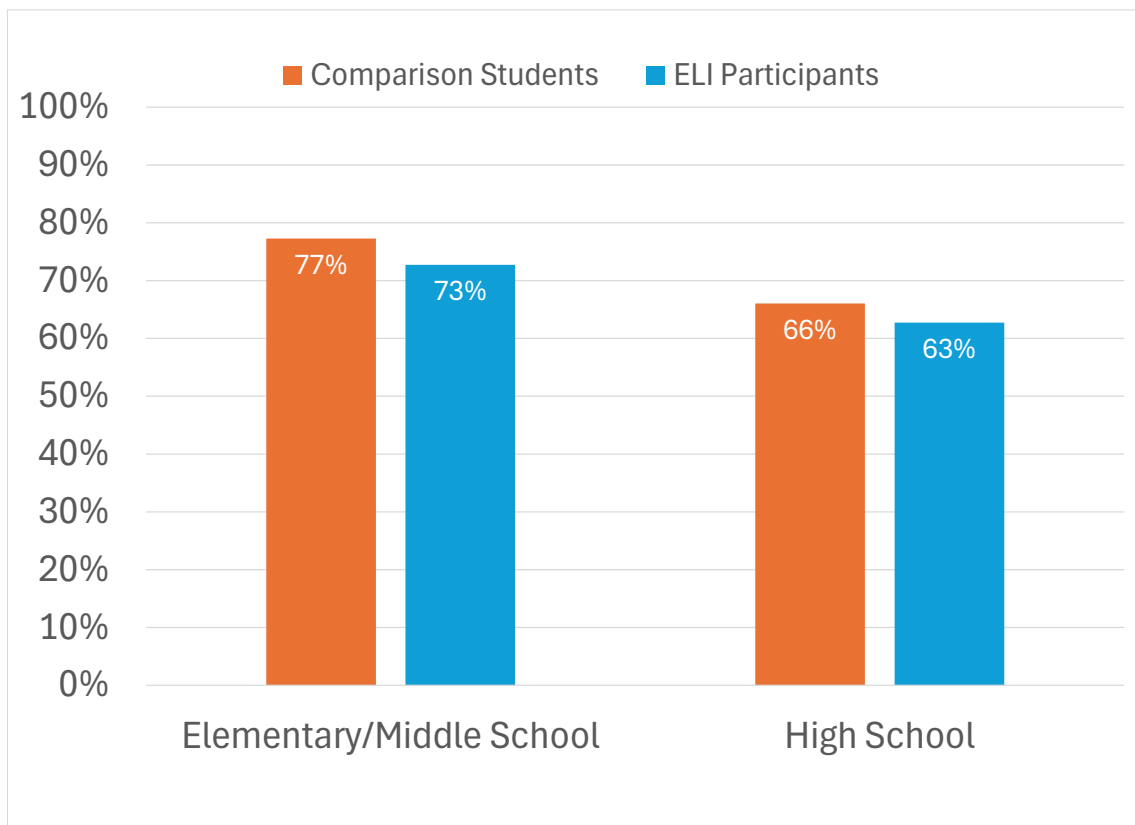
Another indicator of student connection to school relates to referral for behavior incidents. For the ELI program cohort, 11% of elementary/middle school participants and 19% of high school participants had two or more behavioral referrals in the prior school year.

Distribution of Behavior-Related Referrals: ZONE Comparison Students and ELI Participants 2022-23



For these students, we once again selected a comparison group of nonparticipating students in ZONE schools with a similar distribution of behavioral referrals. It is encouraging that about three-quarters of primary students and two-thirds of secondary students with multiple behavioral referrals in a given year go on the following year to have two or fewer behavioral incidents. A slightly lower percentage of ELI participants had year-to-year improvement in behavior, as shown in the chart below. It should be noted again, however, that this behavioral count includes all incidents during the 2023-24 school year and ELI programming took place in the second half of the school year. The complete year one summary report will include a fuller assessment of attendance, behavior and coursework outcomes.

**Reduction in Behavior-Related Referrals (2+): ZONE Comparison Students and ELI Participants
2022-23 to 2023-24**



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