



Summer Learning From Screen to Screen

Lessons Learned From After School Matters Summer 2020 Programs

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AFTER SCHOOL **matters**[®]



After School Matters provides teens with opportunities to discover their potential and find their future. To learn more about After School Matters, visit www.afterschoolmatters.org.

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After School Matters is a nonprofit organization that provides afterschool and summer opportunities to Chicago public high school teens to explore their passions and develop their talents, while gaining critical skills for work, college, and beyond. After School Matters programs are project based and led by industry experts that provide a pathway to progress in skills development and independence. Teens earn a stipend while participating in programs in the arts, communications and leadership, sports, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Over the span of nearly three decades, After School Matters has impacted **more than 350,000 teens** throughout the city of Chicago.

Summer 2020 was unlike any other. The COVID-19 pandemic as well as increased activism and public attention on systemic racism have changed people's daily lives. Not only have schools fundamentally changed, but also afterschool and summer programs have changed. The pandemic has transformed how organizations coordinate and support programs, how adult staff design and implement programs, and how young people and their families participate in and experience their programs.

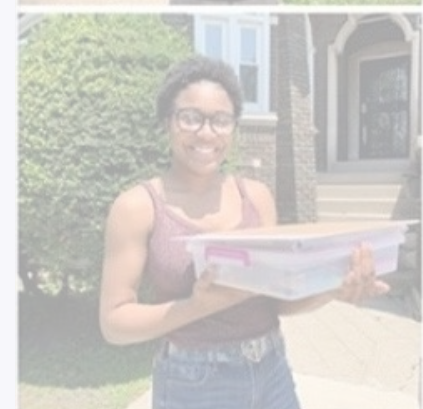
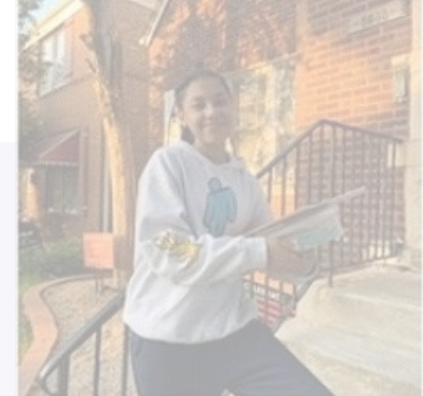
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, After School Matters engaged in organization-wide planning and preparation efforts to move in-person programs online. After School Matters **reenvisioned** its summer 2020 program session to provide **517** remote learning programs to nearly **10,000** teens in the city of Chicago. Remote programs offered a combination of small group, whole group, and individual work time to achieve various projects. Online program meetings occurred 3–5 days a week through Google Suites to be closely aligned to the Chicago Public Schools approach for ease and familiarity, and individual program supply kits and tech devices were delivered directly to teens.

After School Matters partnered with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to better contextualize and understand three key topics as they relate to unique circumstances of summer 2020.

Teen Experiences

Instructor Experiences

Program Quality





What did we learn?

Teen Experiences

Each teen's report of their perceived stress varied. A little over half of teens (52%) reported stress scores lower than the median, whereas 48% of teens reported stress scores at or above the median. In other words; teens' perceived stress scores varied quite a bit by teen. Additionally, one in three teens (32%) screened positively for food insecurity this summer. Teens in more vulnerable areas of the city and in areas of the city with higher COVID-19 case rates were more likely to report higher levels of stress and be food insecure.



Teens shared positive feedback about their program and highlighted supportive relationships with their instructors and peers, opportunities for skills development, and overall satisfaction with their program. Teens also reported a high sense of belonging, which was related to lower reports of stress and food insecurity. Last, teens highlighted challenges with technology and internet access.

Instructor Experiences

Nearly one in four instructors (24%) screened positively for food insecurity. Instructors who reported food insecurity also reported higher levels of stress. Additionally, instructors who reported lower access to mental health supports reported higher levels of stress. The same was true for instructors who reported less confidence in their knowledge of resources or referrals to respond to teen requests.



Instructors generally provided positive feedback about the supports they received from After School Matters. They shared inspiring stories about their teens and highlighted the relationships they had with teens and teens' enthusiasm, final products and showcases, and growth over the course of the program. However, instructors shared their challenges, including translating their program content for a remote learning environment, maintaining teen engagement and participation, and facilitating live program sessions virtually.

Program Quality

After School Matters programs demonstrated high program quality across each of the four Youth Program Quality Assessment domains: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. Domain averages were comparable with previous sessions and followed trends in national benchmarks.



Comparing Summer 2020 With Previous Summers

Average domain scores were comparable with previous years for Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, and Engagement. The domain average was lower in Interaction than for previous summers.

Teens generally rated survey items higher in summer 2020 than in past summers, especially as it relates to the relationship with their instructor and the skills they gained. Teens did rate their feelings of safety in their program lower in summer 2020, although the rating was still high (85%). Teens also reported lower ratings of their program making them hopeful than in previous summers. Again, the percentage of teens was still relatively high (78%).

Instructors reported higher rates of satisfaction and interest in being an instructor with After School Matters again. Instructors reported that their program specialists were more helpful at resolving program issues than the previous summer, although reports of their responsiveness were lower for summer 2020 than for summer 2018.



Looking Ahead to Inform Future Practice

AIR recommends the following next steps based on the lessons learned from the summer 2020 program session:

- Continue to support basic needs (e.g., food, technology, and internet access) for teens and instructors.
- Support instructors with their mental and emotional health.
- Focus on teen belonging to help buffer teen stress.
- Offer training or resources for instructors on strategies for facilitating interaction in a remote learning environment.
- Continue to collect information about teens, instructors, program quality, and the remote learning program model.

Methods

After School Matters provided AIR with datasets from their summer sessions for 2018, 2019, and 2020. The datasets included:

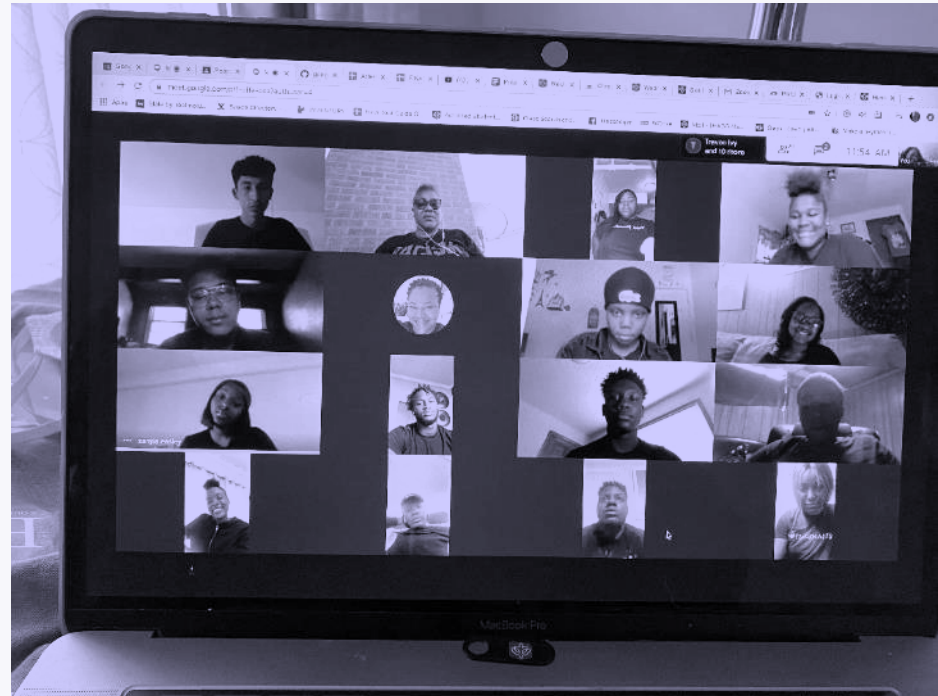
- Program characteristics
- Teen characteristics
- Teen survey responses
- Instructor survey responses
- Program Quality Assessment (PQA) data

Where applicable, AIR used five methods to analyze data:

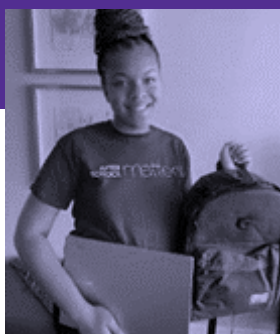
1. **Descriptive analysis** (averages, counts, and percentages)
2. **Correlational analysis** (how two items relate to one another)
3. **Analysis of variance (ANOVA)** (whether group averages are different from each other)
4. **Geographic analysis** (whether items relate to where teens live)
5. **Qualitative analysis** (whether open-ended responses from teens and instructors have common themes)

In this report, we share findings from each analysis when the finding meets a specific threshold. For descriptive analyses, we share findings when they help to establish context, when they are considered a success (>80% agreement), and when they are considered a challenge (<80% agreement). We share correlational, ANOVA, and geographic findings when we observed statistically significant differences at the $p = .05$ level, which indicates that any observed differences did not happen by chance (note that statistical significance does not tell us about the magnitude of that difference). Finally, we share qualitative findings when more than 10% of survey takers conveyed similar themes in their written responses.

For more information on the usage of each analysis, please refer to the **Methods Snapshot** text box in each section.



Teens participating in remote programming meet to discuss peace building in their communities.



Teen Experiences

In this section, we highlight teen experiences in summer 2020. First, we describe teens' daily realities, including stress, food insecurity, and other situational stressors teens experienced in the summer.

Then, we describe teens' program experiences in their After School Matters programs, including [feedback on the remote learning model](#), [feelings of belonging in the program](#), [relationships with instructors](#), [skill development](#), [other program opportunities](#), [program satisfaction](#), and [hope for the future](#).

After School Matters served **9,543** teens in the summer 2020 program session. Nearly **60%** of teens identified as female, and **39%** identified as male. The remaining 2% of teens identified with another gender or chose not to identify. The majority of teens were Black or African American (**53%**), followed by Latinx (**34%**).

A total of **3,999** teens (**42%**) completed a survey to share their daily realities and program experiences. As shown in Table 1, a greater proportion of females responded to the survey than the proportion of female program participants (66% of survey respondents were female, compared with 59% of program participants).

Table 1. Teen Demographics: Program Participants and Survey Respondents

Demographic	Program Participants (n = 9,543)	Survey Respondents (n = 3,999)
Gender		
Female	59%	66% ^a
Male	39%	33% ^a
Another gender	1%	1%
Choose not to identify	1%	1%
Not reported	<1%	0%
Race and Ethnicity		
Black/African American	53%	49%
Latinx	34%	37%
Asian	5%	6%
White	4%	5%
Two or more races	3%	3%
Other races	1%	1%
Not reported	<1%	<1%

Note. "Other races" refers to American Indian/Native American, Middle Eastern/Northern African, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

^a These survey respondent percentages total to greater than a $\pm 5\%$ difference.

Methods Snapshot: *Teen Experiences*

After School Matters shared teen survey data with AIR to conduct quantitative, geographic, and qualitative analyses. AIR used descriptive analysis to provide frequencies and conducted correlation analyses to better understand relationships among teen survey items. Additionally, AIR used geographic analysis (such as spatial autocorrelation and optimized hotspot analysis) to analyze survey data with respect to teen's home locations. Finally, AIR used qualitative methods to identify themes where at least 10% of respondents shared similar feedback to an open-ended question.

These survey findings provide important information about how teens are experiencing their everyday lives and their out-of-school time programs amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Daily Realities

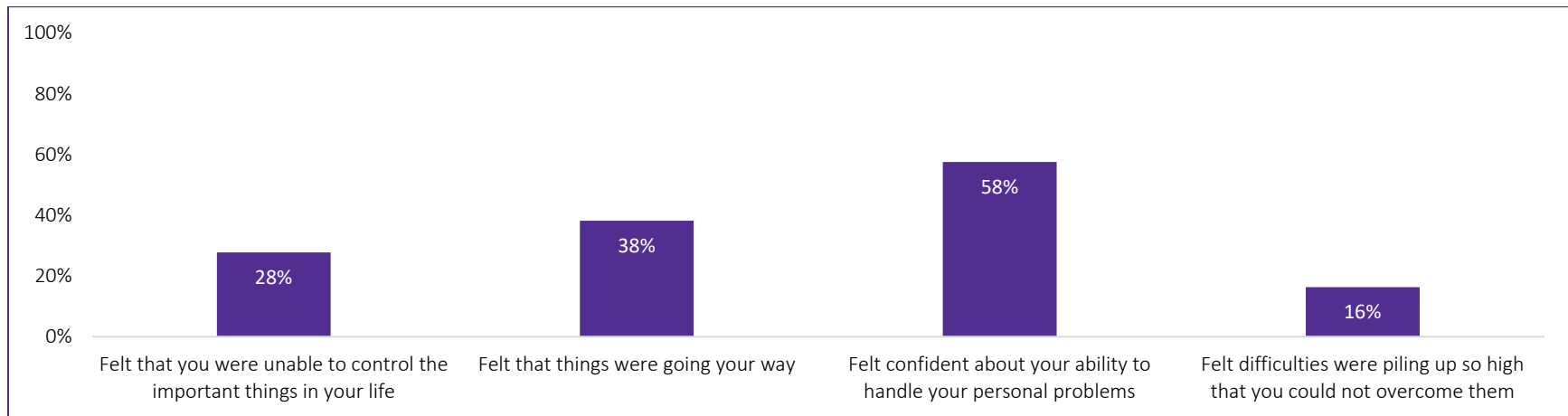
The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way After School Matters provided programming and the way teens experienced their summers. Although the pandemic has impacted people of all backgrounds, the virus has disproportionately affected racial and ethnic minority groups (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Nearly all of After School Matters teens (96%) are from racial and ethnic minority groups. Thus, After School Matters was particularly interested in better understanding the daily realities of teens amid the pandemic. Teens shared information on several aspects of their daily lives that could be impacted by the prevalence of COVID-19. Here, we present information on teens' perceived stress and food insecurity.

Teen Stress

After School Matters first captured teens' stress by including the short version of the [Perceived Stress Scale \(PSS-4\)](#) in their 2020 Spring Teen Survey and again in their 2020 Summer Teen Survey. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is an instrument used to measure the degree to which respondents feel stress in their recent life experiences. Teens responded to questions regarding how overwhelmed and stressed they felt this summer.

AIR first analyzed teen responses descriptively on each of the four items of the PSS-4 (Figure 1). AIR examined the proportion of teens that responded "fairly often" or "often" to each item individually. They found that **58%** of teens reported they felt confident about their ability to handle their personal problems, and **38%** of teens felt things were going their way. About a quarter of teens (**28%**) reported they felt they were unable to control things in their life, and **17%** of teens reported they felt difficulties were piling so high that they could not overcome them.

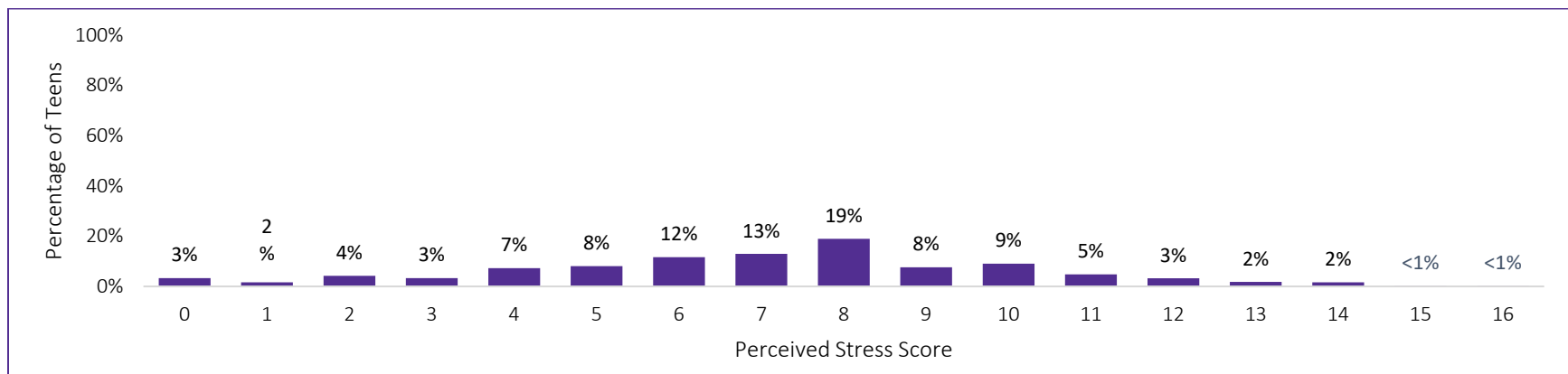
Figure 1. Teen Reports on Their Stress Varied



Note. The number of teen survey respondents varied across items, ranging from 3,369 to 3,378.

Then, AIR followed scoring guidance from the developers of the PSS-4 to calculate an average “perceived stress score” for each teen. Perceived stress scores for PSS-4 range from 0-16. On average, **After School Matters teens scored a 7.07. This score means that After School Matters teens reported a moderate level of stress.** In Figure 2, we present the full distribution of perceived stress scores for teens.

Figure 2. Teens Reported Varied Levels of Stress, With an Average of 7.07



Note. In all, 3,132 teens responded to *all* perceived stress questions and received a perceived stress score.

AIR then used geographic informational systems (GIS) to layer teens' perceived stress scores with key, current neighborhood characteristics that may impact their daily lives. These neighborhood characteristics included the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) and COVID-19 case rates. Social vulnerability refers to the potential negative effects on communities caused by external stresses, such as natural or human-caused disasters, or disease outbreaks. For more information, please see the CDC's [Social Vulnerability Index](#). Additionally, AIR examined teen reports of perceived stress and the rate of positive COVID-19 cases in Chicago. The AIR team used COVID-19 positive case rates by zip code from March 1, 2020, to September 6, 2020, publicly provided by the [City of Chicago Department of Public Health](#).

As shown in Figure 3, AIR found that teens in *more vulnerable areas of the city are more likely to have a higher perceived stress score* ($p = .05$). Figure 4 tells a similar story. Teens in areas of the city with *higher COVID-19 case rates are more likely to have a higher perceived stress score* ($p = .001$) than teens in other areas of the city. In other words, teens are more stressed if their community area is more socially vulnerable or has a higher rate of positive COVID-19 cases.

Figure 3. Teen Perceived Stress and Social Vulnerability Index

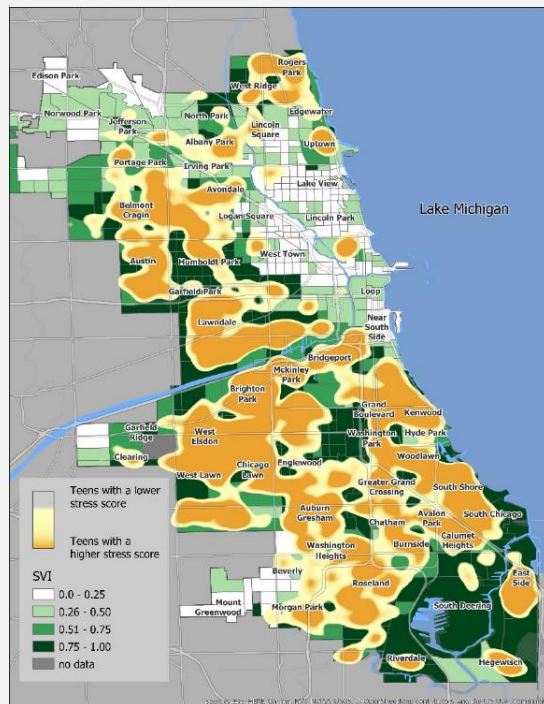
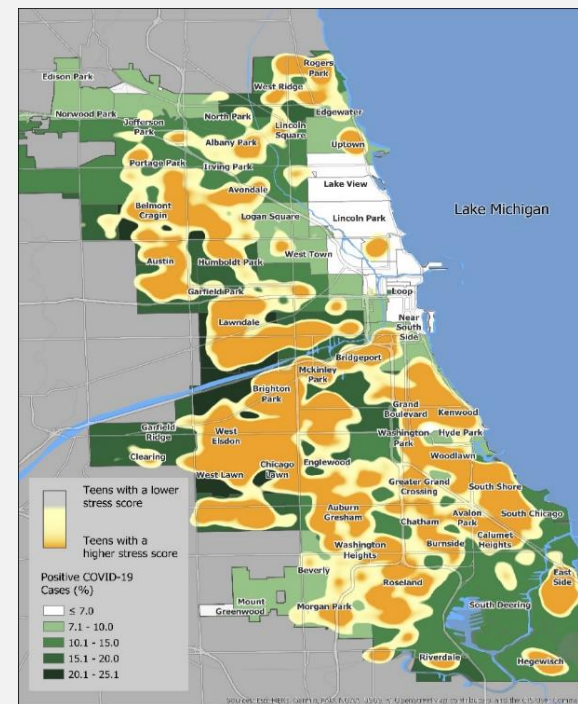


Figure 4. Teen Perceived Stress and COVID-19 Case Rates



Food Insecurity

Throughout the spring, ASM received feedback from instructors and teens that were having trouble meeting basic needs, including food, because of the pandemic. As a result, ASM began offering food distribution at several sites across the city and has distributed 120,000 meals since April 2020. Given the need expressed by some of their instructors and teens, their food distribution efforts, and the rising food insecurity rates across the city and country, After School Matters included a food insecurity screener in their summer 2020 survey.

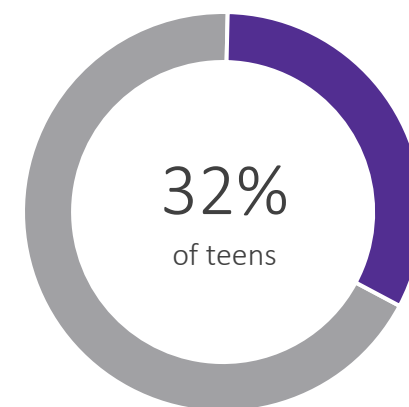
The Food Insecurity Screener is a validated two-item measure created from the United States Department of Agriculture's Household Food Security Survey (Hager et al., 2010). This measure asks respondents to report if they worried whether food would run out before they received money to buy more and if the food they bought would not last until they bought more. Scoring positively on either item indicates an individual is food insecure. AIR first descriptively analyzed how teens responded on each of the food insecurity items and found that teen responses varied.

AIR found that **a third of ASM's teens scored positively for food insecurity this summer** (Figure 5). For context, the child food insecurity rate in 2018 Cook County was 11.9% (Gundersen et al., 2020).

AIR then used GIS to layer teens' food insecurity with [SVI](#) and [COVID-19 case rates](#) (Figures 6 and 7).

AIR found similar trends to those observed with perceived stress: **Teens are more likely to be food insecure in more vulnerable areas of the city** ($p < .001$) **and in areas where there are higher rates of positive COVID-19 cases** ($p < .001$) than in other areas of the city.

Figure 5. One in Three Teens Screened Positively for Food Insecurity



Note. $n = 3,392$ teens.

Figure 6. Teen Food Insecurity and Social Vulnerability Index

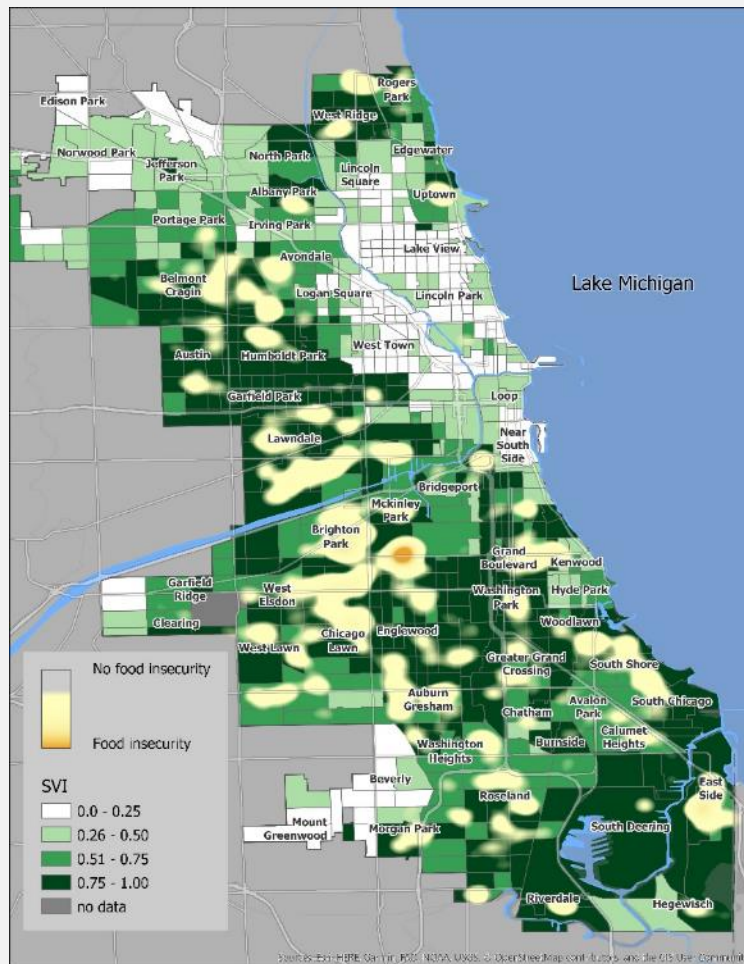
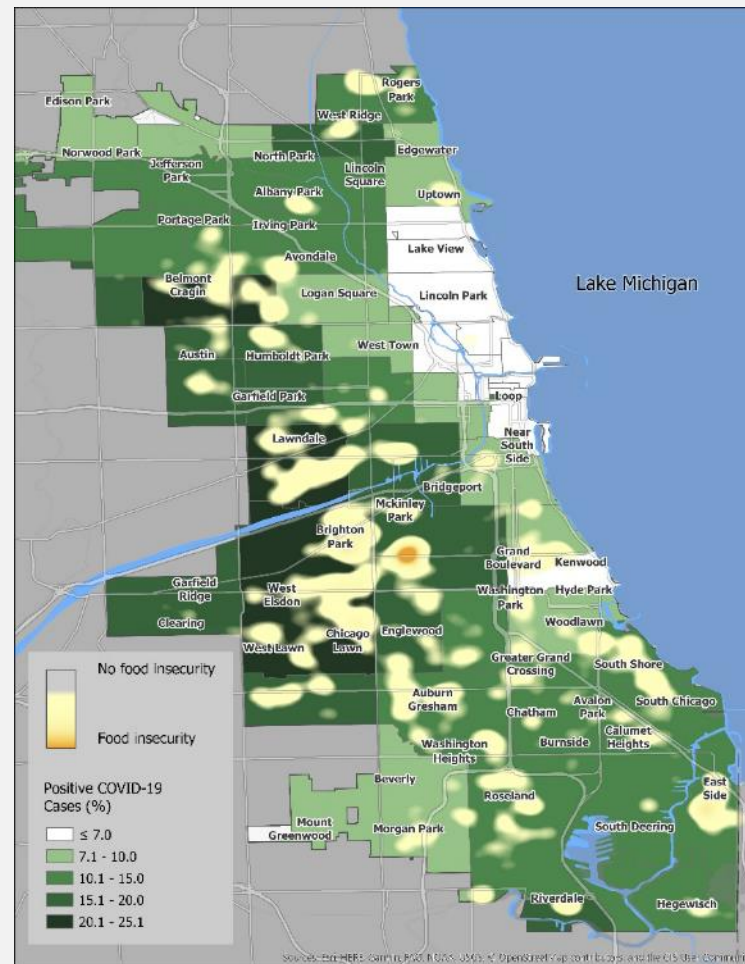


Figure 7. Teen Food Insecurity and COVID-19 Case Rates

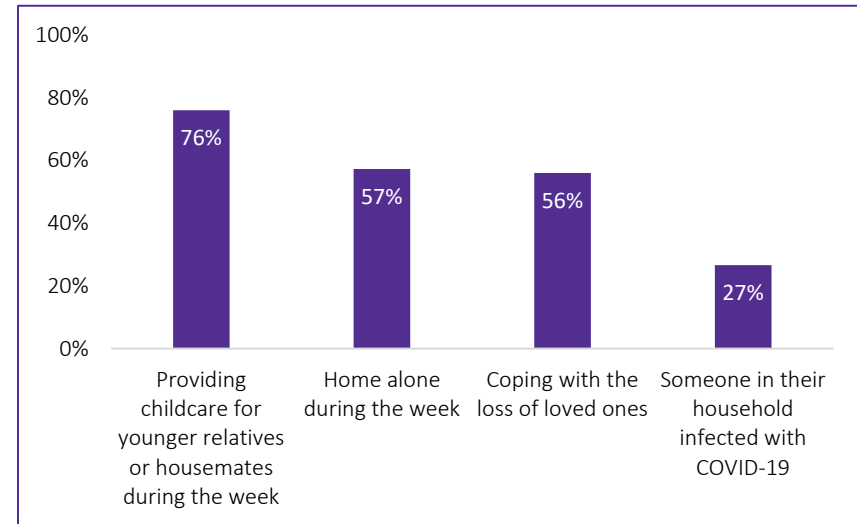


Instructor Reports of Teen Realities

In addition to teen reports of their summer experiences, instructors summarized their perceptions of teens' experiences at home, beyond the program. Instructors reflected on the teens in their program and indicated how many (zero, a few, some, most, or all) engaged in situational stressors, such as providing childcare for younger relatives during the week, staying home alone during the week, coping with the loss of a loved one, or having someone in their household infected with COVID-19. Figure 8 shows the combined percentage of instructors who reported any of their teens experienced each item.

Three quarters of instructors (76%) reported that teens in their program were providing childcare for younger relatives or housemates during the week. More than half of instructors (57%) reported that teens were home alone during the week. Similarly, 56% of instructors reported teens in their program were coping with the loss of loved ones, and 27% reported their teens had someone in their household infected with COVID-19.

Figure 8. Instructors Reported That Teens Experienced Situational Stressors During the Summer



Note. In all, 342 of 729 instructors responded to these questions.

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Teen Realities*

Summer 2020 was unlike previous summers. Teens continued to feel the effects of the pandemic and increased activism and public attention on systemic racism. Teens shared more about their daily realities through the After School Matters Teen Survey.

Teens' perceived stress varied across teens. A little over half of teens (52%) reported stress scores lower than the median, whereas 48% of teens reported stress scores at or above the median. Currently, no comparable dataset exists to provide necessary context for further interpretation of perceived stress scores, which were based on the PSS-4. It will be important for After School Matters to continue to monitor teens' perceived stress scores over time to gather more insight and context.

Instructors also reported on their teens' daily realities. Instructors observed more than half of their teens experienced situational stressors this summer. The most common stressor instructors perceived was providing care for younger relatives or housemates (76%). Keeping the remote learning model flexible for teens may help alleviate barriers to participation.

One in three teens (32%) screened positively for food insecurity this summer. This finding is higher than the most recently available rate for Cook County teens under the age of 18, which was 12% as of 2018 (Gundersen et al., 2020). Additionally, teens in more vulnerable areas of the city and in areas of the city with higher COVID-19 case rates are more likely to report higher levels of stress and be food insecure. After School Matters may consider prioritizing these areas of the city for future food distribution efforts.

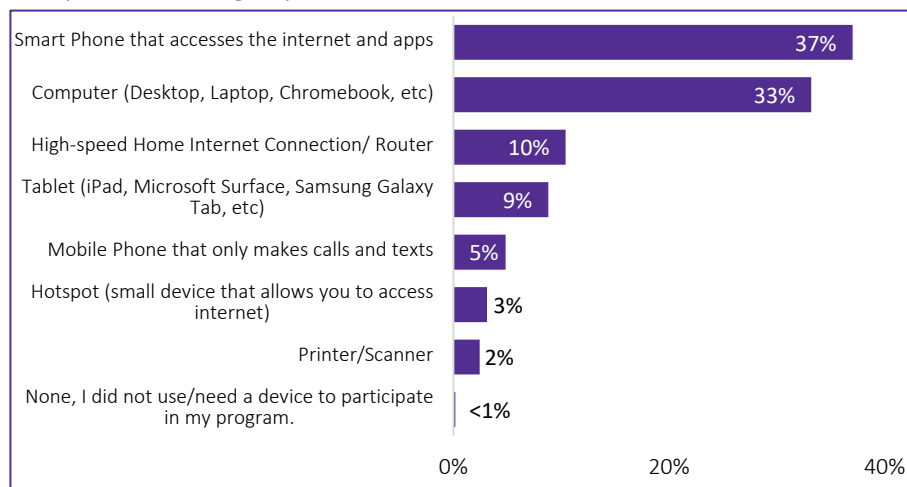
Program Experiences

Summer 2020 marked After School Matters' first fully remote program session.¹ AIR examined teen feedback on the remote learning program model to understand their program experience in summer 2020. We then analyzed teens' reports of how they perceived their program experience, including feelings of belonging, relationships with peers and instructors, skills gained, program opportunities, program satisfaction, and their hope for the future.

Remote Learning

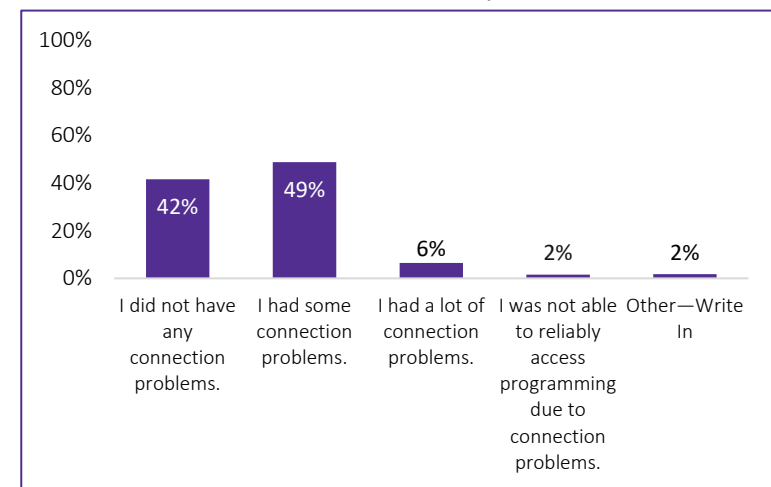
First, we explored how teens accessed their remote learning program. We also explored teen feedback on what they liked or did not like about remote learning. Teens reported what devices they used to access programming by selecting "All that apply." We found that many teens used smart phones, computers, and home internet connections (Figure 9). Finally, we descriptively analyzed how teen's internet connections impacted their program participation. We found that **more than half of teens experienced connection problems this summer** (Figure 10).

Figure 9. Most Teens Accessed Programming Through Smart Phones, Computers, and High-Speed Home Internet



Note. $n = 2,796$.

Figure 10. Many Teens Had Some Connection Problems, Whereas Other Teens Did Not Have Any



Note. $n = 3,251$. Two percent of teens wrote in other responses.

¹ A small percentage of teens (7%) participated in programs that were either all in-person or in-person part of the time (e.g., painting commissions program that completed a mural in person).

Teens also had the opportunity to share what worked well and where they would make changes to the remote programming model.

What worked well?

Communication and relationships with peers and instructors (n = 501).

Teens shared that their instructors encouraged interaction by requesting teens to share their video during calls and by using the breakout function in Google Classrooms to facilitate small-group discussions. For example, one teen shared, “I loved being able to message and text my teammates and the ability to communicate with my program leaders for extra assistance. I also liked the face-to-face interaction using Google Classroom.”

The safety and convenience of participating remotely (n = 295). Teens discussed the comfort of being able to work from home and the benefits of not having to commute to their programs, including additional sleep and saving transit costs. For example, teens shared that they could choose the programs they wanted without having to worry about the time or cost required for transportation to programs. For example, one teen shared, “It was a lot more convenient not having to take time out of my day to drive to a place to practice, so it gave me a lot of free time throughout the day, and I was also able to participate in meetings even when [I] wasn't available at home, so it was very flexible for me.”

What could be improved?

Virtual platforms, devices, and Wi-Fi for remote programming (n = 265). Teens cited their spotty internet connection as a barrier for fully participating in the program. One teen recommended recording program sessions and posting them so teens who missed the sessions can catch up when their internet connection is stronger. For example, one teen shared, “It's hard to be online when at times my internet couldn't access the google meets.... Posting what we did would be helpful as a backup to whenever someone was absent or couldn't get connection.”

Teens' own behavior (n = 262). Teens shared how they would change their level of participation, preparedness for the program, sleep schedule, and choice of program. For example, one teen shared, “I'd try to make and encourage myself to do assignments on-time rather than doing small portions at a time until the last second before it's due. I would also try and be more vocal and speak rather than typing to boost my poor social skills.”

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Remote Learning*

Summer 2020 was After School Matters' first fully planned remote learning session. Nearly all teens participated in programming this summer online. Teens most often used smart phones to access the program, and more than half of teens had connection problems during the session.

Teens shared what they liked about the remote learning. They shared positive feedback about their relationships with their instructors and peers and offered examples of how instructors encouraged interaction, such as requesting teens to leave their video on and taking advantage of breakout rooms. Teens also shared that the remote learning model removed some previous participation barriers, such as transportation time and cost, which allowed teens to select from a broader variety of programs.

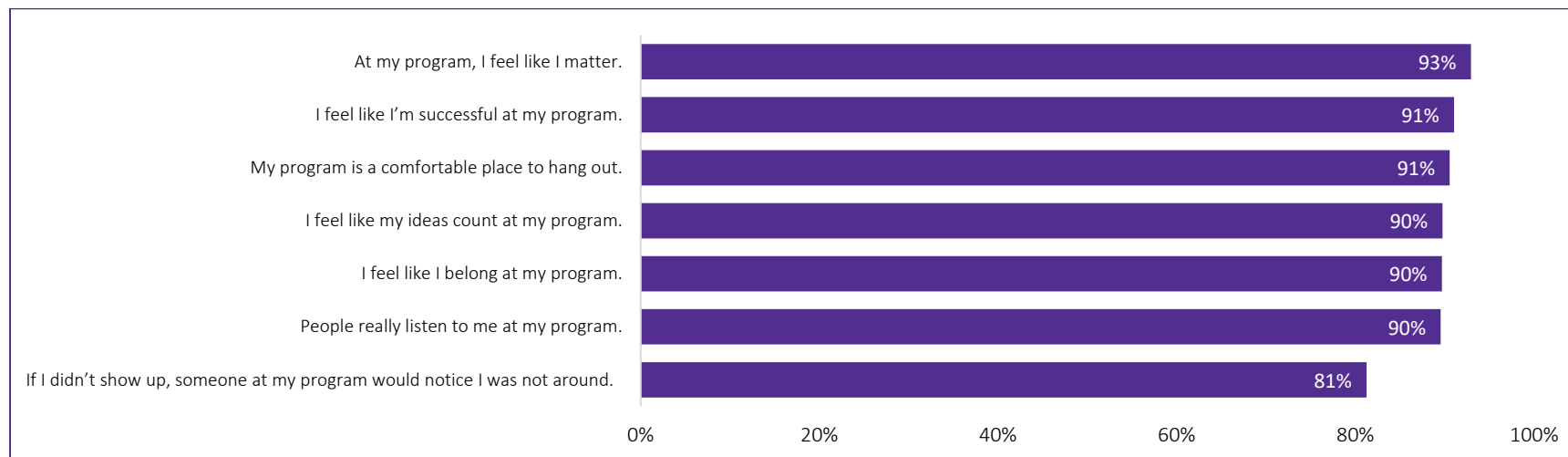
In teens' reflections on what they would improve about remote learning, they most often highlighted issues related to technology and internet connection. Some teens suggested that instructors record program sessions and post them so teens who could not join due to connectivity issues could catch up more easily.

Findings indicate that inequities in technology and internet access persist. Findings also suggest teens may require further connectivity support for participation in remote learning programs. After School Matters may consider continuing its efforts to provide technology devices to teens, such as laptops and hotspots.

Belonging

After School Matters used a scale on [Belonging](#) to get a sense of how teens feel as a member of their program. Teens responded to seven items related to how they feel about their interactions and membership with the program. As shown in Figure 11, most teens agreed with each Belonging item “Most of the time” or “Always.” AIR followed guidance from the instrument’s developer to calculate one Belonging score for each teen. Belonging scores ranged from 1 to 4, with an average of 3.50. **This average represents a high Belonging score among teens.**

Figure 11. Most Teens Had High Belonging Scores



Note. The number of teen survey respondents varied across items, ranging from 3,430 to 3,437.

Sometimes, the way survey takers respond to specific items can relate to the way they respond to other items. Because of this, AIR then dug deeper into teens’ Belonging scores by analyzing whether any other survey items were related to how much a teen felt they belong within their summer program.

AIR examined relationships between teen reports of belonging and other survey items, such as perceived stress, food insecurity, instructor support, skills gained, program opportunities, and program satisfaction. AIR found that **teens who reported a greater sense of belonging reported lower perceived stress** ($p < .001$) **and food insecurity** ($p < .001$).

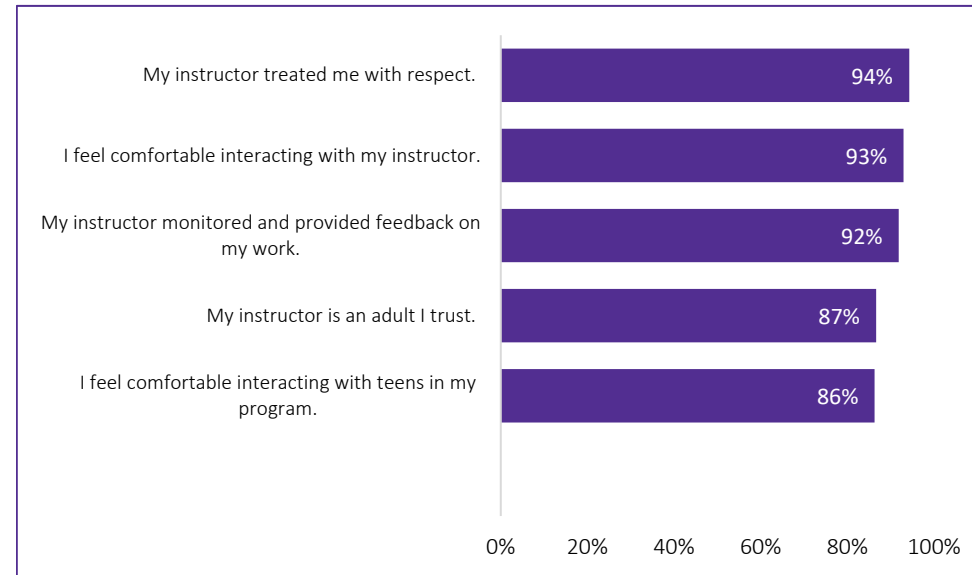
Supportive Relationships With Instructors and Peers

After School Matters instructors serve not only as program leads but also as mentors to help guide teens on a path to success each session. Teens responded to survey questions about their relationships with their instructors, such as whether the instructor was a respectful, caring adult whom the teens trusted.

Teens shared feedback on their relationships with their peers, such as whether they felt comfortable interacting with other teens in the program. In Figure 12, we highlight the percentage of teens who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about their relationships with their instructors and peers.

Teen survey responses highlighted **positive, strong relationships with both their instructors and peers**. More than **90%** of teens reported that their instructor treated them with respect, that they felt comfortable interacting with their instructor, and that their instructor provided feedback on their work. Over **80%** of teens reported that their instructor was an adult they trusted and that they felt comfortable interacting with other teens in the program.

Figure 12. Teens Reported Supportive Relationships With Their Instructor and Peers



Note. The number of teen survey respondents varied across items, ranging from 3,418 to 3,533.

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Belonging and Supportive Relationships With Instructors and Peers*

Environments filled with safety and belonging are a key ingredient for learning and development (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2019). The majority of teens (90%) reported they felt like they belong in their program, and 91% of teens reported their program is a comfortable place for them to hang out. These results indicate that After School Matters programs are creating environments filled with safety and belonging.

Another important element in high-quality learning and development experiences includes positive developmental relationships (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Teens were able to find positive, strong relationships with both their instructors and peers. For example, 94% of teens said their instructors treated them with respect, and 87% of teens said their instructors are adults they trust.

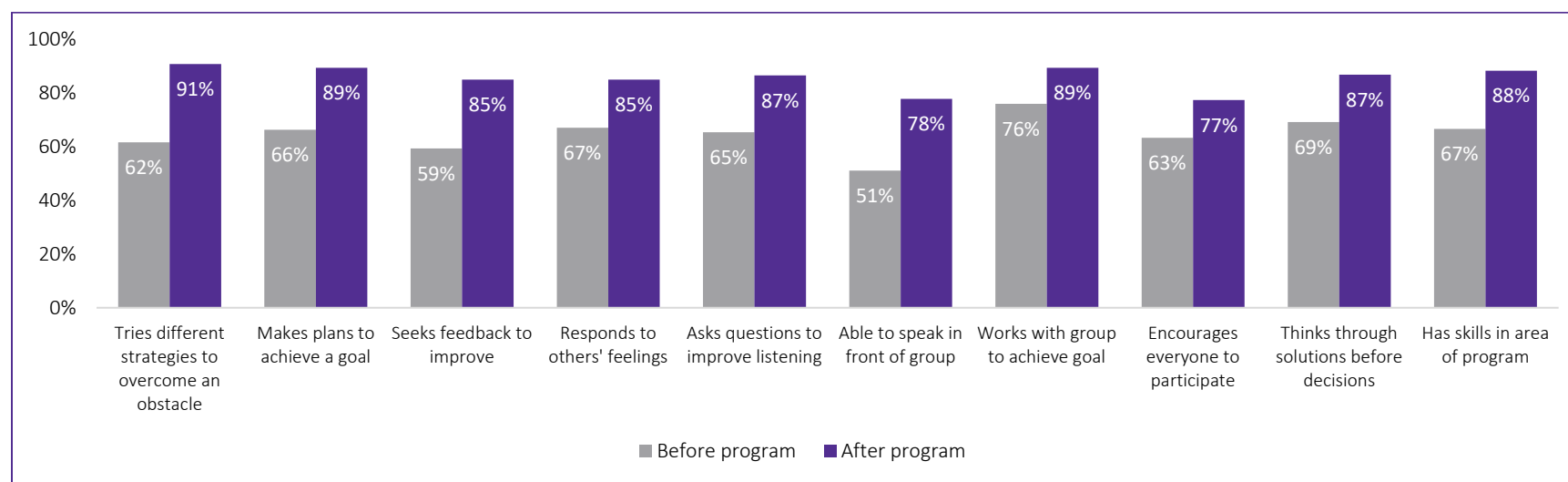
Additionally, the relationship between belonging and stress indicates that feelings of belonging in teens' programs may help buffer their stress. After School Matters should continue to monitor this relationship. After School Matters may also consider contacting instructors whose teens reported high belonging scores to garner best practices or provide professional development or other resources to instructors to help them create safe, supportive environments and relationships in the remote setting.

Skill Development

A key component of After School Matters' program model is to engage teens in skill development for work and higher education. On the summer survey, teens reflected on skills they had before starting the program and how they feel about their abilities in these same skills at the end of program. In Figure 13, we highlight the percentage of teens who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about the skills they possessed at both the beginning and end of their program.

Although all differences in skill abilities were significantly different from the beginning to end of programming, teens reported the largest gains in their ability to **address obstacles, speak in front of a group, and seek feedback**.

Figure 13. Teens Reported High Level of Skills After Participating in Their Programs



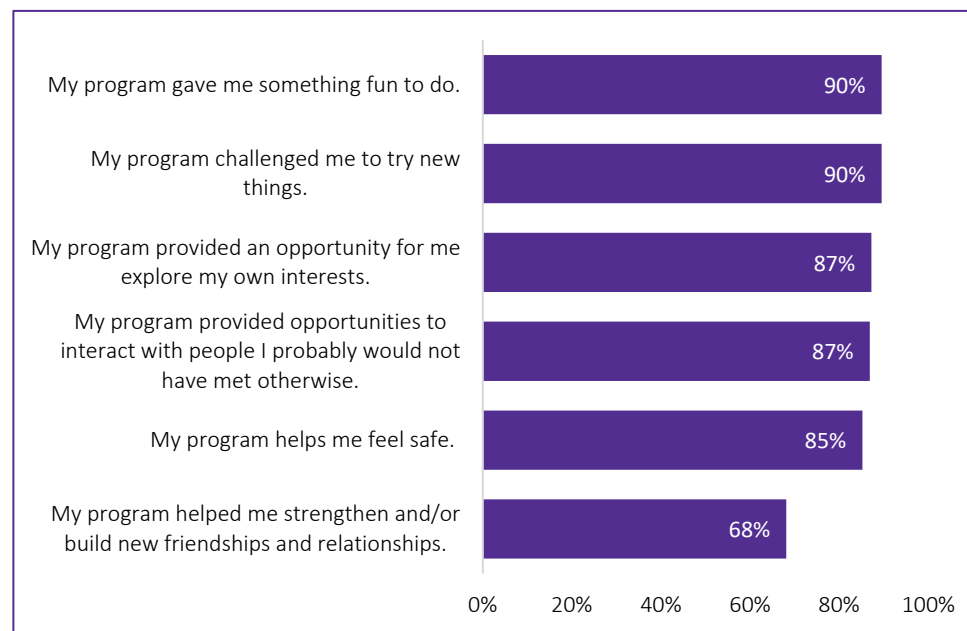
Note. All items were significant at $p < .001$. The number of teen survey respondents varied across items, ranging from 3,877 to 4,011.

Program Opportunities

After School Matters' program model is designed to build opportunities for teens. On the summer survey, teens described the opportunities their program afforded them, such as having fun, trying new things, and meeting new people. In Figure 14, we highlight the percentage of teens that agreed or strongly agreed with statements about opportunities they had in their program.

More than **80%** of teens reported that their **program gave them something fun to do, challenged them to try new things, provided them with opportunities to explore their interests and interact with people they would not have otherwise met, and made them feel safe**. Only **68%** of teens reported that their program helped them develop or strengthen friendships.

Figure 14. Teens Mostly Shared Positive Feedback About Their General Program Experience and Opportunities



Note. The number of teen survey respondents varied across items, ranging from 3,431 to 3,480.

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Skill Development and Other Program Opportunities*

High-quality environments emphasize the intentional development of knowledge, skills, mindsets, and habits and rich learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). After School Matters' program model emphasizes skill development and experiential learning opportunities.

Teens reported significant gains in their skills, such as making plans or working with groups to achieve a goal. Teens felt most strongly that after participating in the session they were better able to try different strategies to overcome an obstacle. Additionally, many teens felt this program session gave them opportunities. The majority teens said this session gave them something fun to do (90%) and challenged them to try new things (90%). Fewer teens felt their program helped them strengthen and/or build new friendships and relationships.

These findings are particularly interesting because less is known about whether and how remote learning supports skill development, especially in an out-of-school time setting. After School Matters teens, however, perceive that that remote learning programs can still provide critical opportunities for them to develop and practice skills, have fun, and explore their interests. After School Matters and others should continue to seek out and further explore this valuable information.

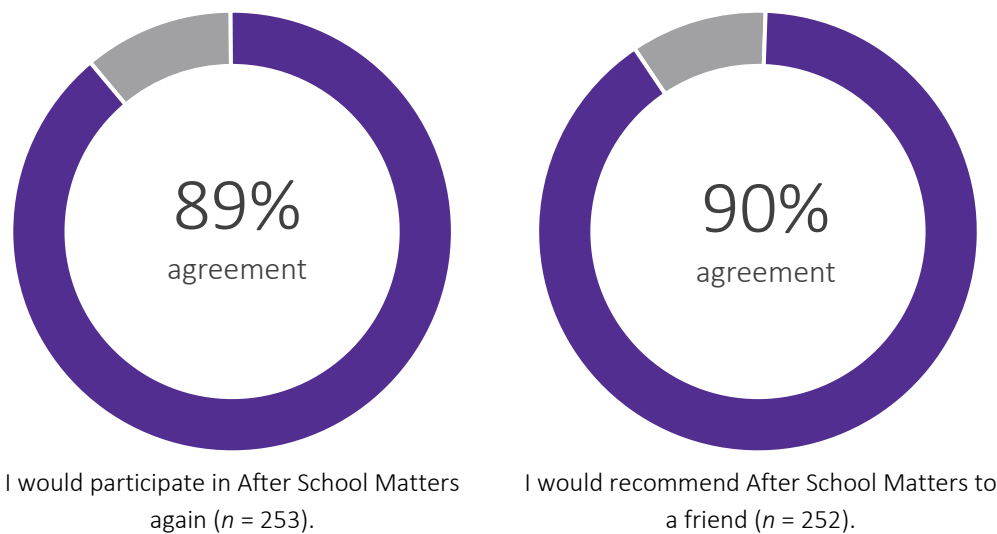
Program Satisfaction

After School Matters has found that teens who participate in more program sessions experience more successful outcomes (Goerge, Cusick, Wasserman, & Gladden, 2007). Measuring program satisfaction can be a helpful way to gauge whether teens may return to programs in the future. Teens shared their satisfaction with the program by reporting whether they would participate in After School Matters again and if they would recommend After School Matters to a friend. Most teens (90%) said they would participate in After School Matters again and would recommend After School Matters to a friend (Figure 15).

Sometimes, the way survey takers respond to specific items can be related to the way they respond to other items. Because of this, AIR then dug deeper into the program satisfaction score by analyzing whether any other survey items related teen satisfaction with programming.

AIR found the strongest relationships with program satisfaction to be a sense of belonging, opportunities to explore interests, and feeling safe in their program. In other words, **the more satisfied teens were with their program, the greater sense of belonging they felt, the more they felt their program gave them opportunities to explore their interests, and the more the program made them feel safe** (all at $p < .001$).

Figure 15. Most Teens Reported High Levels of Program Satisfaction



Hope for the Future

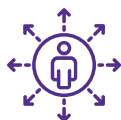
After School Matters asked teens to report how they feel about their futures after participating in the summer program. Teens answered how hopeful they feel about their future, and they shared written responses for why they feel more or less hopeful after participating. As shown in Figure 16, more than three-quarters of teens feel somewhat or very hopeful about their futures.

What made teens more hopeful for their future?

Most teens (78%) reported they felt more hopeful about their future after participating in their After School Matters program than before the program. Teens shared what made them feel hopeful in their open-ended responses. A total of 1,540 teens responded to the survey item.



The skills they developed ($n = 342$). Teens shared they were hopeful about the skills they developed as part of the program. They also shared their hopes for practicing and further developing their skills in the future. For example, one teen shared, “This [program] made me feel more hopeful because now I know that I’m not terrible at what I love to do and hopefully I can continue improving my skills and become something that incorporates dancing!”



Having a better sense of the career they want to pursue ($n = 282$). Teens reported they were more hopeful because they had a better idea of the career they would like to pursue in the future. Teens said they felt more hopeful simply because they know they have options. For example, one teen wrote, “Knowing the different options in career choices I have made me feel more hopeful. Also knowing how girls just like me were able to overcome their challenges gives me hope that so can I.”

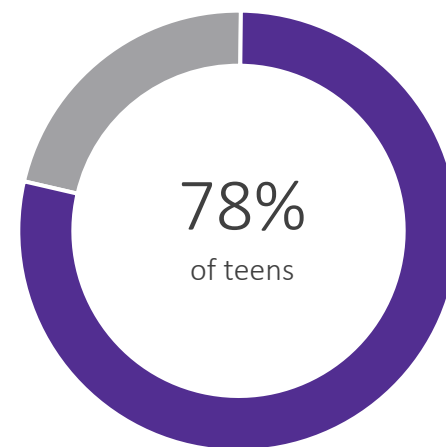


Relationships with their peers and family ($n = 193$). Teens reflected on their relationships with their peers in their program as well as their family members. Teens shared that programs provided an opportunity to connect with their peers regularly. For example, one teen said, “What made me feel hopeful was that even though we are going through a tough time, many of my peers are staying positive and busy doing fun activities.”



Relationships with their instructors ($n = 179$). Finally, teens highlighted their relationships with instructors as making them more hopeful for their future. Teens reported feeling supported in multiple ways by their instructors. For example, one teen shared, “What made me hopeful is my instructors having a very comforting talk about everything that’s happening in the world right now. They didn’t try to push anything aside or try to hide anything, they were just real, but also gave reassurance. I didn’t know what career path to look

Figure 16. Many Teens Feel Hopeful About Their Future



Note. $n = 3,405$ teens.

forward to, and now I have an idea of what I'm [going to] go to college for. What I want to do with my life and be happy while doing it. That came right from a talk with the instructors. I'm just very happy and appreciative of the fact that I got to come across and have those people in my life."

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Teen Program Satisfaction and Hope for the Future*

Most teens (89%) said they would participate in After School Matters again, and 90% would recommend the program to a friend. Despite the complexities of the summer and the transition to online learning, most teens were satisfied with their After School Matters experience this summer.

Teens' open-ended comments about what made them feel more hopeful about the future support findings highlighted in previous sections, including the skills they developed, the career pathways they explored, and their relationships with peers and instructors.



Instructor Experiences

In this section, we highlight instructor experiences in summer 2020. We describe instructors' daily realities, including job loss and security as a result of the pandemic, stress, and food insecurity. We also describe instructors' experiences implementing their After School Matters programs, including how they accessed their program, supports they received from After School Matters, successes and challenges, and supports they would like to receive in the future.

After School Matters worked with **729** instructors in the summer 2020 program session. A total of **370** instructors (**51%**) completed a survey to share their daily realities and program experiences. Demographic data were not available for instructors.

Methods Snapshot: Instructor Experiences

After School Matters shared instructor survey data with AIR to conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses. AIR used descriptive analysis to provide frequencies, as well as correlational analysis to better understand relationships among instructor survey items. Finally, AIR analyzed open-ended survey responses using qualitative methods to identify themes. AIR elevated themes where at least 10% of respondents to an open-ended question shared similar feedback.

These survey findings provide important information about how instructors are experiencing their everyday lives and their out-of-school time programs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

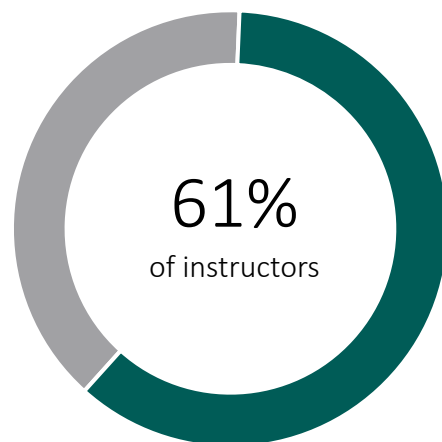
Daily Realities

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the U.S. workforce. The pandemic has increased household demands for many adults, such as managing their own health and well-being, supporting the health and well-being of family and loved ones, and caring for and educating children at home. In addition to these added stressors, unemployment rates remain substantially higher than before the pandemic began (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). A survey of afterschool and summer program providers reports that a third (34%) of these providers laid off or furloughed 75% or more of their staff (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). High unemployment rates raise concerns about financial strain on adults and families. After School Matters sought to better understand the experiences of their instructors this summer by including questions on job loss, food insecurity, and perceived stress on the instructor survey.

Job Loss and Security

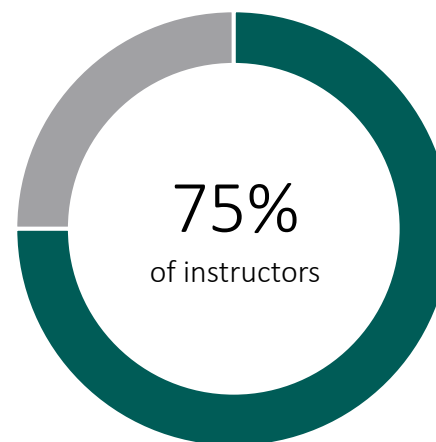
Instructors shared information about job loss and security as a result of the pandemic. **Nearly two in three instructors reported they live with someone who lost a job or had their hours cut as a result of the pandemic** (Figure 17). On a more promising note, **three in four instructors reported that After School Matters provided them a reliable source of income** (Figure 18).

Figure 17. Many Instructors Live in a Household Where Someone Lost Their Job or Had Their Hours Cut Because of COVID-19



Note. *n* = 325 instructors.

Figure 18. The Majority of Instructors Reported After School Matters Provided Them With a Reliable Income



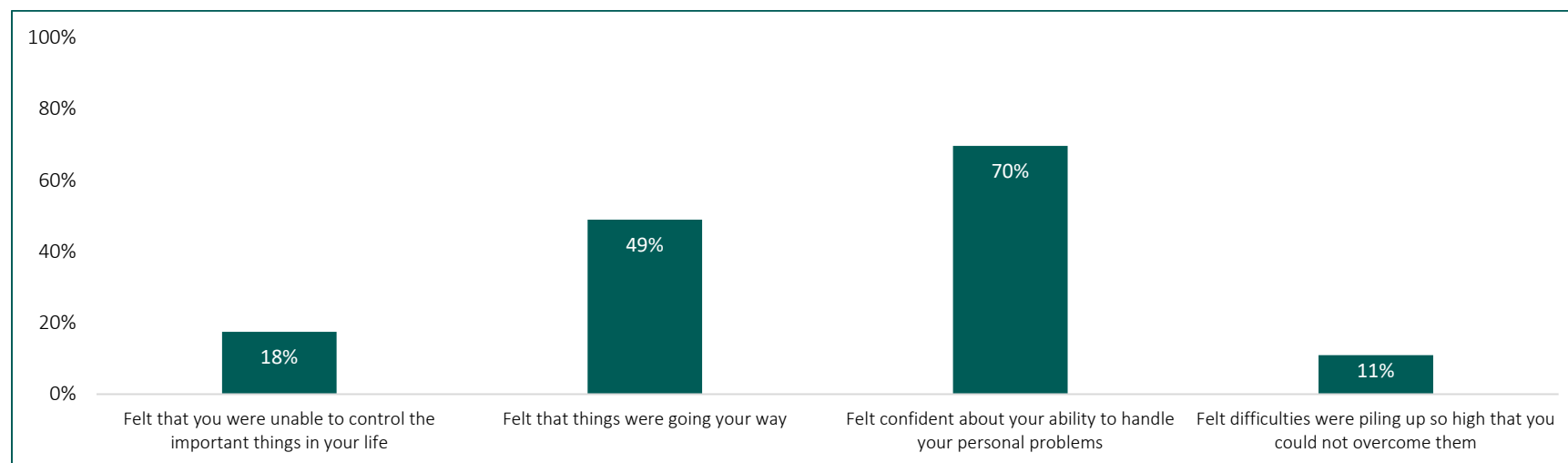
Note. *n* = 325 instructors.

Instructor Stress

After School Matters captured instructors' stress by including the short version of the [Perceived Stress Scale \(PSS-4\)](#) in their 2020 Summer Instructor Survey.

AIR first descriptively analyzed instructors' responses on each of the four items of the PSS-4 (Figure 19). Like teens, instructor responses varied. AIR examined the percentage of instructors who responded "fairly often" or "often" to each item individually. AIR found that **70%** of instructors reported they felt confident about their ability to handle their personal problems, and **49%** of instructors felt things were going their way. A smaller percentage of instructors (**18%**) reported they felt they were unable to control things in their life, and **11%** of instructors reported they felt difficulties were piling so high that they could not overcome them.

Figure 19. Instructors' Reports on Their Stress Varied

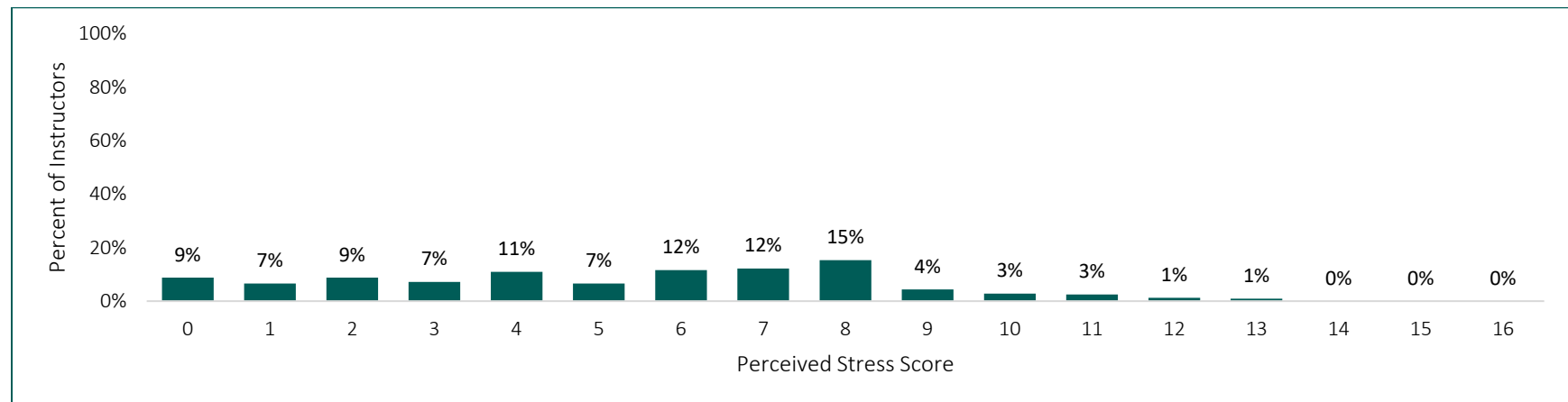


Note. The number of instructor survey respondents varied across items, ranging from 319 to 321.

Next, to get a snapshot of instructor’s overall perceived stress, AIR followed scoring guidance from the developers of the PSS-4 to calculate an average “perceived stress score” for each instructor. Perceived stress scores can range from 0 to 16; however, no instructors scored above a 13 this summer. On average, **After School Matters instructors scored 5.23 for perceived stress, indicating a lower level of stress.**²

We also examined the full distribution of instructors’ scores to contextualize the average perceived stress score (Figure 20). Instructors’ reported stress scores skewed lower than teens’ stress scores. Three quarters of instructors (77%) reported stress scores lower than the median (a score of 8 on the PSS-4), whereas 27% of instructors reported stress scores at or above the median.

Figure 20. Instructors Reported Lower Levels of Stress, With an Average of 5.23



Note. In all, 319 instructors responded to all perceived stress items and received a perceived stress score.

² For reference, recent studies have reported that mean scores on the PSS-4 vary quite a bit, ranging from 5.43 to 6.11 among representative population-based samples of adults (Lesage, Berjot, & Deschamps, 2012; Vallejo, Vallejo-Slocker, Fernández-Abascal, & Mañanes, 2018; Warttig, Forshaw, South, & White, 2013).

Some instructors reported that they did not have access to **mental health supports (37%) nor did they take time for their own self-care (31%)**; Figure 21).

We examined instructors' reported stress in relation to other instructor survey responses to contextualize instructors' stress. AIR found two survey items that were negatively related to instructor's perceived stress. In other words, **the less an instructor agreed with each statement below, the more stress they felt:**

- I had access to mental health supports to manage my stress, anxiety, or other concerns ($p < .001$).
- How confident were you in your knowledge of resources or referrals to respond to teens' requests ($p < .001$)?

Food Insecurity

AIR found that **one in four instructors screened positively for food insecurity**, answering affirmatively to either one or both items (Figure 22). Comparatively, the overall food insecurity rate in 2018 Cook County was 10.1% (Gundersen et al., 2020).

AIR observed that instructor's perceived stress was positively correlated to food insecurity. In other words, **those with greater food insecurity were more stressed** ($p < .001$).

Figure 21. Not All Instructors Felt They Had Access to Mental Health Supports, Nor Did They Take Time Out for Self-Care

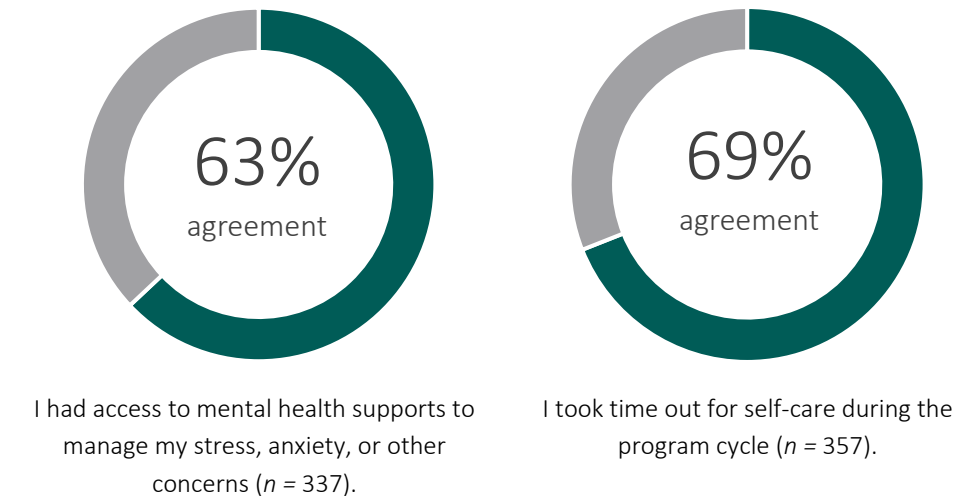
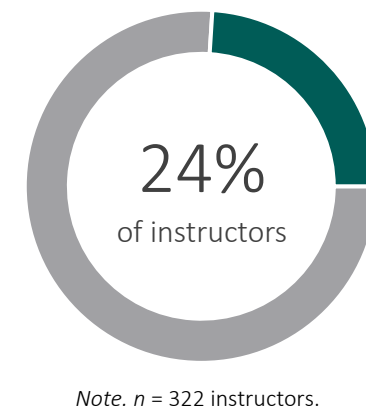


Figure 22. One in Four Instructors Screened Positively for Food Insecurity



Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Instructors' Daily Realities*

Nearly one in four instructors (24%) screened positively for food insecurity. This finding is higher than the most recently available rate for Cook County as a whole (10%). Instructors who reported food insecurity also reported higher levels of stress. These findings help provide context on the many stressors instructors encountered in their personal lives while running programs for After School Matters teens.

Nearly two in three instructors reported they live with someone who lost a job or had their hours cut as a result of the pandemic. Living in a household where adults have lost their job or had hours cut can have implications on the food security and stress levels of the household. On a positive note, 75% of instructors reported that After School Matters provided them with a reliable income for the summer.

While perceived stress scores for instructors skewed lower, fewer than 70% of instructors reported they took time out for self-care, and fewer shared they had access to mental health supports to manage their stress. In fact, the less instructors agreed they had access to mental health supports, the more stressed they felt. They also felt more stressed if they reported less confidence in their knowledge of resources or referrals to respond to teens' requests.

These findings indicate instructors may need more support from After School Matters to take care of their own mental health. They may also benefit from a centralized hub for resources and referrals that they can draw from to support teens.

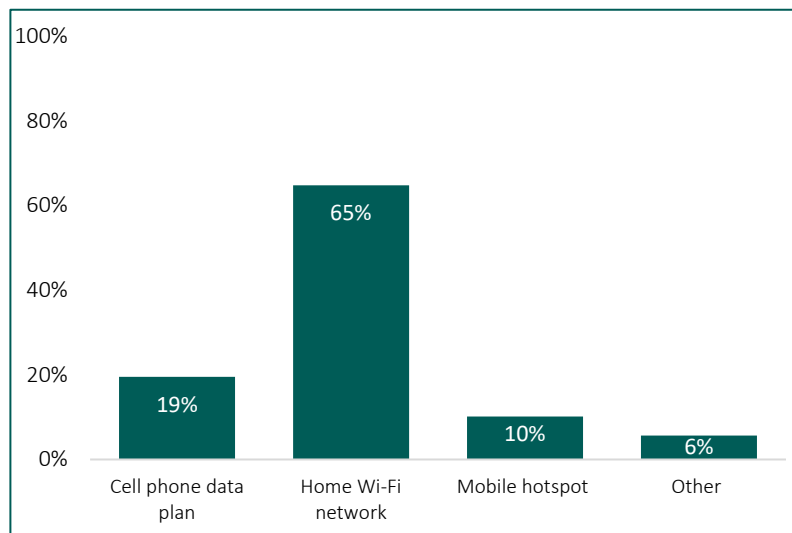
Program Experience

The format of After School Matters' Summer 2020 session required many instructors to alter their instructional practices. In the Summer 2020 Instructor Survey, instructors shared feedback about the support they received from After School Matters and their overall experience adopting the remote learning model for summer. Instructors also shared successes from their program as well as challenges and provided recommendations for future remote program sessions. Before discussing how instructors felt about their summer experience, AIR first examined how they accessed programming.

How Instructors Accessed Programming

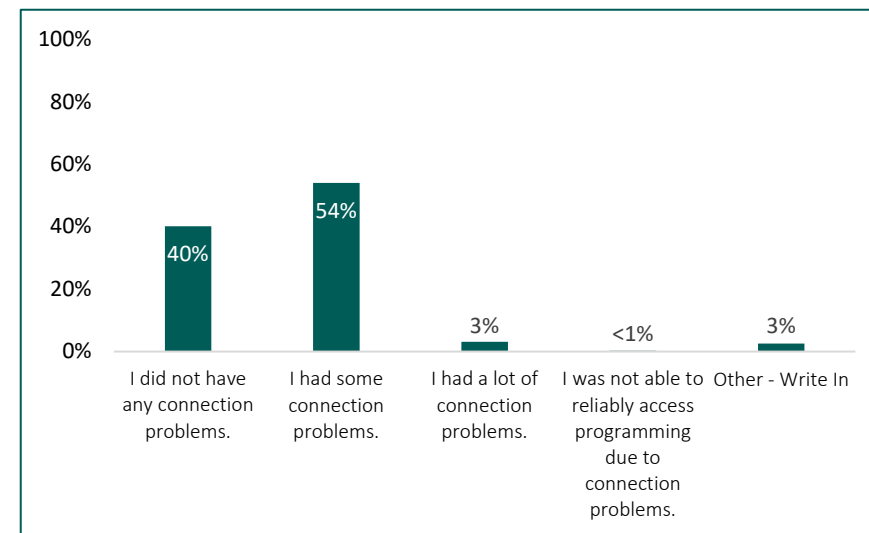
Instructors shared how they accessed the internet during remote programming. Instructors were able to “select all that apply.” AIR found that **most instructors used a home Wi-Fi network**, but some also used cell phone data plans and mobile hotspots (Figure 23). Next, AIR examined instructors' experiences using the internet to participate in remote programming. As shown in Figure 24, **more than half of instructors had some connection problems during the summer**.

Figure 23. Most Instructors Used Home Wi-Fi Networks to Access Programming



Note. n = 355 instructors

Figure 24. More Than Half of Instructors Had Some Internet Connection Problems During the Summer Program Session



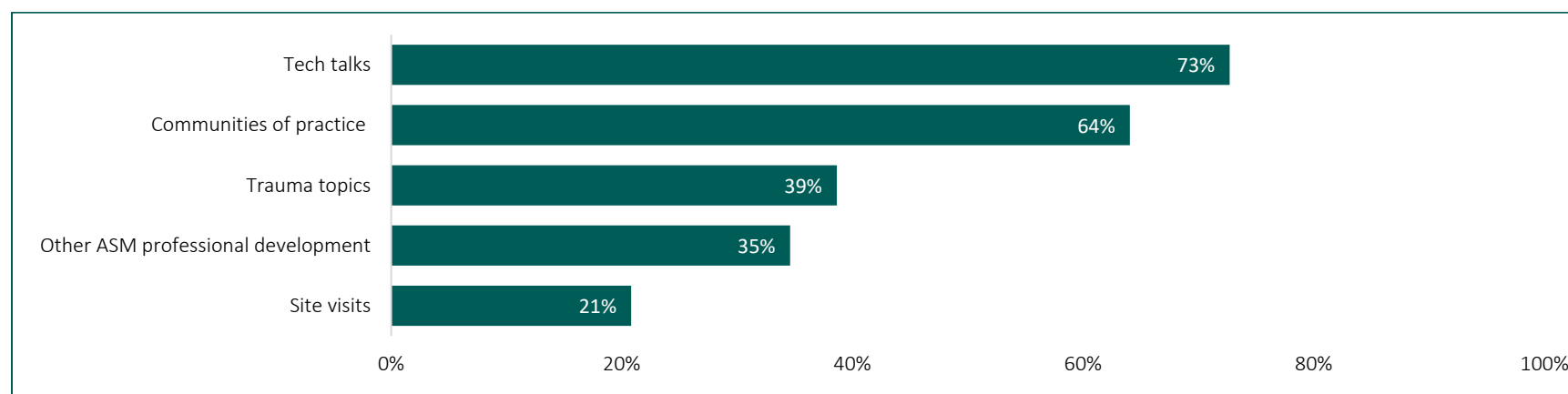
Note. n = 354 instructors

Support From After School Matters

Instructors reported how supported they felt by both the organization and their program specialist, who is their main point of contact at After School Matters. In Figures 25–27, we highlight the percentage of instructors who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about supports that were helpful during their program session.

After School Matters strives to support instructors each session through professional development trainings covering a variety of topics. Instructors reported which training supports they found useful during the summer. AIR found that **three quarters of instructors found Tech Talks useful** this summer. Many instructors also found communities of practice with program specialists to be helpful (Figure 25).

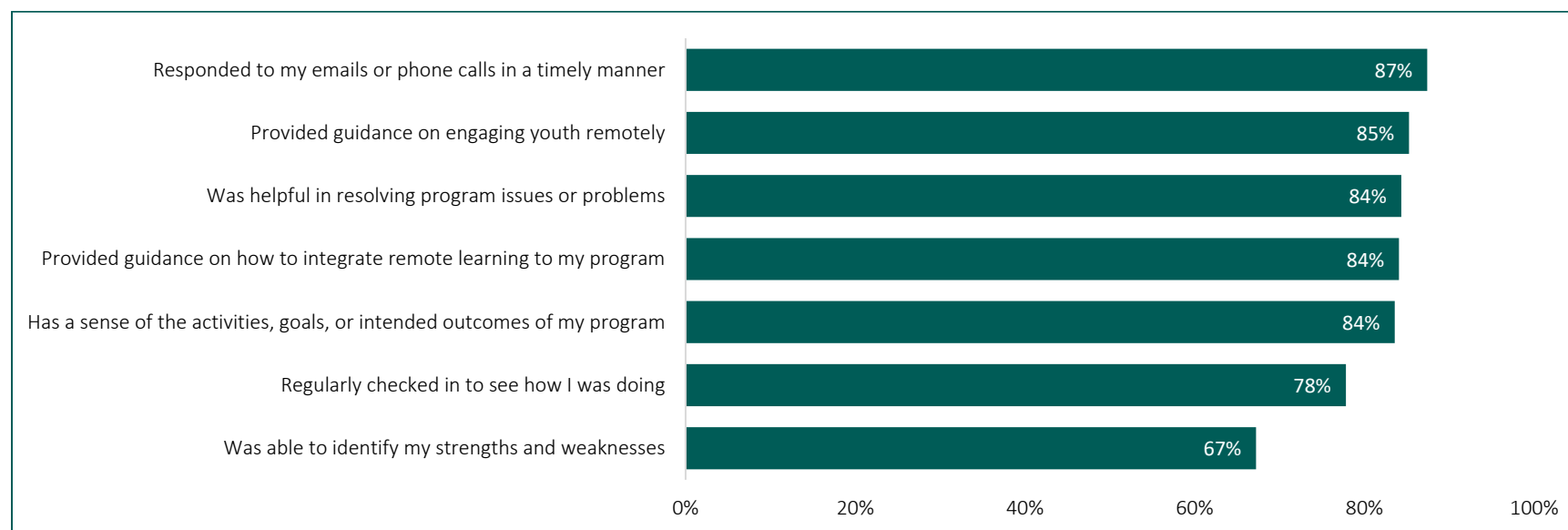
Figure 25. Most Instructors Found Tech Talks and Communities of Practice Useful This Summer



Note. $n = 340$ instructors.

As shown in Figure 26, most instructors said their program specialists were supportive by **responding to emails or phone calls in a timely manner** and **providing guidance on engaging youth remotely**. Instructors did not feel as strongly that their program specialist was able to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

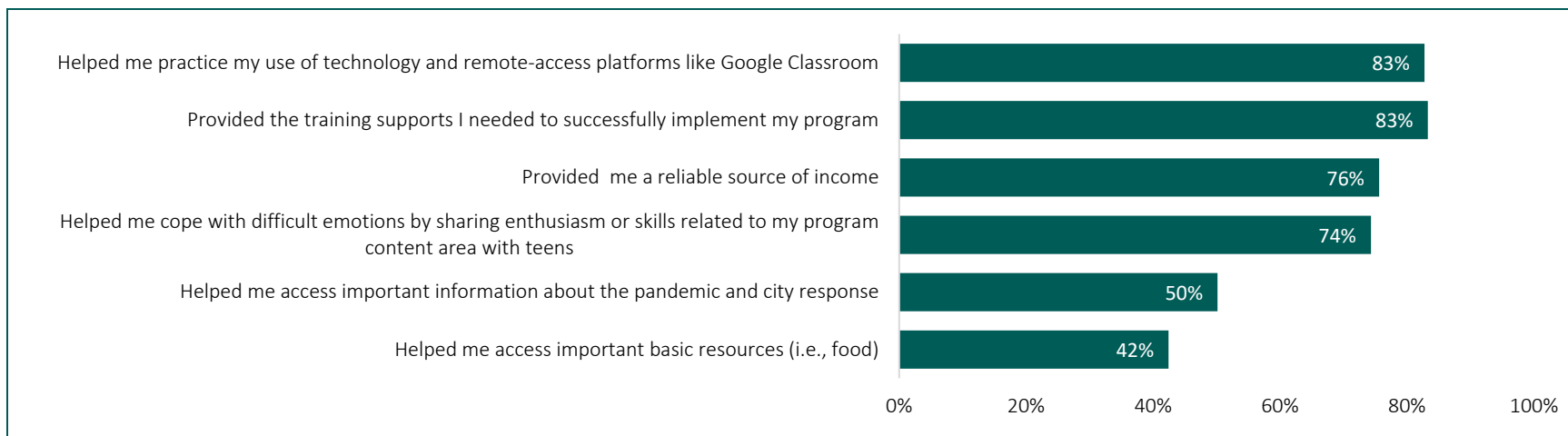
Figure 26. Instructors Reported Positive Feedback About the Supports They Received From Their Program Specialist



Note. The number of instructor survey respondents varied across items, ranging from 341 to 360.

Instructors also shared the ways in which the program session helped them this summer. As shown in Figure 27, instructors felt strongest that After School Matters helped them to **practice their use of technology and remote-access platforms and to provide training supports necessary to successfully implement their program**. Less than half of the respondents felt that After School Matters helped them to access important basic resources this summer.

Figure 27. Instructors Reported Mostly Positive Feedback About the Resources They Received From After School Matters



Note. The number of instructor survey respondents varied across items, ranging from 329 to 333.

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Accessing Programs and Support From After School Matters*

Most instructors accessed programming using a home Wi-Fi network this summer. More than half of instructors reported some connection problems. This context could be used to plan for future remote programs. Instructors may require further internet connectivity support to ensure they are able to reliably provide programming.

Instructors generally provided positive feedback about the supports they received from After School Matters. They highlighted tech talks and communities of practice as the most helpful professional development sessions. They also shared that their program specialists were supportive by being responsive to phone calls and emails, resolving issues and problems, and providing guidance on engaging youth remotely and adapting to the remote learning model. Instructors did not feel as strongly as students that their program specialist was able to identify their strengths and weaknesses. An all-remote learning program model was new for program specialists too. It may be that program specialists and instructors focused their time together on adjusting to the remote learning program model, rather than having traditional coaching conversations as in the past.

Finally, instructors felt strongest that After School Matters helped them to practice their use of technology and remote-access platforms, and to provide training supports necessary to successfully implement their program. Respondents did not feel that After School Matters helped them to access important basic resources this summer. This finding reiterates that instructors are struggling with the same things teens are and may require additional support, such as food, access to technology, and internet connectivity.

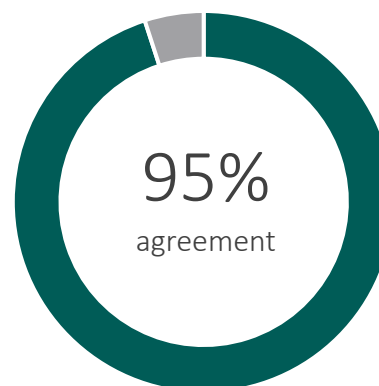
Instructor Successes

The summer 2020 program session brought unique circumstances and challenges to instructors' daily realities and program practices. Instructors shared feedback related to the outcomes of the summer, their satisfaction as an instructor, and inspiring teen stories.

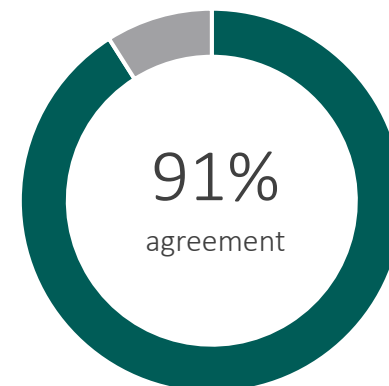
As shown in Figure 28, we found that despite the complexities and changes this summer, **instructors were proud of their work with teens and found joy in leading the program.**

In addition, we found **that most respondents said they would consider being an instructor again and that they were satisfied with their experience** as an After School Matters instructor.

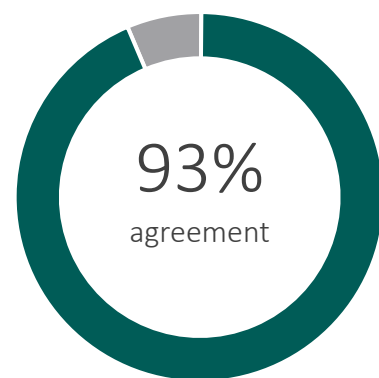
Figure 28. Most Instructors Found Success During This Summer Program Session



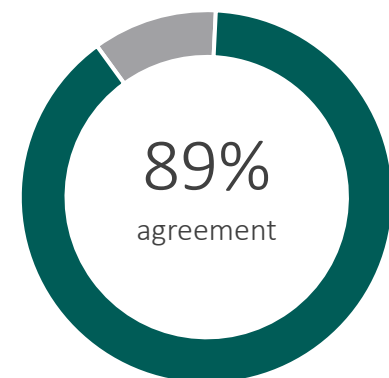
I feel proud of what I achieved with my youth this summer ($n = 364$).



I was able to find joy leading the program even when it was really hard at times ($n = 364$).



If possible, I would consider being an instructor again ($n = 337$).



I'm satisfied with my experience as an ASM instructor ($n = 334$).

To elaborate on successes of the summer, many instructors shared stories about teens who inspired them.

Instructors felt inspired by:



Teens' eagerness and enthusiastic participation in summer programming ($n = 64$). Instructors most frequently cited teen engagement in their program as inspiring. One instructor shared, "I am very grateful to be a part of this session. I learned a lot from the planning and execution of the program as well as the interaction with the teens. I was inspired daily by how my teens responded to the program and we achieved a lot more than I ever thought we could and despite the challenges I had, I am glad to have had a very successful program."



The strong relationships they developed with teens ($n = 32$). Similar to teen reports, instructors highlighted the positive relationships they had with teens in their program as inspiring. One instructor reported, "Because of the constant messaging between the teens, myself, and their families, I felt a strong connection between everyone involved. It felt as though we were all in it together."



Teen presentations or showcases ($n = 31$). Instructors also described their teens' final product presentations as inspiring. One instructor shared, "Each time our youth shared their art with each other was incredibly inspiring. It felt like we were always blowing each other's minds with the talents we were all bringing to the table."



Teens' learning and growth during summer programming ($n = 29$). Finally, instructors were inspired by teens' skill development over the course of the summer. One instructor reported, "It was wonderful experience to see the teens reveal their talents, improve their skills and came out with beautiful virtual murals. We and the teens had [a] chance to talk and reflect about our moment, pandemic and racism through art. They inspired in what all of us confront today to create their own symbolic visual language. The murals reflect their own impressive response about this moment."

Instructor Challenges

When the COVID-19 pandemic became widespread in March 2020, After School Matters transitioned their traditional program structure to offer remote opportunities from the remainder of the spring session. As the first ever *planned* remote session, summer 2020 utilized lessons learned from spring 2020 in its design. As with any new program experience, summer 2020 encountered areas of growth to inform future remote sessions. Instructors weighed in to share challenges they encountered as they implemented remote programs, such as the following:



Translating content or program activities into a virtual learning environment ($n = 64$). Instructors indicated that the lack of face-to-face instruction was difficult. One instructor shared, “When you make a musical, you build off of the energy of everyone in the room. Finding that magic was hard. Also, musicals just aren’t built to be within a video chat situation. Trying to achieve the quality at which our program executes our work was difficult because of the glitches in the new medium we had to work in.”



Teen participation or engagement ($n = 56$). Additionally, instructors noted it was challenging to build community in a virtual environment. To a lesser extent, instructors indicated that holding teens accountable for engagement was challenging. One instructor shared, “Dealing with youth engagement. Many seemed to be zoning in and out in regard to focus and turning in work. I tried my best to show empathy because these circumstances are strange and unknown.... I made it clear to them that I am flexible and willing to work around their work schedule.”



Software and platforms used during summer programming ($n = 45$). Finally, instructors reported difficulty with Google Classroom. One instructor shared, “Google Classroom is not really intended for a visual arts curriculum, so it requires a lot of work to turn the work into something to be viewed and critiqued, which is essential for visual arts learning.”

Future Supports for Remote Programming

Instructors shared additional thoughts in open-ended comments on what else would they need to successfully engage teens remotely during the school year. Instructors highlighted the following needs for engaging teens remotely in the future:



Access to technology and devices ($n = 36$). Instructors shared that both they and teens needed access to better technology and devices. One instructor noted, “I...would need all of my teens to have access to better devices because a number of my teens this summer never turned on their cameras because they were inoperable on their devices, and many had microphone issues as well. It made it difficult to build community because of that.”



Stronger internet access ($n = 28$). Instructors also reported that teens struggled with adequate internet access throughout the summer. One instructor explained, “The number one ‘issue’ [or] challenge was, all teens were not able to be in class all together without being dropped and or screen freezing.”



Health services guides to provide resources and referrals to teens ($n = 18$). Additionally, instructors highlighted the need to provide teens with extra supports for mental and emotional health. One instructor shared, “I feel like the teens need emotional support from professionals. So just like the instructors had a PD meeting to help with our mental state the teens should have access to that as well.”



Centralized hub for resources ($n = 17$). Finally, instructors requested a centralized hub for resources for employment and mental health supports. One instructor suggested, “...a good addition would be a list of warmlines/hotlines for different types of potential distress.”

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Successes, Challenges, and Future Support*

Most instructors (89%) shared they were satisfied with their experience as an instructor and were willing to be an instructor again in the future. Instructors shared inspiring stories about their teens and highlighted teens' enthusiastic participation in the program, their relationships with teens, teens' final presentation and showcases, and teens' learning over the course of the program.

Some instructors shared their challenges, including translating their program content for a remote learning environment, maintaining teen engagement and participation, and facilitating live program sessions with Google Classroom. These instructors noted that for future programming, both teens and instructors will require greater access to technology and stronger internet connectivity. Some instructors requested additional resources to support teen employment and mental health, and suggested a centralized hub to provide instructors with access to a variety of information.



Program Quality

After School Matters uses the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) as part of the organization's continuous quality improvement process. The YPQA is a validated instrument used to measure the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. It includes four domains of program quality: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. Each domain includes several items. Observers score each item as a 1, 3, or 5, where 5 represents best practice.

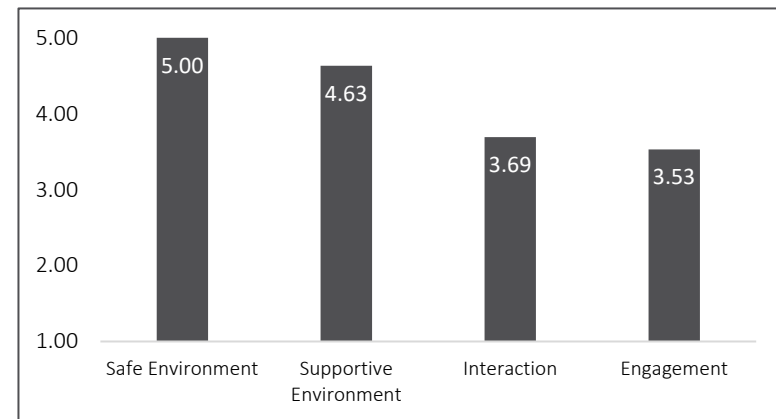
This summer, After School Matters modified the YPQA to better assess the remote learning environment in 2020. This process included removing items used on the traditional YPQA that were not relevant to online learning. Assessors certified in the YPQA observed recorded sessions from a sample of 101 programs. Assessors then scored the program using an adapted version of the YPQA tailored for the remote environment.

Methods Snapshot: *Program Quality*

After School Matters shared YPQA data with AIR, who analyzed it descriptively to provide the averages presented in this report.

The distribution of program characteristics (Program Branch, Model, and Content Area) for programs observed by the YPQA varied slightly from the distribution of all summer 2020 programs. The observed programs represented a smaller proportion of programs than the programs as a whole for citywide programs (Program Branch), advanced apprenticeships (Program Model), and communications and leadership (Content Area).

Figure 29. Programs Demonstrated High Quality Across Domains



Note. $n = 101$ programs

After School Matters programs demonstrated high quality. Figure 29 indicates After School Matters programs scored highest in Safe Environment, followed by Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. This trend follows the most recent national benchmarks of the full YPQA compiled by the Weikart Center: 4.64 for Safe Environment, 4.31 for Supportive Environment, 3.36 for Interaction, and 2.85 for Engagement.

AIR found that average scores for each of the four domains were consistently high across program content areas (arts, communications and leadership, sports, and STEM). This indicates that high quality is possible in remote learning programs, regardless of content area.

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Program Quality*

After School Matters programs demonstrated high program quality across all four YPQA domains: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. This trend was true across program content areas and aligns with prior years when the program was offered in person. We could not use the national benchmarks After School Matters regularly uses to understand their programs' YPQA scores because the national benchmarks reflect the full YPQA, pre-pandemic, and during in-person learning. Still, the benchmarks may provide a useful proxy for After School Matters to contextualize their quality scores until new information is available. In addition, After School Matters should consider continuing to measure remote learning program quality to gather more data about teens' program experience and instructors' professional development needs now that remote learning has been underway for a substantial period of time and our understanding of how to create quality remote learning environments has increased.



Comparing Summer 2020 With Previous Summers

AIR compared key data points from summer 2018, 2019, and 2020 to help contextualize summer 2020 findings, including average daily attendance rates, program quality, and teen and instructor survey feedback.

Methods Snapshot: *Comparing Summer 2020 With Previous Summers*

After School Matters provided AIR with YPQA, teen survey, instructor survey, teen attendance, and program characteristics data from 2018 through 2020. AIR used an ANOVA to determine whether trends in data differed across summer program sessions. Here, we elevate findings where analyses produced statistical significance of less than .05.

Average Daily Attendance Rates

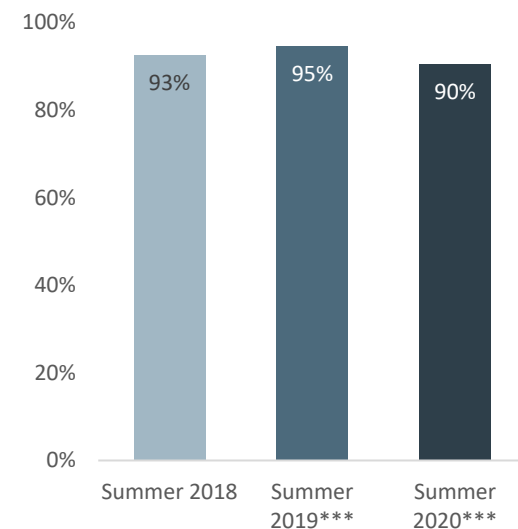
After School Matters regularly monitors average daily attendance (ADA) rates to gauge teen engagement in programs. The ADA rate for summer 2020 was 90%, which is higher than After School Matters' internal benchmark (Figure 30). The ADA rate --for summer 2020 was significantly lower than the rate for summer 2019, but there was no difference between summer 2018 and summer 2020.

Key Findings and Takeaways: *ADA Rates*

After School Matters programs maintained a high ADA rate of 90% as they transitioned to a remote learning model. Although the ADA rate for summer 2020 was significantly lower than summer 2019, there was no difference compared with summer 2018.

Reports indicate that rates of teen disengagement in schools and the workforce are on the rise (Bauer, Lu, & Moss, 2020). The high ADA rates tell a more positive story about teens' engagement in enrichment activities. After School Matters provides teens with a stipend to participate in programs, which is likely a contributor to the high ADA rates as it removes potential barriers and incentivizes for participation.

Figure 30. Programs Maintained High ADA Rates



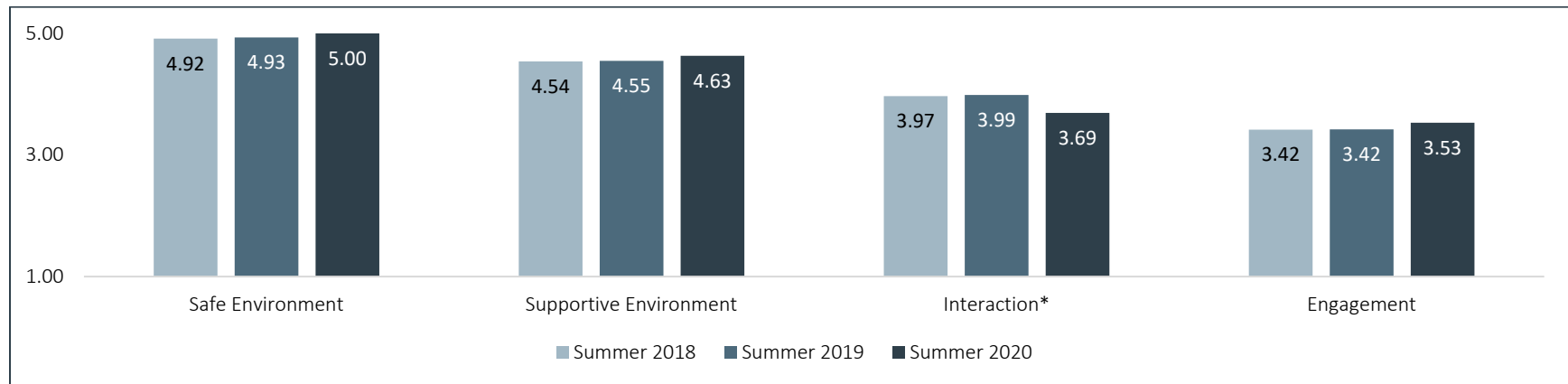
Note. The number of programs varied across summer sessions 724 in 2018, 735 in 2019, and 518 in 2020.
*** $p < .001$.

Program Quality

After School Matters modified the YPQA in conversation with the Weikart Center to better assess the remote learning environment in 2020. This included removing items used on the traditional YPQA that were not relevant to online learning. To compare data across summer sessions, AIR recalculated YPQA domain scores for summer 2018 and 2019 following omissions on the adapted 2020 YPQA.

Summer 2020 program quality was comparable with previous summer sessions based on the adapted YPQA domain scores, except for the Interaction domain (as seen in Figure 31). The score for Interaction was significantly lower for summer 2020. The interaction items reflect staff practices that promote belonging in the program, collaboration among teens, youth leadership, and partnerships between adults and teens.

Figure 31. Summer 2020 Program Quality Was Comparable With Previous Years on Three of the Four Quality Domains

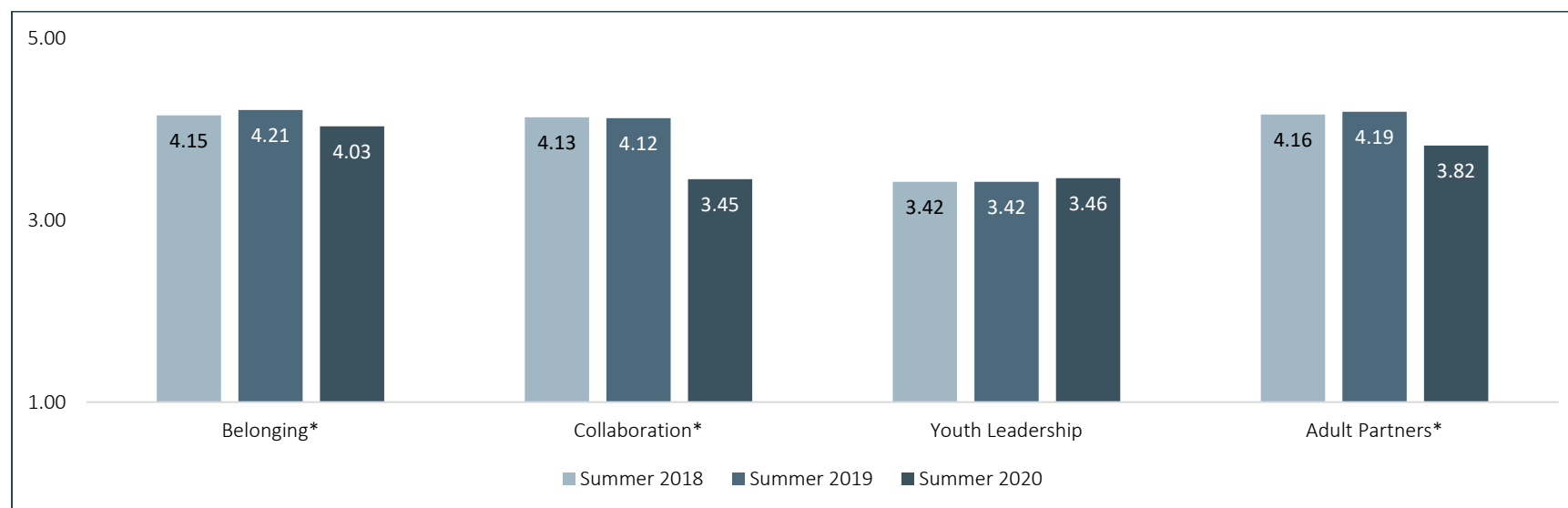


Note. The number of assessments varied across summer sessions 379 in 2018, 408 in 2019, and 101 in 2020.

* $p < .001$.

AIR then examined the scales within Interaction to learn more about changes in this domain across years. AIR found that average scores Belonging, Collaboration, and Adult Partners were significantly lower than other summer sessions (Figure 32).

Figure 32. Belonging, Collaboration, and Adult Partners Scale Scores Were Significantly Lower in Summer 2020 Than in Other Years



Note. The number of assessments varied across summer sessions 379 in 2018, 408 in 2019, and 101 in 2020.

* $p < .001$.

Key Highlights and Takeaways: *Program Quality Compared With Previous Summers*

Overall, After School Matters maintained high program quality after moving to a remote learning model for summer 2020. Programs provided a safe environment for teens, supportive conditions for learning, and opportunities for engagement. Programs also provided opportunities for teens to interact with their instructors and peers, although interaction was more difficult this summer. This finding is to be expected, as the organization, instructors, and teens all learned new technology and adjusted to the remote learning model.

As mentioned in earlier sections, instructors indicated in their open-ended survey responses that they need more support in adapting their program content to a virtual setting. Additionally, both instructors and teens reported issues with internet connectivity. Both issues could contribute to the success of program activities intended to bolster belonging, collaboration, and partnership.

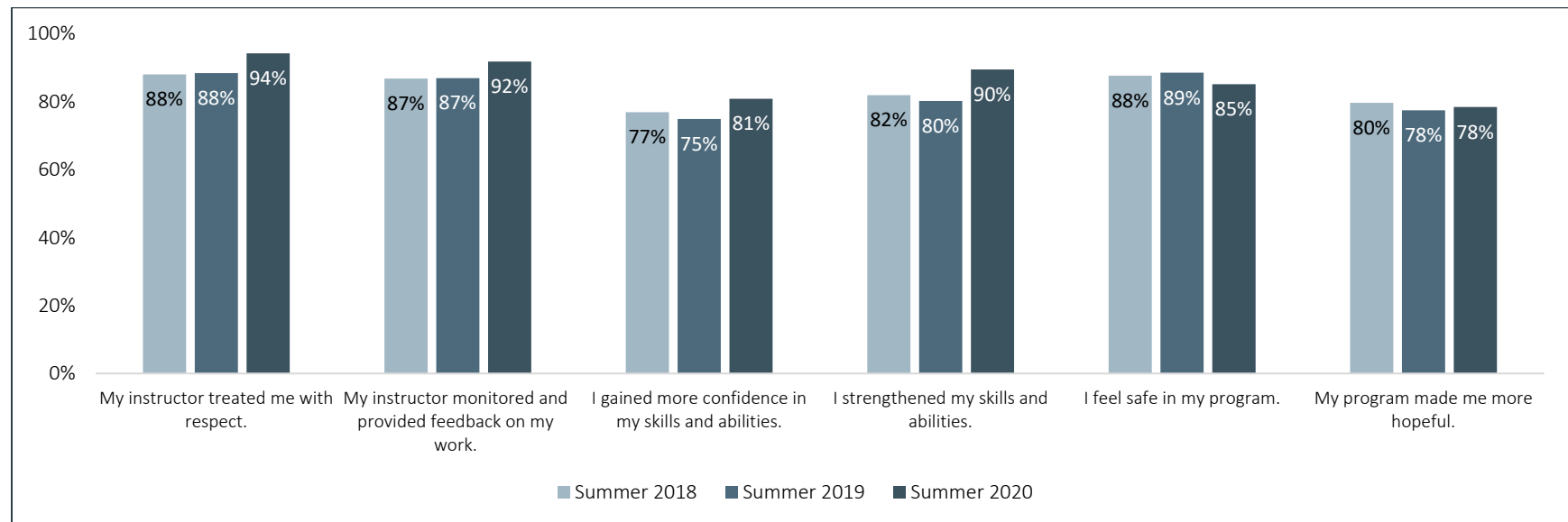
The lower belonging scores contradict teens' reports of a high sense of belonging. The YPQA and the Belonging scale measure belonging differently, which may contribute to the contradictory findings. External assessors rate Belonging on the YPQA by observing the extent to which programs provide structured opportunities for teens to get to know each other and publicly acknowledge teen achievements or contributions. External assessors also rate the extent to which youth identify with the program and do not exhibit any exclusive behaviors.

Teens provide self-report ratings for the Belonging scale on how they feel about their program, such as feeling like they belong, matter, or count in their program; that they are successful and comfortable in their program; and that people listen to them and would notice if they did not show up to the program. Both instructors and teens reported they kept in touch with each other offline in the Google environment as well, which could contribute to teen feelings of belonging, but would not have been observable on the YPQA. After School Matters may consider further exploration of the relationship between Belonging on the YPQA and the Belonging scale in the future.

Teen Experiences

AIR compared teen responses on the After School Matters' teen summer survey across 2018, 2019, and 2020. Teen survey questions vary for each session depending on special initiatives or specific research questions. AIR only conducted analyses on items that were consistent across all three summers. Figure 33 indicates survey items that were significantly different for the summer 2020 session. Numbers represent the percentage of teens who agreed or strongly agreed with each question.

Figure 33. Teen Survey Feedback Varied Slightly Across Summer Sessions



Note. All items were statistically significant at $p = .001$. The number of teen survey responses varied across summer sessions: 9,495 in 2018, 8,875 in 2019, and 3,999 in 2020.

AIR observed statistically significant increases in the following survey items:

- My instructor treated me with respect.
- My instructor monitored and provided feedback on my work.
- I gained more confidence in my skills and abilities.
- I strengthened my skills and abilities.

AIR also observed statistically significant decreases in the following survey items:

- I feel safe in my program.
- My program made me more hopeful (compared with summer 2018 only).

Key Findings and Takeaways: *Teen Experiences Compared With Previous Summers*

We might expect to see more negative or mixed results from teens, who are adjusting to a new program model and experiencing their summer programs remotely for the first time. Teens generally rated survey items higher in summer 2020 than in past summers, especially as it relates to their relationship with their instructor and the skills they gained.

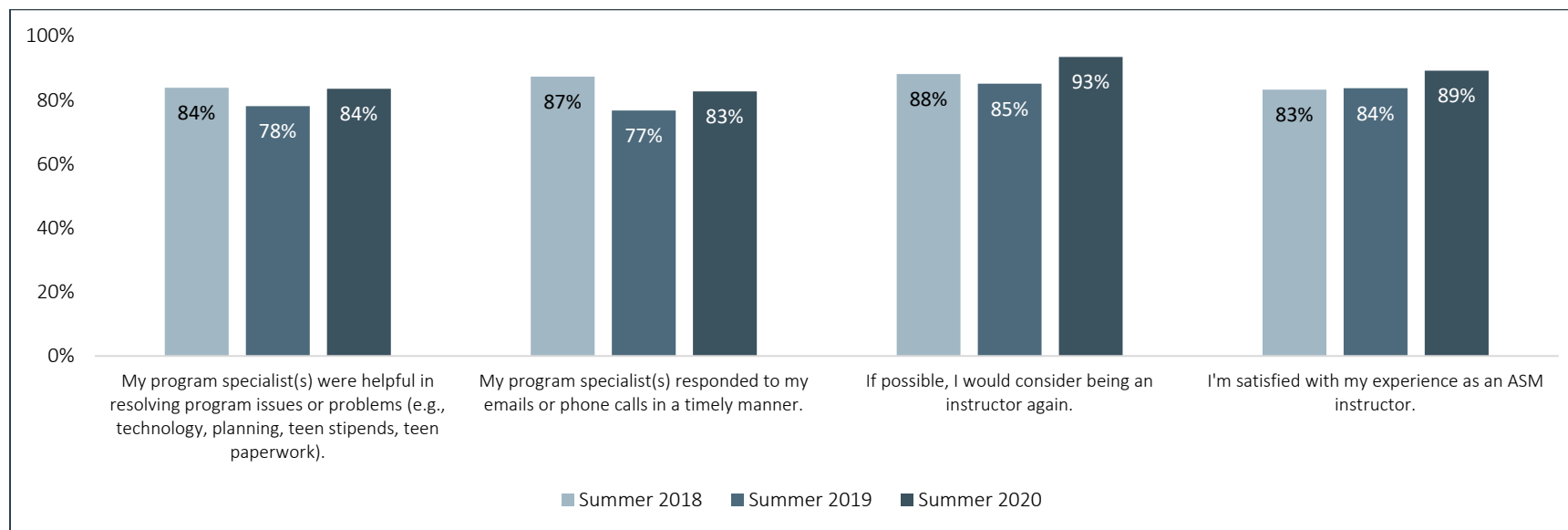
Teens rated their feelings of safety in their program lower in summer 2020, although the rating was still high (85%). There are multiple dimensions of safety – physical, emotional, intellectual, identity. Teens may have been thinking about any number of these dimensions when they responded to the survey question. While programs have less control over physical safety with the remote learning program model, they can still promote belonging to help young people feel safe in other ways.

Teens also reported lower ratings of their program making them hopeful than in previous summers. Again, the percentage of teens was still relatively high (78%). The pandemic and social unrest may contribute to this finding, as some teens reported stress, food insecurity, internet connectivity issues, and other hardships. Additionally, many teens shared positive feedback in their open-ended survey comments about how their relationships with their instructors and peers brought them hope this summer.

Instructor Experiences

Finally, AIR compared instructor survey responses for questions that were included in After School Matters' end-of-session survey for 2018, 2019, and 2020. Similar to the teen survey, instructor survey questions vary each session depending on special initiatives or specific research questions. Figure 34 indicates survey items that were significantly different for the summer 2020 session. Values in this figure represent the percentage of instructors who agreed or strongly agreed with each question.

Figure 34. Instructor Survey Feedback Varied Slightly Across Summer Sessions



Note. All survey items were statistically significant at $p = .001$. The number of instructor survey responses varied across summer sessions: 260 in 2018, 357 in 2019, and 370 in 2020.

AIR observed statistically significant increases in the following survey items:

- My program specialist was helpful in resolving issues or problems (compared with summer 2019).
- I would consider being an instructor again.
- I'm satisfied with my experiences as an ASM instructor.

AIR also observed statistically significant decreases in the following survey item:

- My program specialist responded to my emails or phone calls in a timely manner (compared with summer 2018).

Key Findings and Takeaways: *Instructor Experiences Compared With Previous Summers*

Instructors had to adjust to the new remote learning program model. They had to learn new technology and adapt their in-person program to function as a virtual program. We might expect to see negative or mixed results from instructors based on the pivot to a new program model.

Instructors reported that their program specialists were more helpful at resolving program issues than in the previous summer, although reports of their responsiveness were lower for summer 2020 than summer 2018. Program specialists, like instructors and teens, had to adapt to supporting programs in the new remote learning model, which may have caused delays in response.

Instructors reported higher rates of satisfaction and interest in being an instructor with After School Matters again. These findings indicate that, despite the challenges instructors reported, they were still generally satisfied with their instructor experience.

Looking Ahead to Inform Future Practice

In this section, AIR provides a summary of findings from our analyses of After School Matters data. AIR also provides recommendations for future remote learning program sessions.



Summary of Findings

Findings from AIR's analysis of After School Matters data revealed that **ASM teens had a positive remote learning experience during summer 2020**, despite what was likely an unusual and stressful summer for all. **Instructors reported both positive experiences and challenges**, as well as how to best support them moving forward into the school year.

Teens reported positive experiences in their remote learning ASM program. They felt like they belonged in the program and they highlighted their supportive relationships with instructors and peers. Teens also shared that they had opportunities to gain and practice skills in their remote learning program. Overall, teens were satisfied with their remote learning programs, although they requested better virtual platforms, devices, and faster Wi-Fi for remote programming.

Instructors reported that they were proud of the work they did with teens and that it brought them joy. Like the teens, instructors highlighted the positive nature of their relationships and noted teens' skill development. Instructors shared their struggles, such as translating content for an online program, navigating virtual platforms, and instructor and teen internet connectivity. While instructors felt equipped to support teens, they did not feel they could access the mental health supports they needed for themselves.

After School Matters programs maintained a high level of quality in their transition to the remote learning program model. In 2020, scores were significantly lower in the Interaction domain than in summer 2018 and 2019. Compared with previous summers, teens and instructors rated their program satisfaction higher. The largest increases for teens were related to their relationship with their instructors, whereas the largest increases for instructors were related to the supports they received from their program specialist. Teens reported lower agreement than in previous summers that their program made them feel safe or that their program made them more hopeful for the future, although ratings were still high. Instructor reports of program specialist responsiveness was lower than in previous summers as well.



Recommendations for After School Matters

AIR recommends the following next steps based on the lessons learned from the summer 2020 program session:

Continue to support basic needs (e.g., food, technology, and internet access) for teens and instructors. Both teens and instructors reported food insecurity and issues related to technology and internet access. Additionally, teens in more vulnerable areas of the city and in areas of the city with higher COVID-19 case rates are more likely to report higher levels of stress and be food insecure. After School Matters may consider prioritizing these areas of the city for future food and technology distribution efforts. Additionally, instructors requested a centralized hub for information that could keep them informed on the city's pandemic efforts and resources and referrals that they can draw from to support teens.

Support instructors with their mental and emotional health. Instructors who reported they had less access to mental health supports and took less time out for self-care reported high levels of stress. These findings indicate instructors may need more support from After School Matters to take care of their own mental health. After School Matters may consider partnerships with mental health providers to help address instructor needs.

Focus on teen belonging to help buffer teen stress. Teens who reported a greater sense of belonging also reported lower levels of stress. After School Matters should continue to monitor this relationship. After School Matters may also consider contacting instructors whose teens reported high Belonging scores to garner best practices or provide professional development or other resources to instructors to help them create safe, supportive environments and relationships in the remote setting.

Offer training or resources for instructors on strategies for facilitating interaction in a remote learning environment. The average domain score for Interaction dipped in summer 2020. Additionally, instructors reported that they need more support in adapting their program content to a virtual setting. Given how both teens and instructors highlighted the importance of their relationships with each other over the summer, it will be important for After School Matters to provide training or resources to help instructors learn how to translate their program content online in ways that encourage belonging and provide opportunities for teens to collaborate and partner with instructors. After School Matters may also consider further examining programs with high Interaction domain scores on the adapted YPQA and interview instructors to learn more about how they facilitated online interaction among teens.

Continue to collect information about teens, instructors, and program quality and the remote learning program model. After School Matters quickly adapted data collection tools in spring 2020 when the pandemic hit. However, little information is available to contextualize or compare current findings on the remote learning model. After School Matters should maintain their current data collection efforts to help gather more insight and context for the organization internally, as well as to share with the broader education field. After School Matters may consider additional measures to tell the story of teen and instructor experiences in remote learning program, such as youth voice and choice.



Implications for the Field

Findings from AIR's analyses of After School Matters data have broader implications for the education field. First, these findings underscore the importance of caring for young people *and* the adults who support them as whole people. To fully participate in remote learning programs, young people and adults need access to basic resources such as food, mental and emotional health supports, and access to technology and high-speed internet.

Second, while remote learning programs may exacerbate inequities in program access, particularly as it relates to technology access and internet connectivity, remote learning programs may also remove previously existing barriers for program participation, such as transportation. Remote learning programs may also provide more flexibility, allowing young people to choose from a broader list of programs. Increased efforts to make technology and high-speed internet available to all young people and the adults who support them is necessary for them to reap some of the benefits remote learning programs may provide.

Last, it is possible to implement high-quality, engaging remote learning programs for young people. It requires building the technology skills of the adults who facilitate virtual learning spaces to help them translate learning content for a virtual environment. It also requires providing training and resources to support adults in providing ample opportunities for meaningful interaction in their remote learning programs. Finally, it requires planning and collaboration across multiple departments and teams, including programs, finance, operations, and research, to ensure organizational alignment on the remote learning model.

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