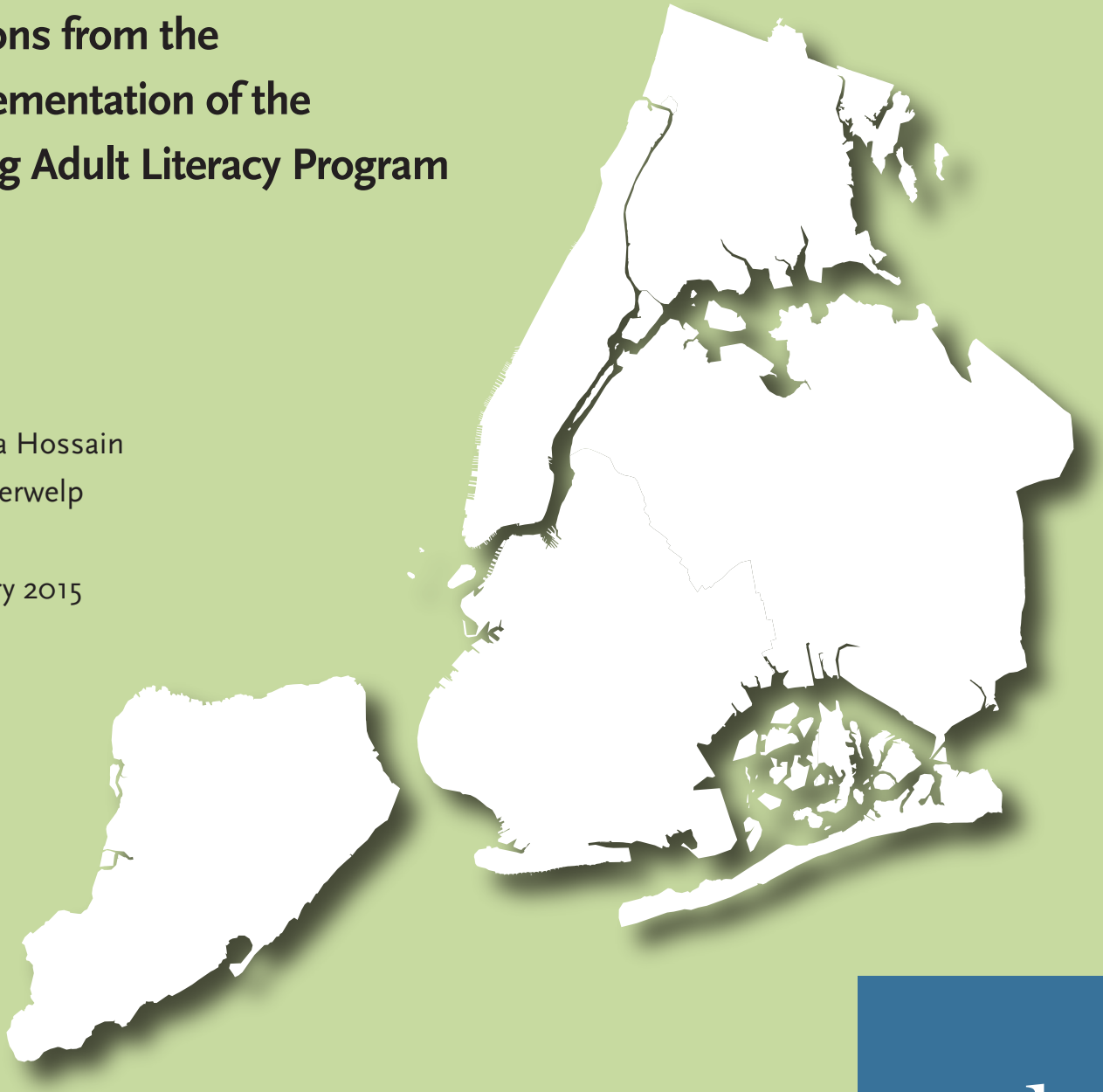
IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR NEW YORK CITY'S DISCONNECTED YOUTH

Lessons from the Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program



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Emily Terwelp

February 2015

mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

Improving Outcomes for New York City's Disconnected Youth

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CEO RESPONSE TO MDRC EVALUATION OF THE YOUNG ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM

February 2015

The Young Adult Literacy program was designed to fill a gap in services for young people with basic education needs. High school equivalency (HSE) programs generally serve participants reading at the 8th grade level or above and very little has been available for young people with 4th-8th grade reading skills.[1] In addition, few literacy programs are specifically designed for the needs of young adults.[2] To address these needs, the Young Adult Literacy program was launched in 2008 by Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) in partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library. The program was expanded by the Young Men's Initiative in 2011.

The Young Adult Literacy program provides young adults ages 16-24 who are out of work and out of school and read at the 4th-8th grade levels with targeted instruction specifically tailored to their needs and interests, case management and support services, and a project-based learning or internship component. The service providers do this within a youth development framework and focus on serving young adults at particularly low literacy levels. Individual providers have considerable flexibility from CEO and DYCD to implement these components differently within this framework.

Seeking to study implementation challenges and programmatic best practices across a selection of Young Adult Literacy sites, CEO contracted with MDRC to conduct an implementation evaluation, focusing on five programs that represent the geographical and organizational diversity of the program. The evaluation included sites operated by both the public library systems and community based organizations, as well as sites also housing the YMI Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) literacy program serving young adults on probation.[3] The evaluators completed visits to each site to conduct observations of the classroom and internship components, interviews with staff, and focus groups with participants.

This MDRC evaluation report documents some of the core challenges of implementing a literacy program for young adults, including participant attendance and retention, teacher and other staff turnover, and engagement of students with sometimes widely different skill levels. In addition, programs report challenges with striking a balance between enforcement of program requirements and flexibility to accommodate participants' life circumstances.

A key challenge highlighted within the report is the management of student expectations when many young adults enter the program anticipating they will be able to earn their HSE diploma relatively quickly. This is especially challenging given the long journey to HSE completion facing young adults entering the program at the lowest literacy levels. A prior evaluation of the program by Westat showed that those participants entering at the lowest grade levels make the greatest gains – approximately 2 grade levels in literacy and math.[4] Even with these impressive gains, however, a young adult at the 4th grade level would still need to advance two more grade levels beyond these documented gains to be able to enroll in a HSE preparation course. Over the 18-month period examined in the

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[1] Note that in January 2014, New York State replaced the GED with the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) to award high school equivalency degrees.

[2] See Flugman, B., Perin, D., and Spiegel, S. (2003) "An Exploratory Case Study of 16-20 Year Old Students in Adult Education Programs"; Hayes, E. (1999) "Youth in Adult Literacy Programs" Review of Adult Learning and Literacy: http://www.ncsall.net/?id=524.

[3] CEPS was launched in 2012 by YMI in partnership with the Department of Probation, to replicate the same model as Young Adult Literacy but specifically serving young adults on probation.

[4] See Westat (2013) "Follow-up Evaluation of the CEO Young Adult Literacy Program: July 2009-December 2010."

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Westat evaluation, just 40% of Young Adult Literacy participants reached a point where they could transition to a higher level HSE class.

The MDRC evaluation also documents some key strategies programs are using to overcome these challenges or enhance their success. These include:

- Strong team coordination
- Use of full-time instructors
- Allowing time for lesson-planning
- Fostering a sense of community among students and staff
- Early and ongoing goal-setting
- Clear articulation and reinforcement of program norms
- Linking to on-site HSE programs

This evaluation has already informed CEO's strategic planning and operations for the program. A new set of providers was selected through a competitive Request for Proposals for fiscal year 2015. CEO, in partnership with DYCD, is drawing upon lessons from this evaluation to support the first year of implementation for these new sites and remains committed to improving the program using the lessons from this and other evaluations.

Prior evaluations of the program have also shaped CEO's implementation of Young Adult Literacy in important ways. For example, the first evaluation of the program by Westat tested the potential impact of adding paid internships to the model by randomly assigning this component to about half of programs. It showed positive effects on attendance and retention and led to the incorporation of internships across all Young Adult Literacy sites. [5] These findings have also continued to inform CEO's interest in pairing subsidized jobs for young adults with other services like education. CEO's Work Progress Program is one example of this strategy.[6] CEO has also used the lessons of Young Adult Literacy to inform the development of Project Rise, one of its federal Social Innovation Fund programs.[7]

Looking forward, CEO will continue to partner with DYCD and others to ensure that the lessons of Young Adult Literacy, Project Rise, and other programs are informing youth programming across the city. CEO remains committed to pursuing the implementation and evaluation of effective strategies to meet the needs of disconnected young adults reading at low literacy levels and connect them to pathways that further their education and careers. CEO is working closely with the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development to support the development of quality programs that help improve career pathways for young adults.[8]

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[5] See Westat and Metis (2011) "CEO Young Adult Literacy Program and the Impact of Adding Paid Internships."
[6] For more information on the Work Progress Program, see Branch Associates (2014) "Implementation Study of the Center for Economic Opportunity's Work Progress Program and NYC Recovers."
[7] For more information on Project Rise, see MDRC (2013) "Reconnecting Disconnected Young Adults: The Early Experience of Project Rise."
[8] See http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/931-14/de-blasio-administration-overhaul-workforce-development-focus-good-paying-jobs-/#/0

Overview

In 2008, New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) launched the Young Adult Literacy (YAL) program to improve the academic and work-readiness skills of youth who are not in school, do not have a job, and have very low literacy skills. In fiscal year 2013, eight community-based organizations and the city's three public library systems operated the program at 17 sites, with oversight from the Department of Youth and Community Development.

The YAL program targets 16- to 24-year-old young adults who read at the fourth- through eighth-grade levels, and serves them until they are academically ready to enter a program that prepares them for a high school equivalency (HSE) certificate. The year-round program offers up to 15 hours of literacy and numeracy instruction each week, along with social support services, life skills and work-readiness training, a paid internship, and some modest incentives.

In the summer of 2013, MDRC conducted an implementation study of five YAL sites in order to explore factors that facilitate or challenge successful program implementation. This report presents the findings, which are largely based on an analysis of qualitative data from staff interviews, participant focus groups, and observations of classrooms and internships, as well as a review of program participation data.

Key Findings

- Characteristics of the host organizations play a significant role in shaping the implementation of YAL. The program draws financial, administrative, and staff support, as well as in-kind resources, from the organizations through which it operates.
- Most sites did not find it challenging to recruit participants for the program, reinforcing the idea that there is a need for programs that serve low-literacy youth in New York City.
- While the study was not designed to test how different strategies and practices affect program performance, the high-performing YAL sites were found to have a few features and practices in common, including:
    - Involved leaders with experience implementing youth-focused programs
    - A team environment where staff collaborate formally and informally on a regular basis
    - Clear articulation and consistent reinforcement of program norms
    - Full-time academic instructors with adequate time for lesson planning
    - Social service staff who are consistently available and who foster personal relationships with students
    - Availability of on-site HSE certification training to help students make the transition from completing YAL to obtaining an HSE certificate
    - A structured, multistep selection and enrollment process, as well as extensive eligibility screening and processes for determining suitability for the program

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Preface

Nearly one in five youth between the ages of 16 and 24 in New York City is disconnected from the worlds of school and work, according to recent estimates, and about half do not have a high school diploma. The recession and slow economic recovery have exacerbated the disconnection for young adults, as they face competition from older and more skilled workers in a diminished workforce. There is a great need to find ways to reengage these youth and encourage them to pursue further education in order to be successful in the labor market.

Many youth who drop out of high school seek adult education programs to prepare them for a High School Equivalency diploma. However, these programs are not specifically designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth, and many of the programs do not serve youth who have a very low level of skills. In an effort to address the gap in services for disconnected youth with serious basic skills deficits, New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity worked with multiple stakeholders in the City to develop a community-based model for basic literacy instruction in an adult education setting. The Young Adult Literacy (YAL) program, operated by community-based organizations and libraries, provides intensive literacy and numeracy instruction, social support services, and work-readiness training to out-of-school youth who read at the fourth- through eighth-grade levels.

MDRC conducted an implementation study of five YAL program sites in 2013 to develop a greater understanding of this unique model, and to explore best practices in serving this population. This report presents the findings, which are largely based on staff and participant interviews and observations conducted during a period of approximately one month.

Implementation of the YAL program varies greatly by the infrastructure and resources of the organizations that operate the program. Study sites that reported better outcomes were housed in organizations where they were part of a continuum of services for out-of-school youth of different ages with diverse needs. Leaders at these organizations have invested in developing the organizational structure and environment necessary for successfully implementing a youth development program. Examples include hiring high-quality full-time staff and creating a collaborative culture that encourages interpersonal relationships among staff and participants. The study sites did not report any recruitment challenges, indicating that the YAL program fills an important gap in services available to disconnected youth in New York City who lack the basic academic and work skills that are critical to their success. Continued efforts are necessary to address the needs of this population, as well as to explore what works best in serving them.

Gordon L. Berlin
President

Acknowledgments

This report reflects contributions from many people. We extend our sincere thanks to the Young Adult Literacy (YAL) program staff, who helped us coordinate the site visits and interviews and who shared their experiences regarding implementation of the program. Brandie Chandler, the YAL Program Coordinator at the Department of Youth and Community Development, provided tremendous support with gaining access to the sites and to program management data. She also provided a great deal of information on the program's background to help us prepare for the site visits and to formulate our data collection plan. Annie Moyer Martinez, Louise Grotenhuis, and Pardeice Powell McGoy at the Youth Development Institute facilitated our understanding of the YAL program and patiently answered our many questions about their work with the program. At the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, which funded the study, Jean-Marie Callan reviewed the report and provided helpful suggestions.

At MDRC, Dan Bloom guided the design and implementation of the study and reviewed all relevant materials, including this report. Shelley Rappaport provided her expertise in developing the data collection tools, conducted a few classroom observations, and provided guidance on the report. John Martinez and William Corrin also provided valuable feedback on report drafts. Leslie Bachman edited the report, and Stephanie Cowell prepared it for publication.

We are especially grateful to the YAL students who took the time to participate in the study and allowed us to learn firsthand from their experiences in the program.

The Authors

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

In New York City, more than 200,000 young people between 16 and 24 years of age are disconnected from the worlds of school and work, making them vulnerable to risky behavior and increasing their chances of poverty in later years.[1] About half of the disconnected youth do not have a high school diploma, placing them at a serious disadvantage in competing for jobs in a labor market where employment for young people has become increasingly scarce in recent years.[2] The rate of poverty is significantly higher among disconnected youth without a high school diploma than among their disconnected peers with more education.[3]

Research shows that most high school dropouts do not stay persistently disconnected and that a large number seek out Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes or preparation programs for high school equivalency (HSE) credentials, like the General Educational Development (GED) certificate, at local community organizations, libraries, or community colleges.[4] Nearly one in five of those in New York City's adult education system are between the ages of 16 and 24, but most adult literacy programs lack the structure, resources, or experience to meet the specific needs of young adults with such high academic demands and, in most cases, personal hardships that pose barriers to their success.[5] Many high school dropouts also have extremely low literacy skills and cannot qualify for most HSE programs, which generally serve participants reading at the eighth-grade level or above.

New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) launched the Young Adult Literacy (YAL) program in 2008, in an effort to address the need for instructional services among disconnected and disadvantaged youth with very low literacy skills, as well as to explore best practices in serving this population. YAL targets unemployed, out-of-school 16- to 24-year-olds who read at the fourth- through eighth-grade levels, with a particular focus on those who read at fourth- and fifth-grade levels. Providers are expected to engage participants as long as necessary to reach an eighth-grade reading level and to make the transition to an HSE preparation program.[6]

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[1]Treschan and Molnar (2008).

[2]Treschan and Molnar (2008).

[3]Fernandes and Gabe (2009).

[4]Bloom, Thompson, and Ivry (2010).

[5]Treschan and Molnar (2008); Youth Development Institute (2009).

[6]In January 2014, New York State began using the Test Assessing Secondary Completion™ (TASC™) to award a high school equivalency certificate, replacing the GED. In summer 2013, when the study was conducted, the study sites were gearing up to prepare for the implementation of the new HSE test in 2014. However, recruitment for YAL and academic instruction was mostly centered on the GED exam at the time of the

The YAL program offers intensive basic literacy and numeracy instruction, along with social support services, work-readiness training, internships, and some modest incentives. The goal is to reengage these young adults in education and career exploration, prepare them for employment or further training, and reduce their risk for long-term poverty. In the fiscal year that ended in June 2013, the program served nearly 800 youth in 17 sites across New York City, eight of which are operated by community-based organizations. The rest are run by the City's three public library systems.

This report presents findings from an implementation study of five YAL sites across New York City, three of which are housed in community-based organizations and two at library branches. It documents how these five programs deliver services, and examines the similarities and variations across the programs to identify factors that facilitate or challenge the successful implementation of the YAL program.

What Is YAL?

The YAL program is modeled largely on the Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) program developed by the Youth Development Institute (YDI). A New York City-based intermediary organization, CEPS works with not-for-profit and public agencies to create youth programming and to build organizational capacity to support its successful implementation. The CEPS model combines rigorous academic instruction, personal support, and work readiness within a youth development framework. In 2005, YDI began partnering with community-based organizations in New York City to implement the CEPS program, targeting out-of-school young adults who are 16 to 24 years old, read below the eighth-grade level, and are interested in preparing for the HSE exam and/or improving their academic skills.[7] Nonexperimental evaluations found CEPS to be a potentially promising intervention in increasing participants' reading levels within a short period of time.[8]

In partnership with YDI, New York City's CEO and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) expanded on the CEPS model and developed YAL. As Box 1.1 shows, the program was first launched in 2008 at 11 sites across the city. DYCD worked with five community-based organizations to develop pilot programs; the New York Public Library, Queens Public Library, and Brooklyn Public Library also received funding to establish two pilot programs each. In 2012, the program expanded to additional sites through Mayor

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study visits. The term HSE in the rest of this report refers to the GED, as this was the service being offered at the time of the study.

[7]Youth Development Institute (2009).

[8]Campbell, Kibler, and Weisman (2009).

Box 1.1

Evolution and Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program

2005

Youth Development Institute launches the Community Education Pathways to Success program.

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) partnered with community-based organizations in New York City to establish the Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) program. This program targeted out-of-school young adults who were 16 to 24 years old, who read below the eighth-grade level, and who were interested in preparing for the GED exam or improving their skills, or both. The pilot began with three organizations, expanded to six in 2006, and then to eight in 2009.

FISCAL YEAR 2008

Young Adult Literacy program, modeled after CEPS, is launched as a pilot at 11 sites.

New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) expanded on the CEPS model and developed the Young Adult Literacy (YAL) program, in partnership with YDI and three public library systems. The YAL program was first established at 12 sites across the city: DYCD worked with five community-based organizations to develop pilot programs, and the New York Public Library, Queens Public Library, and Brooklyn Public Library received funding to establish a total of 7 program sites. YDI provided technical assistance to the programs.

FISCAL YEAR 2012

YAL program expands to five new sites; a separate CEPS program is launched for youth on probation.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Young Men's Initiative (YMI) supported the expansion of YAL to five new program sites, bringing the total number of sites to 17. The YMI also created a similar pre-GED program to specifically target young adults on probation. This program, also called Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) after the original YDI program, was overseen by the city's Department of Probation (DOP) and is referred to as the DOP-CEPS program in this report. Some of the DOP-CEPS sites also ran YAL; participants in the two programs generally received the same services. The programs differed mostly in terms of eligibility criteria, funding streams, and reporting requirements.

FISCAL YEAR 2013

YAL program operates a total of 17 sites across New York City.

The program was offered by eight community-based organizations and by eight different branches of the public libraries (one branch ran two programs). DYCD oversaw all of the programs, while YDI continued to provide technical assistance.

Michael Bloomberg's Young Men's Initiative. In fiscal year 2013, YAL was offered at a total of 17 sites across New York City — operated by eight community-based organizations and the City's three public library systems.[9]

On-the-ground implementation of YAL is guided by YDI and both City agencies — DYCD and CEO. DYCD contracts with the provider organizations, administers funds, monitors program performance through observations and data collection, and, in consultation with CEO, sets program policies and objectives. YDI provides technical assistance and training to the providers in service strategy and delivery.

YAL sites offer four program sessions annually (summer, fall, winter, and spring). The length of each session can vary by site, but, on average, each session lasts a little less than three months, with a two-week break from one session to the next. The sites are expected to engage students in as many program sessions as necessary to reach an eighth-grade reading level and transition to an HSE preparation program. Most participants need to advance several grade levels before entering HSE programs or to realistically compete in the job market. Therefore, a program goal is to retain students over an extended period of time.

The elements that define CEPS — academic instruction, social support, work-readiness services, and an integrated approach to service delivery — are also at the core of YAL, as seen in Figure 1.1. The four main components of the CEPS model are detailed below, along with a description of how they have been adapted for YAL.

1. **Rigorous academic instruction.** Daily "routines and rituals" are used to deliver highly structured lessons, often with specific time allotments for teaching specific skills each day.[10] The goal is to help students learn what is expected of them when they come into the classroom and to minimize the need for "heavy-handed" management, allowing young adults some control in their learning process.

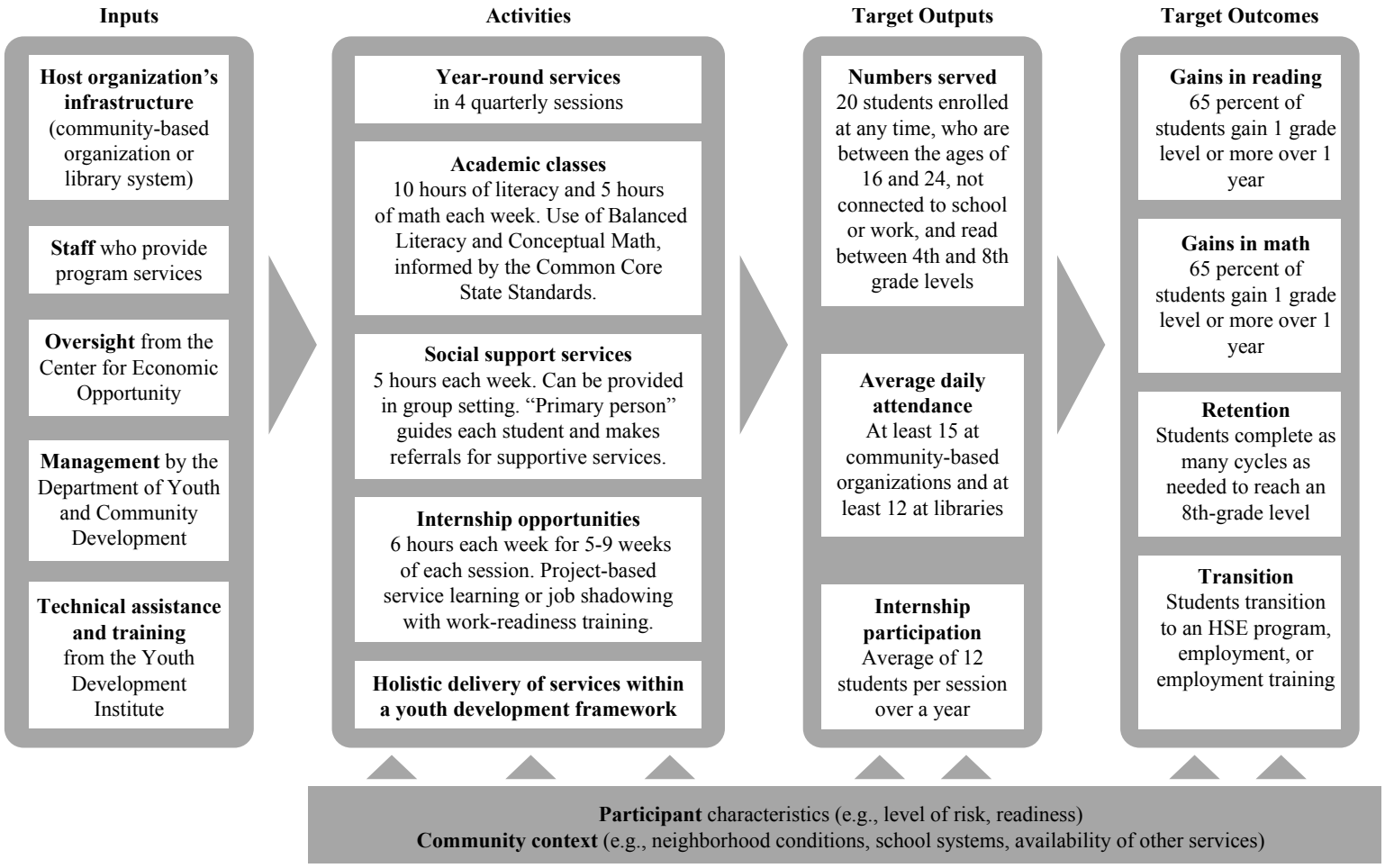
    - YAL offers 15 hours of academic instruction — 10 hours of literacy and 5 hours of math — each week. The providers are not required to use a standardized curriculum. YDI strongly recommends that the academic

[9]The Young Men's Initiative also created a new literacy program that adapts YDI's CEPS model to specifically target young adults on probation. The program, also called Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS), is overseen by New York City's Department of Probation and is referred to as the DOP-CEPS program in this report. Some of the YAL sites are also home to DOP-CEPS; two of those sites are part of this study. According to program staff at these two sites, participants in the two programs generally receive the same services and are in the same classroom every day. The programs differ mostly in terms of their eligibility criteria, funding streams, and reporting requirements.

[10]Youth Development Institute (2009).

Figure 1.1

Young Adult Literacy (YAL) Program Model



instructors conduct highly structured lessons using a "balanced" approach to literacy instruction and a "conceptual" approach to math, both informed by the Common Core State Standards (a set of nationally recognized English language arts and math competencies for students in kindergarten through grade 12) and the changes to the New York State HSE testing in 2014.

In "Balanced Literacy," students receive explicit instruction in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency, as well as time to practice their skills in the classroom.[11] In a structured lesson using this approach, the instructor may (1) model how to read by reading aloud to students, (2) allow them to read independently or in groups, (3) hold a class discussion, (4) conduct a mini-lesson that may focus on comprehension or vocabulary, (5) provide writing exercises for students to apply the lesson, and (6) review progress individually or in a group. To align with the Common Core, YDI has advised instructors to use complex, informational text more frequently for reading; to build academic vocabulary; and to engage students in text-dependent discussions and writing that require them to use evidence from their readings to inform or make an argument.

When teaching math, instructors are encouraged to focus more on an understanding of concepts, rather than a memorization of procedures, as well as building computational fluency through practice. Instructors are asked to model new information clearly and concisely, and to make connections among concepts, procedures, and ideas within and across lessons. The Common Core also stipulates that in math classes, both understanding and practicing should receive equal attention.[12]

2. **Social supports.** Emphasis is on the need to address any barriers to program participation and academic progress; to help youth plan their eventual transition from the program to HSE test preparation classes or other training, education, or employment; and to promote life and work skills that prepare them for adulthood. Students have a specific "primary person" to whom they go for guidance, support, and referrals for supportive services not directly provided by the program.[13]

[11]New York City Department of Education (2013).

[12]Appendix B lists the pedagogical approach required by the Common Core State Standards, as well as the Balanced Literacy standards recommended by YDI.

[13]Youth Development Institute (2009).

- YAL offers five hours of social support services each week. DYCD asks that the programs establish a primary-person system to ensure that every participant has a close adult support and contact. However, the programs are not required to provide five hours of one-on-one case management and can provide a bulk of these services in a group setting. Programs are expected to provide students who achieve an eighth-grade reading level the opportunity for a transition into HSE test preparation classes or other education, training, or employment. Each YAL participant also receives a MetroCard as an incentive to ease any financial burden of attending the program.[14]

3. **Work-readiness activities.** Youth explore post-HSE options, set goals, practice work skills and behaviors, and build their résumés.

   - YAL offers six hours of internship activities and a $50 stipend each week to youth who attend at least 70 percent of the academic hours. Programs can offer between five and nine weeks of internship during each program session. The internship was not a component of the initial pilot program launched in 2008; it was added after a 2009 experiment found that five randomly selected YAL sites that began to offer internships had better attendance and higher retention than those that did not offer internships.[15] Up until spring 2013, the programs offered more traditional internships, placing youth in part-time work opportunities at local businesses, organizations, or community projects. In April 2013, DYCD asked the programs to offer project-based and service learning opportunities, or job shadowing, for the internship component of YAL. The providers were also asked to offer training on "soft skills" (for example, communications, team work, and problem-solving skills) and job-readiness skills (for instance, building résumés and interview skills).

4. **A holistic approach to program delivery within a youth development framework.** The CEPS model assumes that the above-mentioned program components — rigorous academic instruction, social supports, and work-readiness activities — will be delivered in a coherent, "blended" manner

[14]Metrocards, which are issued by New York City's Metropolitan Transit Authority, are used to access public transportation in New York City.

[15]Westat and Metis Associates (2011).

with staff across the program working together to connect the different components. The model also assumes that youth development practices will be infused in every aspect of the program, including "high expectations for youth; opportunities for youth to contribute; continuity of relationships with youth; engaging activities for youth; caring and trusting relationships; and physical, emotional, and psychological safety."[16]

- YDI provides trainings and on-site technical assistance to all YAL sites in order to build strong instructional and support practices that incorporate a youth development framework. Besides providing role-specific training to program managers, academic instructors, and case managers, YDI works to develop the capacity of the leadership and the program team to integrate all elements of the model. In fiscal year 2013, YDI visited each YAL site about a dozen times for on-site training and technical assistance, and offered the programs numerous other off-site training and networking opportunities.

The provider organizations have great flexibility in the way they implement these program components, in terms of designing curricula and activities.

Target Population and Outcomes

As previously mentioned, YAL targets out-of-school youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who read at the fourth- through eighth-grade levels, as measured by the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE). The program staff are instructed to focus their recruitment and instructional efforts on youth who are on the lower end of literacy proficiency (those reading at the fourth- and fifth-grade levels). Programs must administer the TABE to all new students to establish eligibility before enrolling them into the program; DYCD asks that the program re-administer the TABE to students after a minimum of 100 hours of academic instruction.

The primary goal of YAL is to reengage out-of-school, low-literacy youth in education and career exploration to prepare them for further training or employment and to reduce their risk for long-term poverty. As seen in Figure 1.1, providers are expected to engage participants as long as necessary to reach an eighth-grade reading level and to help them make the transition to an HSE preparation program, employment training, or employment. To measure short-term performance in relation to these longer-term goals, the providers track and report data related to the following required outputs and outcomes:

[16]Youth Development Institute (2009).

- **Literacy gains (reading).** Improvements in skill levels of one or more grade levels in one year by 65 percent of students enrolled annually.
- **Numeracy gains (math).** Improvements in skill levels of one or more grade levels in one year by 65 percent of students enrolled annually.
- **Numbers served.** At least 20 students enrolled at any given time.
- **Attendance.** An average daily attendance of at least 15 students for the community-based organizations and at least 12 for the library sites.
- **Internship participation.** An average of 12 students per session over the course of a year.

Prior Evaluations

Neither CEPS nor YAL have undergone experimental evaluations to assess their impact on participants' overall growth during the course of the programs. A three-year longitudinal evaluation of CEPS found that the number of students staying in the program long enough to take the TABE more than once increased over time, along with the average gain in literacy among participants as measured by grade-level equivalency.[17]

As previously mentioned, the CEO tested the impact of adding a paid internship to YAL in the summer of 2009. Sites were randomly assigned to provide either a paid internship enhancement in the summer session or the standard set of services. The evaluation found that compared with participants in the non-internship sites, participants at the internship sites had higher math scores and retention rates, on average. A descriptive analysis of the program data also showed that all participants improved both their literacy and numeracy scores by one-half of a grade level, on average, over the eight-week summer session.[18]

CEO also sponsored a quantitative evaluation of YAL in 2012, in which a correlational analysis of program data from July 2009 to December 2010 indicated that program participants had increased 1.41 grade levels in literacy and over one grade level in numeracy. Students who entered the program at lower literacy levels experienced the largest gains. The data also found performance differences across sites in terms of attendance, retention, and educational gains, with a few program sites performing better than others. No significant differences in perfor-

[17]Campbell, Kibler, and Weisman (2009).
[18]Westat and Metis (2011).

mance were found between the two types of providers that operate YAL — libraries and community-based organizations.[19]

Study Overview

In light of the 2012 evaluation, CEO sought to conduct a qualitative study of the highest-performing YAL sites, and to explore unique or common factors that appear to lead to their success. However, as Table 1.1 shows, outcome and process measures in fiscal year 2013 did not show a consistent pattern of performance across study sites, making it difficult to choose sites that are consistently "high performing." For example, a site that ranked at the top among all YAL sites for maintaining high attendance on a daily basis (Site C) did not report the largest literacy gains among its students. Similarly, a site that reported producing large math gains for its students (Site D) ranked toward the bottom for literacy gains.

Besides variation in program performance, the five sites that were ultimately selected for the study capture the variety in YAL providers' organizational structure (three are operated by community-based organizations of different sizes and two are in libraries) and geographic location (the sites are located in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx). Two of the YAL programs are also home to the DOP-CEPS program, which offers YAL-like services, targeted specifically to young adults on probation.

The selected sites allowed the research team to examine program variation in some key areas that could affect the performance of the programs, including (1) characteristics of the organizations that operate YAL and their approaches to staffing and management; (2) characteristics of the participants, as shaped by recruitment and screening practices; and (3) providers' specific approaches to utilizing the program components.

Data for this study were collected between August and early September 2013, mainly through visits to the selected sites. The research team visited each site two to three times to interview all relevant staff, conduct focus groups with program participants, and observe classroom and internship activities. At each site, the team interviewed 28 staff members, conducted focus groups with 27 participants,[20] and observed at least an hour and a half of literacy and one hour of numeracy instruction, on average. Researchers observed internship activities at four sites, and gathered data on program participation and participant characteristics for the summer

[19]Westat (2013).

[20]The research team had intended to interview six to eight youth at each study site (30 to 40 in total), but was unable to do so due to low attendance at some sites, which is common in summer months, according to the staff. The focus groups were also voluntary and participation depended on the availability of the youth after class, as the research team did not wish to interfere with activities scheduled during program hours.

Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program

Table 1.1

How the Study Sites Performed in Fiscal Year 2013

	Outcome Measures		Process Measures		
Rank Among All YAL Sites	**Annual Literacy Gain** (Percentage of Youth Who Gained 1 Grade Level)	**Annual Math Gain** (Percentage of Youth Who Gained 1 Grade Level)	**Internship Participation** (Average Number of Youth per Session)[a]	**Numbers Served** (Average Number of Youth per Session)[a]	**Daily Attendance** (Average Number of Youth per Day)[b]
1	Site A (87%)	Site A (76%)			
2	Site B (87%)		Site A (15)	Site C (25)	Site C (16)
3	Site E (69%)	Site E (60%)		Site B (22)	
4		Site D (59%)	Site C (14)		
5		Site C (58%)	Site B (13)	Site D (22)	Site B (13)
6				Site A (20)	Site A (13)
7					
8		Site B (52%)			Site D (13)
9	Site C (53%)		Site E (8)		
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15			Site D (6)	Site E (11)	Site E (8)
16	Site D (38%)				
17					

NOTES: The program was operated at 8 community-based organizations and 8 different branches of New York City's 3 public libraries in fiscal year 2013; 1 library branch operated 2 programs.

[a]Average internship participation figures are the averages of actual attendance counts for each session across a year. Since students can participate in more than 1 session, this figure may overestimate the number of unique students who participated.

[b]Average daily attendance is calculated by taking the average number of youth in attendance per day for each month and then averaging across months over a year.

2013 session from all sites. The team also reviewed program management documents provided by DYCD to gather background information on the sites, and interviewed staff at DYCD and YDI to discuss their general roles in the program.

The research team studied the similarities and variations observed across the five sites in order to identify common practices among sites that performed well in fiscal year 2013, and that appeared to be implementing YAL in a successful manner, based on the team's observations and students' feedback. Factors that challenge the implementation of YAL were also identified.

The findings presented in this report are limited by a few elements, most important, the fact that they are based on observations of only 5 of the 17 YAL sites across the City. The study was not designed to make any causal connections between practices and outcomes. However, the sites were selected partly based on their performance in fiscal year 2013, with the goal of identifying practices that could affect participant outcomes. At the same time, recent changes to the overall program (namely, the change to the internship component in April 2013), as well as other programmatic and staffing changes at individual sites, limited the research team's ability to make connections between practices observed during the summer session and the past outcomes.

In addition, since YAL is a relatively new program and some of the study sites received funding to implement it for the first time in fiscal year 2012, program practices can vary from session to session as sites try to make improvements, meet new challenges, and accommodate staff turnover. The research team was able to create a detailed picture of the program at each site through the data collection activities, but these pictures are snapshots of only one program session. To protect confidentiality and to optimize learning from their experiences, the sites are not identified by name in this report but are simply labeled A through E.

Report Road Map

The remainder of this report is divided into three chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of how YAL is currently implemented at the study sites, along with a description of the program participants. A profile of the individual sites is provided in Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 4 examines the similarities and variations observed across the study sites in order to draw a few lessons on practices that appear to be successful in implementing YAL, as well as to identify some key challenges.

Chapter 2

Overview of Implementation at Study Sites

Three of the five Young Adult Literacy (YAL) program sites selected for the study are housed in multiservice, community-based organizations (CBOs); two are located in library branches (one of these library programs is operated through a partnership with a community development agency). One goal shared by all of the provider organizations is to strengthen the communities they serve by supplying educational opportunities that enhance the well-being of their residents.[1] Each organization also has a long-standing history of service, which facilitates recruitment for YAL and enables the organizations to augment services through partnerships. While all of the organizations have some experience providing services to youth, the CBOs have considerably more involvement working with disconnected and disadvantaged youth.

All of the YAL programs in the study draw financial, administrative, and staff support, as well as in-kind resources (marketing, use of facilities, and the like) from the host organizations. In each case, YAL is housed within a broader education or adult literacy unit inside the host organization, which offers other, similar services to youth and adults looking for academic instruction. The administrative and management structure of these larger units, as well as the funding available to them for other programs they operate, greatly affects the way YAL is staffed and implemented. Table 2.1 presents an overview of the main program components at each site. A more detailed side-by-side comparison of the sites is available in Appendix C.

Leadership and Staffing

Experience and tenure of program staff is of key importance to the implementation of YAL. The program model rests on the assumption that the staff are knowledgeable about youth development principles, and have the time to form caring and trusting relationships with participants that provide the safety and consistency needed to overcome any barriers they may face.

- **Staff turnover was not reported to be a general problem by the leadership.** However, about a third of the 28 staff members interviewed for the study had been with YAL at their respective organizations for less than a year at the time of the interviews. The leadership positions at these programs have not experienced much turnover, and most of the leadership staff have been involved with YAL since the program was launched at their organization.

[1]The report does not identify the YAL providers by name in order to protect confidentiality and to optimize learning from their experiences.

Table 2.1

Overview of Services at the Study Sites

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Where YAL is housed	Youth education and workforce department; houses other youth programs, including an HSE program.	Youth and adult education department; houses other youth programs, including an HSE program.	Adult literacy center; houses ABE and ESOL classes for all adults.	Adult literacy center; houses ABE and ESOL classes for all adults.	Adult literacy division of library; houses ABE and ESOL classes for all adults. Services provided through a not-for-profit subcontractor.
Academic services	9 hours of literacy; 6 hours of math. Structured class routine. Curriculum is a mix of teacher-developed Balanced Literacy (BL) lessons from news articles and pre-HSE text books.	6 hours of literacy; 6 hours of math; 3 hours of literacy through life skills class. Structured class routine. Thematic, student-centered curriculum with BL lessons and ties to internship projects.	10 hours of literacy; 5 hours math. Semi-structured classes. Incorporates some elements of BL. Uses a lot of fiction, some news and nonfiction, and standardized textbooks for math and writing.	10 hours of literacy; 5 hours math; often varies. Classes are not structured. Teacher does not use BL; a lot of small-group activities and individual work. Mostly uses pre-HSE textbooks.	8 hours of literacy; 6 hours math. Structured classes. A lot of independent work, including 30 minutes of daily reading from a student-selected book. Uses news articles and pre-HSE textbooks.
Social support services	3 staff split primary-person duties; group workshops at least once every 2 weeks. As-needed student conferences. Most referrals on-site.	Case managers spend time in class; as-needed student check-ins. A lot of students have counselors through another agency program. Most referrals on-site.	Hour-long class with case manager 5 days a week: sometimes just a forum for students to hold open discussions; otherwise work-readiness training.	Case manager spends time in class; as-needed student check-ins. 1-2-hour group workshops each week on life skills and work readiness topics.	Case manager rotates between 3 library programs. As-needed student check-ins. Group sessions on schedule but not very frequent.

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Internship services	2 hours of skills training and 4 hours of project-based learning. Project example: business planning to launch a food shop at the site.	Integrated with academics. Variety of options made available through community partnerships, agency resources, and additional fund-raising.	Organized by themes, like recycling. First: skills training (research, presentations). Then: projects (giving a recycling presentation at a summer camp).	"Boot camp" with youth from all YAL sites run by this library: skills workshops, team-building, and projects (library beautification, child care certification).	Only site to offer job shadowing (senior living community, catering business). Hour-long work-readiness class once a week.

SOURCES: Interviews with YAL staff at study sites.

- **The staff who implement YAL were generally employed full time at the host organizations, but most split their time between YAL and other programs.** This is especially true of the leadership and management staff. All three of the CBOs have full-time teachers to deliver academic instruction, and both library sites employ part-time teachers who are paid on an hourly basis. The organizations mostly employ full-time staff for provision of social support, internship coordination, and recruitment and intake; however, these duties are shared differently from site to site.

- **Nearly all of the program staff interviewed for this study have prior experience working with youth or in adult education, or both.** The leadership at each of the programs has considerable experience in one or both of these areas, but the extent of their involvement in guiding program activities varies widely by site. Much of the service coordination among program staff is done through informal check-ins and e-mails; the frequency of formal staff meetings ranges from once every two weeks to once each quarter.

- **Staff at all program sites reported receiving technical assistance and training from the Youth Development Institute (YDI), which is the main source of professional development for YAL staff.** Nearly everyone finds the assistance to be very useful, especially the academic staff. Many of the staff also find the opportunity to network with other YAL staff at YDI trainings to be very rewarding.

Recruitment and Enrollment

All but one of the sites reported that they actively recruit all year, stepping up efforts before a new session is set to begin; one of the sites indicated that their prominence and relationships in the community generate enough interest for them to fill program slots. The sites generally recruit for all of their adult education offerings and not specifically for YAL; however, YAL students generally go through a separate screening process to determine eligibility and suitability. It is important to understand how sites recruit and enroll youth because these practices can "select in" or "select out" particular types of youth, which, in turn, can affect retention and performance. For example, a lengthy enrollment process that involves multiple steps and visits to the program may result in the selection of participants who are self-motivated and disciplined enough to follow through, indicating greater potential for participation and performance than those who are not able to complete the intake process.

- **The most popular recruitment strategies included word-of-mouth referrals from friends, relatives, or former participants, followed by recom-**

mendations from public school administrators and other CBOs that offer adult education. About 40 percent of the youth interviewed for the study were referred to the program by a friend or a family member. Other programs within each host organization are also major sources of referrals. Staff at only one of the sites reported recruitment to be a challenge; the others said that there is a great need for pre-high school equivalency (HSE) services even if the students are not aware that they need them. Leadership at one of the sites said that the agency previously served low-literacy youth through HSE contracts, but struggled to meet outcome requirements because many of the youth needed additional help to be HSE-ready. YAL allows the agency to focus its energy on the select group of youth who need the extra step before going into an HSE program.

- **Students who join YAL generally wish to enroll in an HSE program when they seek out services at these sites.** Most sites reported that they do not focus much on the fact that YAL is a pre-HSE program that specifically targets youth with lower academic skill levels than those served by typical HSE programs. Instead they try to emphasize that it is a year-round program, and that youth might need to attend multiple sessions in order to be ready for an HSE preparation program and to be closer to taking the HSE test.

- **All of the programs have a multistep process for determining eligibility and suitability, but the level of screening prior to enrolling new youth varies widely across sites.** The sites follow the eligibility criteria established by the Center for Economic Opportunity and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and enroll out-of-school, 16- to 24-year-old youth who read between the fourth- and eighth-grade levels. YAL does not have any geographic eligibility requirements; however, the sites reported that most students come from neighboring communities, and that the program generally gives priority to youth who live nearby for accessibility reasons. Some of the sites have additional eligibility considerations. Two do not serve 16-year-olds and generally refer them back to high school, while four require documentation as proof of identity and age. Students who are not eligible for the program are generally referred to other adult literacy classes on site, if they are available, or at another organization. The eligibility considerations are not mutually exclusive: two of the five programs accept 16-year-olds, and four of the five require documentation.

  Staff at these four programs also reported that they view the intake steps — which generally include taking the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE),

an interview with a staff member, and an orientation — as a means to gauge youths' commitment to the program. Most of the staff said that students are generally not turned away, but applicants do drop off along the way. However, some staff also stressed that more students drop off after they start class than during the intake process. This is one of the reasons why the programs do not officially enroll youth until they have attended the program regularly for at least one week. Students who return from session to session are not expected to go through most of the enrollment steps unless they return to the program after a long gap.

- **All but one of the programs allow enrollment on a rolling basis, some admitting new students until the final days of a session.** The programs that use rolling admissions do so because of drop-off during the program session, as well as the concern that applicants who seek out services midway through a session may not return for the next one if they are not immediately placed. All of the programs enroll youth in cohorts in the beginning of a session when classes start, but only one program does not allow new enrollments to fill slots when youth drop out. The program director at this site says that the cohort system allows youth to foster relationships with their peers, and makes engagement and follow-up easier for the staff.

Participant Characteristics

A 2012 evaluation that analyzed data for nearly 900 youth who participated in YAL between July 2009 and December 2010 found that, on average, participants entered the program at a sixth-grade reading level and a fifth-grade math level. The analysis found that the majority of the participants were either African-American or Hispanic, with a mean age of 20. Overall, 55 percent of participants were male, and 45 percent were female.[2]

The preliminary summer 2013 data from each study site show that about 43 percent of the 98 students who enrolled in this session were completely new to the program, whereas the rest had attended one or more sessions of YAL before. As Table 2.2 shows, a little more than half of the youth were under age 21. About half of the youth read below the sixth-grade level; the other half, between the sixth- and eighth-grade levels. In math, about 60 percent of the youth were at or below the sixth-grade level.

[2]Westat (2013).

Table 2.2

Characteristics of YAL Participants at the Five Study Sites, Summer 2013

Characteristic	Percentage
Female	29.6
Age	
Less than 18 years old	11.2
18-20 years old	43.9
21 years old or more	44.9
Experience in YAL program	
Completely new to YAL this cycle	42.9
Attended 1 cycle of YAL before	21.4
Attended more than 1 cycle of YAL before	35.7
Race	
Non-Hispanic black	54.1
Hispanic/Latino	39.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.1
Non-Hispanic white	2.0
Has children	20.4
Has a criminal/juvenile history	44.9
Reading grade level[a]	
Below 4th grade	1.0
Between 4th and 6th grade	45.9
Between 6th and 8th grade	53.1
Above 8th grade	0.0
Math grade level[a]	
Below 4th grade	12.2
Between 4th and 6th grade	48.0
Between 6th and 8th grade	35.7
Above 8th grade	4.1
Internship participation	
Qualified for internships[b]	59.2
Enrolled in internships	36.7
Total number of enrolled participants	98

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from data provided by YAL sites in the study.

NOTES: [a]Reading and math grade levels assessed by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). For first-time YAL students, reading and math scores from the intake process are reported. For students who have been in the program for more than 1 session, scores from their most recent TABE is reported.

[b]Students who attend 70 percent of the academic classes are qualified to participate in the internship.

For this report, the research team sought to better understand the barriers faced by and the services needed by YAL participants, within the limitation of the study's scope. The most common issues mentioned by staff across all sites were:

- **Lack of stable home lives.** Youth are not necessarily homeless in a traditional sense, according to staff, but they often come from dysfunctional family settings and are living with relatives or friends. A case manager at one of the sites said that "a lot of people won't say they are homeless even if they are couch surfing" because of the stigma surrounding homelessness. Finding housing solutions for youth was mentioned as one of the biggest challenges in providing support services, as options for transitional housing are generally limited in the New York City area, especially for youth.

- **Responsibilities of parenthood and family life.** Many YAL participants have children. (One in five of those enrolled in the summer session at the five study sites reported being a parent.) The program staff reported that many also take care of parents, relatives, or younger siblings. In addition, some participants hold part-time or full-time jobs to support themselves or their families (or both) while enrolled in the program, which can often affect their attendance and performance.

- **Access to public assistance.** Work requirements for cash assistance and child care can create obstacles for youth in YAL. One case manager reported that some individuals are required to work full time in order to receive assistance and must therefore find employment while in the program, which can pose a barrier to attendance. An additional difficulty is posed by the break between each quarterly session, which interferes with the requirement that youth remain in activities in order to receive public assistance. Further complicating matters is the fact that one of the library programs is not a vendor

approved by the New York City Human Resources Administration to provide workforce or educational services to people on public assistance. The case manager at this program indicated that youth have experienced difficulty getting their YAL hours counted toward benefits eligibility.

- **Criminal justice involvement.** Nearly all of the YAL sites reported serving a certain number of youth who have committed an offense. One of the study sites is based in a CBO that serves only this population; the staff and most of the youth at this site reported experiences with gangs and violence, as well as substance abuse issues.

- **Learning disabilities.** While the research team does not have data available on how many students in YAL programs have diagnosed disabilities or special education needs, staff at all of the sites recounted multiple instances of dealing with participants who have these needs. During recruitment, potential students at most of the sites are asked whether they have had involvement with an Individualized Education Program, which guides the delivery of special education supports and services for those with disabilities in the public school system. Staff reported that they generally do not find out about these youth and the extent of their needs until they are in the classrooms. Staff at some sites try to work with this population and offer them additional support within their ability level; others try to find alternative programs for referral.

Although a small proportion of YAL students hold jobs while in the program, most do not have any work experience, according to staff. Moreover, even those who have worked in the past have spotty, inconsistent employment histories, usually in the retail or food industry. All sites reported that students often seek assistance with their job search, and the staff helps with application, résumé, and interview preparation. However, staff at a few sites said that employment can conflict with their main goal of getting students ready to take the HSE exam by diverting their attention away from academics. "There's always tension between what we'd like to see them do and what they need or want to do. When they find jobs, they don't come to class," one staff member said.

The research team talked to 27 youth in voluntary focus groups conducted across the five sites. Nearly all of the youth said they joined YAL to get their HSE credentials, a goal that appeared to be of utmost importance. They pointed to various scenarios as explanations for why they did not finish high school. Many cited negative peer influence that led to disruptive behavior; others, boring instruction and large classrooms where they were not able to get any individual attention. A couple of youth said that they fell behind for different reasons and were never able to catch up, while a few had finished high school in other countries. Most of the youth were

able to articulate postprogram goals, which generally included getting their HSE credential and then finding a job while pursuing college or other types of training (nursing, trade school, culinary school, cosmetology, and the like).

Academic Services

- **The sites provide between 14 and 15 hours of academic instruction each week.** Instructors develop their own curriculum based on material from a variety of sources, including those provided by YDI, pre-HSE and HSE textbooks, resources from instructional Web sites, and news and journal articles. Teachers report that they need to vary their lessons for each quarterly session because a large proportion of students have attended one or more sessions of YAL before. All of the instructors indicated that they try to take students' interests into account when designing lessons and choose topics that could be relevant to their lives. However, only two used structured goal-setting activities to guide their lessons. Program leaders are generally not involved in curriculum development or academic planning, though some reported that they conduct observations and solicit lesson plans from their instructors.

- **While preparing students for the HSE exam is a main goal shared by all instructors, most also report having broader, more personal goals that shape their work.** Examples include imparting skills "to make students productive and successful" members of society; encouraging them "to see that they can achieve the things they want to achieve"; and getting them "to love learning," "to develop as learners," and "to see the bigger picture in everything they do so they can be more engaged."

- **Teachers at most of the sites incorporate some elements of the instructional frameworks recommended by YDI.** These elements include reading aloud, making greater use of nonfiction text and word work, and modeling problem-solving strategies for students to practice in math. Based on classroom observations and interviews, a couple of the teachers incorporate all of the elements into highly structured lessons, while others use some of the elements more often than others. Most of the instructors are familiar with the concepts of Balanced Literacy and the Common Core State Standards.

- **Instructors assess students' progress primarily through daily classroom observations of their work and participation, and through the TABE.** A few of the teachers keep portfolios of student work. Participants generally receive informal feedback in the classroom. Conferences do not occur on a

regular basis during the program session, but most of the programs include scheduled meetings with students to update them on their progress at the end of each session.

- **At most sites, all students in a YAL classroom generally receive the same instruction and participate in the same work, even if they are at different skill levels.** A couple of the sites reported allowing students with higher math proficiency to do independent or group-based work that is different from work involving the rest of the class. A lot of the teachers rely on the stronger students in the class to help their peers, which sometimes occurs without any explicit instruction from them.

Social Support Services

- **All of the programs offer the bulk of social support services in group settings, namely, through work-readiness and life skills workshops.** One-on-one meetings between students and social service staff take place mostly on an as-needed basis, which makes it difficult to estimate the actual number of social support hours each site provides. The topics of the workshops do not vary greatly from site to site, despite having no prescribed curriculum. The workshops generally involve (1) "soft" work-related skills (for example, time management, team work, and effective communications); (2) work-readiness preparation (for instance, creating résumés and cover letters, practicing interview skills, exploring careers, and learning about professional attire); and (3) life skills (such as sexual health, healthy relationships, and financial literacy).

- **All of the social service staff indicate that their main goals in providing services are to eliminate external barriers that affect attendance and participation, and to help students make the transition into their post-program goals.** Most social support staff also lead recruitment and enrollment activities at the sites, and meet with the students when they first arrive at the program. They generally use the initial meeting to understand the needs and goals of participants, and then check in with them on an informal basis. Staff at each site report connecting youth to various supportive services, including assistance with housing, child care, and public benefits. The sites that are housed within large, multiservice CBOs are better able to leverage supportive services in-house and to supplement responses to unmet needs through referrals.

Internship Services

- **Staff at all of the sites identify their main goals for the internship as teaching students transferrable work-readiness skills, and offering them opportunities and experiences that can be listed on their résumé.** Most participants lack both work-readiness skills and consistent work experience when they enter the program, the staff reported. The internships at all the sites included both skills training and experiential components. Students generally attended skills instruction and then applied the skills in project settings (for example, learning presentation skills and then building a presentation for public consumption). In that respect, there was some overlap in the work-readiness instruction provided through social support workshops and the internship component at a few of the sites, but it was not apparent that the two were deliberately integrated, as they generally involve different staff. Youth at four programs participated in project-based and service learning opportunities; one site offered "job shadowing" opportunities, placing youth in businesses and organizations in the community.

- **The scope and nature of the internship projects varied widely across the sites and reflected the host organizations' ability to leverage resources and partnerships to create opportunities.** Internship staff at two sites said that they try to explicitly link the academic instruction to the internship projects by coordinating with the academic staff. For example, at one site, staff pick a theme for each session and plan the internship and academic activities around that theme. In the summer 2013 session, the staff at this site planned instruction and activities around community and civic engagement. The academic instructor selected readings on social science and history that loosely tied to these topics; the internship coordinator brought in a representative from a community-based social justice organization to do a lesson in the classroom concerning issues in the community; and for the internship activity, students had an opportunity to work with the CBO to do advocacy and organizing work. In a prior session at this site, the internship coordinator created an opportunity for students to work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for their internship activity; in that case, the teacher supported the internship component by selecting readings on art-related topics.

- **Most sites reported that they have begun to present the internship component as a mandatory part of the YAL program when they enroll youth.** However, most sites have difficulties meeting the DYCD requirement of having an average of 12 students participate in the internship in each ses-

sion. According to the preliminary data provided by the sites for the summer 2013 session, about 60 percent of all youth who meet the attendance requirement to qualify for the internship component attended on a regular basis. Staff cited different reasons why it was challenging to engage students in the internship, the most frequent one being that many students had life needs that took precedence over what they considered an after-school activity. For example, some students need to work full time or take care of family needs.

Program Rules and Incentives

- **During the enrollment process, sites generally inform youth — either verbally or with a written document, or both — of the program's policies and disciplinary rules.** Enforcement of program rules varies by site. A lot of the staff cited the nature of the population they serve and the barriers in the youths' lives as the reasons they need to maintain flexibility in enforcing the rules.

- **Sites reach out to absent youth on a regular basis. Students usually sign in when they come to class, and the teachers share the information with the rest of the staff.** Some sites require that students sign in separately for each component — academic, life skills, internship — to better track participation. Teachers or case managers make follow-up calls to students who are absent, generally within one or two days. Youth receive MetroCards at the end of each day if they attend class.[3]

- **Some of the programs offer additional incentives to students for attendance and increases in academic proficiency, including movie tickets, electronics, and gift cards.** When it came to incentives, the staff were generally divided about their use. Even in programs that provided additional incentives, the staff said that they were uncertain of their effectiveness in producing desired results. All but one of the programs reported hosting celebrations to mark the completion of a session or a program year.

Transition and Follow-Up

- **Sites generally administer the TABE to students at the end of each session, and use the score to decide whether they should return to YAL or**

[3]MetroCards, issued by New York City's Metropolitan Transit Authority, are used to access public transportation throughout the City.

transition to an HSE program. Youth who read at or above an eighth-grade level are ready to transition out of YAL. The CBO sites operate HSE classes or other Adult Basic Education classes for higher-level adult learners, and they usually move YAL students to these on-site classes when they are ready to make the transition. Staff at the rest of the sites reported that they refer students to other HSE programs when they reach at least an eighth-grade reading level and are ready to transition out of YAL. But students usually want to take the test while still enrolled in YAL, the staff said. In some cases, the site staff have administered official practice tests for the HSE exam and, based on the results, scheduled students for testing while they were still in YAL. Most staff encourage students to delay taking the HSE exam until they have attended some higher-level classes to prepare for the test, increasing their chances of passing and better preparing them for college or career training programs.

- **If youth have not reached an eighth-grade level at the end of a program session, they are expected to return to the program during the following session.** At the same time, programs struggle with retaining youth from session to session; staff reported that it is difficult to keep youth for more than two sessions. Nearly all youth come to YAL seeking services to prepare for the HSE exam, often with an inflated understanding of their own skill levels. All of the sites reported difficulties managing youths' expectations.

- **Sites generally follow up with current students who need to return for more services between session breaks, but they do not typically follow up with youth who have left the program.** At the end of each session, staff in most programs discuss the end-of-session TABE scores with youth before they leave for the break, and most call or e-mail youth during the break to remind them to return. The programs generally do not follow up with students for long if they stop coming to the program for an extended period of time.

Chapter 3

Profiles of the Study Sites

This chapter presents a profile of each site in the Young Adult Literacy (YAL) program evaluation, describing infrastructure, program flow, and practices. A detailed, side-by-side comparison of the study sites is available in Appendix C.

Site A

Host Organization

Site A is a large social service organization that provides a comprehensive list of services aimed at improving the social and economic well-being of the communities it serves. The YAL program is housed in a unit that offers a few education and workforce development programs for out-of-school youth, including High School Equivalency (HSE) classes and HSE testing. Before receiving funding for YAL in fiscal year 2012, the staff at this site had worked with the Youth Development Institute (YDI) to implement Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS).

Key Staff

The coordinator of the youth education and workforce unit manages YAL. The main program components are delivered by a teacher, an intake coordinator, and an internship coordinator. All three are employed full time, but the latter two split their time between YAL and the HSE program. All of the other members in this 12-person unit assist with YAL, providing help with case management, academic instruction, and work readiness. The whole unit meets every other month; the coordinator meets with each staff every month for one-on-one supervision and coordination.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Site A mainly recruits for its HSE program and places those who read below an eighth-grade level in YAL. Youth are enrolled as a cohort at the beginning of each quarterly session (which lasts 9 weeks in summer and 11 weeks each in fall, winter, and spring), and new students generally cannot enroll after classes start. During the enrollment process, youth go through the following steps: (1) attend an information session and take the Test of Adult Basic Education™ (TABE™) in reading and math to determine eligibility; (2) pick up an application package; (3) return with a completed application and meet with a staff member for an interview;

and (4) attend a three- to four-day orientation that includes participation in team building, life skills, and job-readiness workshops. Youth are officially enrolled if they attend classes regularly for a week. Leadership at the site said that they restructured the enrollment process to put youth through a "few hurdles" in order to set high expectations. Staff said that they accept most youth who complete the required steps. However, they also consider whether their site can meet the challenges of serving high-needs youth (for example, students with diagnosed learning disabilities who may need additional resources and support) and youth with many barriers to attendance (for example, parenting youth who lack stable child care).

Academic Instruction

Academic classes are offered four days a week. Students receive about nine hours of literacy and six hours of math instruction each week. Instructors use the same format every day: a warm-up activity, about two hours of reading and writing, and an hour and a half of math instruction. They try to incorporate the instructional approaches recommended by the YDI into their lessons and to align them to the Common Core State Standards. For literacy, instructors develop their own lessons using the Balanced Literacy approach for about half of their classes. The remainder of the time they teach from pre-HSE textbooks, generally when covering language arts — grammar, sentence structure, and the like. When developing the curriculum, teachers take into account students' goals, skills, and interests. To do so, they use information from the intake process (the TABE and YAL application), as well as a goal-setting exercise done in the first week of class in which they spell out their immediate, medium-, and long-term goals and the actions they can take to achieve them.

In one classroom, during the language arts period, the teacher observed students as they read a journal article about the constitutionality of New York City's "stop-and-frisk" practices. He then discussed new vocabulary words from the reading, and students read aloud in pairs and answered a few text-dependent questions on a worksheet. Next, the instructor read each passage aloud to the students and held a discussion to check for comprehension. During the math lesson, he modeled strategies for adding decimals, demonstrated practice problems on the board, and allowed youth to work independently while he walked around to help individual students. Youth who had attended the program for a while or had greater proficiency were asked to work on exercises in a pre-HSE textbook.

Social Support Services

Social support duties for YAL are split among the program coordinator, the intake coordinator, and the internship coordinator, who serve as "primary people" to a group of students. Each primary person provides one-on-one guidance on an as-needed basis; there are no regularly scheduled student conferences. Work-readiness and life skills workshops are scheduled at least

once every two weeks and often involve community partners. Each staff member is responsible for planning the workshops for a given month. Past examples include a "family day," during which community service providers informed youth about the services they offer young parents, and a financial literacy workshop hosted by a local bank. The agency offers a large number of supportive services — including child care, housing assistance, immigration services, and benefits assistance — and referrals are generally made in-house. Group-based counseling is offered through a part-time intern who is a candidate for a master's degree in social work.

Internship Services

The internship involves two hours of skills training on one day and four hours of project-based learning on another. The coordinator says that he aims to reinforce what students are learning in the classroom, while equipping them with life skills and work skills. The skills portion is driven by a list of job-readiness topics recommended by the Department of Youth and Community Development, including communication skills, time management, and study skills. Site A also has a job developer who works with multiple programs within the department; she helps the YAL internship coordinator with skills training and meets with students who request individual assistance. For the project portion of the summer 2013 session, students opened a small food store in the agency and received training on planning a business. The internship coordinator hopes to offer more than one project in the future so that students can choose an option that fits their interests. YAL presents the internship as a requirement to be accepted into the program; only those with serious barriers — like another job — are not required to participate.

Transition

YAL participants take the TABE midway through each session, which helps the staff assess each student's potential for transition at the end of the session. The staff may have a preliminary conversation with those who are doing well and could be ready to move out of YAL. A more formal conversation takes place after the students take the end-of-session TABE. The instructor generally schedules meetings within days of a session's completion to discuss students' performance. The program coordinator organizes a "transition breakfast" where the YAL teacher "hands over" the transitioning students to the HSE teachers. While the agency offers HSE testing, the staff do not encourage youth to take the HSE test while they are still in YAL; instead, students are asked to attend the HSE program first. The staff reported that students who are eligible to transition out of YAL generally enroll in the HSE program.

Site B

Host Organization

Site B is a not-for-profit agency that provides reentry services and alternatives to incarceration for people involved with the criminal justice system. YAL is housed within the agency's education department, which offers Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, an HSE preparation program, and a pre-HSE program for youth who are currently on probation (also known as the Department of Probation-Community Education Pathways to Success program, or DOP-CEPS, in this report).[1] The agency has locations in two boroughs — Queens and Manhattan — and operates YAL at both locations. While the two locations constitute one YAL program for reporting purposes, there are many variations in practices between them. Among these are the distance between the two locations, and the fact that YAL is delivered alongside DOP-CEPS in Manhattan but not in Queens. Site B received funding for both of these programs in fiscal year 2012. However, the education department worked with YDI before that to train its staff on youth development principles, as their student population became increasingly younger over the years. The entire department, including the Manhattan staff, meets twice a month; role-specific meetings between counselors and teachers occur twice a month.

Key Staff

YAL is under the leadership of the director of the education department and is coordinated by a staff member who oversees all of the youth programs in the department. This youth education coordinator also runs the YAL internship services in Queens, where a full-time instructor provides academic services and a counselor provides social support services. The counselor splits her time between YAL and other education programs. In Manhattan, there are two full-time staff members who deliver program services to YAL and DOP-CEPS students: a program coordinator who teaches and coordinates the internship, and a counselor who provides social support services.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Referrals from other departments in the agency bring a majority of the YAL participants to the program at this site; the rest come through word-of-mouth referrals and outreach to the DOP. The youth who join YAL through interagency referrals are often mandated by the legal

[1]Mayor Bloomberg's Young Men's Initiative created the DOP-CEPS program by adapting YDI's CEPS model to specifically target young adults on probation. DOP-CEPS is overseen by New York City's Department of Probation. Some of the YAL sites are also home to DOP-CEPS; Site B is one of them. Participants in the two programs generally receive the same services; the programs mostly differ in terms of their eligibility criteria, funding streams, and reporting requirements.

system to receive educational or support services through the agency. Both locations allow new students to enroll throughout each session, though the Queens site does not do so in the last couple of weeks of class. The recruitment and enrollment practices are different at the two locations. There are three distinct steps to gain admission into the YAL program in Queens: (1) advancement through the agency-wide admissions process, which involves an assessment of social support needs; (2) participation in a two-day orientation with the education department, where youths must take the TABE, write a short essay, and complete an interview with a staff member; and (3) attendance at YAL classes for a week, during which youth must write a long essay, make a presentation, and complete another interview. Staff say most youth complete the steps; if they do not complete the application, they are asked to join an ABE class that is less structured and intensive. The enrollment process at the Manhattan site omits the last, YAL-specific step. Youth go through the agency- and education-specific intake, but even those steps are streamlined because the location also serves DOP-CEPS youth, who are more difficult to recruit.

Academic Instruction

Classes are offered five days a week. In Queens, students receive about six hours of literacy and six hours of math instruction on the first four days of each week. The remainder of the instructional hours are delivered through a "life skills" class on Fridays that incorporates reading and writing. In Manhattan, students generally receive eight hours of literacy and four hours of math on the first four days; the life skills instruction on Fridays is mostly focused on soft skills but is applied toward the academic hours.

The curricula and the topics at each location reflect the interests of the staff and the student. Staff at both locations set a theme for each session that ties the academic and internship components together. The instructors develop their own curricula using these themes, and often take into account the students' opinions when choosing specific activities and topics. For example, when the internship coordinator found an opportunity to work with the Metropolitan Museum of Art on a project, the academic instructor supported that work with art-related readings in the classroom.

Instructors at both the Queens and Manhattan sites incorporated Balanced Literacy techniques in their lessons. In addition, they relied on the concept of "scaffolding" to break up each lesson into small sections, gradually releasing the responsibility of learning to the students. In both math and literacy, the instructors discussed using "I do," "we do," and "you do," a scaffolding strategy where the teacher first provides direct instruction (for example, reading aloud or modeling a problem), then leads an interactive instruction with the class, and then allows students to work independently. During the classroom observation in Queens, the instructor taught a lesson about historical maps: she started the lesson with vocabulary words, led a guided reading and discussion of the text, and then asked students to write an explanatory piece on the top-

ic. The research team did not conduct a classroom observation in Manhattan, where the instructor relies heavily on volunteer tutors to offer individualized support to students who are at different levels of proficiency.[2] In contrast, the instructor in the Queens location says that most students are working on the same things, though she does offer individual support in the classroom. Neither instructor uses pre-HSE textbooks, relying instead on online resources, news articles, and fiction or nonfiction books.

Social Support Services

Most of the other programs offer life skills or work-readiness classes as part of their social support services. Site B uses a three-hour "life skills" class, held on Fridays, and treats it as part of the academic hours. The class at the Queens location is more focused on building personal skills; students were reading true stories of teenagers who have overcome struggles. The class at the Manhattan site concentrates more on job readiness, covering topics like time management, cultural sensitivity, and résumé building. The education counselor at each location, who meets with students individually on an as-needed basis, provides social support services. The counselor at the Queens site begins her day in the classroom greeting and observing students, and assessing who may need one-on-one support. YAL youth who are judicially mandated for services at the agency receive case management and counseling through other agency initiatives, which count toward the DYCD required social support hours. The Queens location offers an array of support services, such as benefits assistance and mental health counseling, and the counselor can refer youth to in-house services. At the Manhattan location, students are often referred within the agency to services at the other location. This site recently began offering an hour-long group counseling session each week with a licensed clinician from the agency.

Internship Services

As previously discussed, during each YAL session the project-based internship activities are tied to academic services through a specific theme. The schedule in Queens varies for internship activities, but students participate two to three times per week. Students in Manhattan participate for 1.5 hours, four days per week. The staff's goal for youth is to be able to articulate the skills they learn through each activity in order to convey them in a résumé or to an employer. The YAL program at this site is able to offer more project options than most of the other YAL sites by drawing on the host organization's resources, partnerships, and fund-raising capabilities. For example, the Manhattan location has a technology lab, and a few of the students there have worked with the lab's coordinator to produce public service announcements about the new HSE

[2]Three tutors volunteered at the Manhattan location during the summer 2013 session. The number of tutors and their schedules can vary from session to session.

exam, learning video production and editing techniques in the process. The program offers numerous such options for students through partnerships with museums and schools.

Transition

All students take the TABE at the end of each session, unless they started late, and review their performance with the academic instructors. The Queens location has an HSE program on site, and students who score out of YAL are encouraged to join. The staff do not encourage the youth to take the practice test or the HSE when they are still in YAL. The Manhattan location does not have an HSE program on-site. The instructor used to refer youth to outside HSE programs, but after they reported frustrations with the size and structure of these programs, she began to retain them in YAL until they could take the HSE test. These students receive regular YAL services in terms of social support and internship opportunities; for academic instruction, they attend classes with the other YAL students half of the time and receive individualized HSE-specific instruction from the teacher or a volunteer tutor the rest of the time.

Site C

Host Organization

Site C is a multiservice, community-based organization (CBO) that offers a wide range of social services. YAL is housed within the CBO's adult literacy center, which runs various ABE and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. While these classes are often aimed at different skill levels, YAL is the only program among the adult literacy center's offerings that specifically targets youth. Site C was among the very first YAL programs launched in 2008.

Key Staff

Four full-time staff are involved in the implementation of YAL; two split their time between YAL and other programs. Until summer 2013, the director of the adult literacy center coordinated the program. While he supervised the program at the time of the visit, the day-to-day operations were overseen by a program coordinator, who split his time between YAL and the ESOL program. A full-time instructor provides academic services and coordinates the internship component, while a full-time case manager provides social support services and coordinates recruitment and intake. Service coordination is largely informal and occurs through phone calls, e-mails, and check-ins; staff meet during the breaks to plan for each session.

Recruitment and Enrollment

The literacy director said that it is not necessary for the program to actively recruit, and that the host organization's reputation in the community ensures that most applicants come through word-of-mouth referrals, often from former participants. The program also receives referrals from other programs within the agency, from the Human Resources Administration, and from high schools and other organizations in the community. The site enrolls youth as a cohort at the beginning of each session, but allows new youth to enter the program up to one month after classes start.

The intake process involves at least three steps. In the first step, youth who seek literacy services are asked a few questions to assess initial eligibility (age, school status, and the like). If youth appear eligible, they receive a short application to complete on-site. In the second step, staff call youth to return to the program for two days of orientation and testing. The program administers the reading TABE on the first day to establish eligibility for YAL; if eligible, youth return the next day for math and language tests. In the third step, if there is time between testing and the start of classes, the case manager schedules an interview with youth. If classes are scheduled to begin shortly, youth will likely be asked to come straight to class, where they will complete a longer application and discuss their goals with the case manager. Youth are not usually turned away from the program unless they are under 18 years of age and cannot provide high school discharge papers.[3] However, the case manager does inquire about the extent of their desire to be in the program.

Academic Instruction

Students receive one hour of instruction in math, in reading, and in writing every day, almost always in that order. The instructor develops her own curriculum using the Common Core State Standards as a guide. She also incorporates Balanced Literacy methods into some lessons, but says it is difficult to cover a whole range of activities in the short time she has with the youth. During literacy instruction, students read either independently or aloud every day; sometimes the teacher also reads to them. She uses a lot of fictional texts but incorporates some news articles and nonfiction. Math instruction usually starts with a warm-up activity, followed by a new lesson. Students work on problems on their own and discuss the answers as a class. The teacher uses math exercises from McGraw Hill's Number Power books, pre-HSE textbooks, and HSE textbooks. She uses the TABE language book to guide her writing instruction and makes sure that students write something every day.

The instructor administers a diagnostic test in the first week of classes to get a better insight into the skills of her students and the challenges they present. Everyone generally works

[3]DYCD does not require the programs to submit high school discharge papers.

on the same lessons because students are often missing critical skills even if they test at a higher level on the TABE, she says. The teacher provides additional work for those who are more advanced than the rest of the class.

Social Support Services

The case manager conducts an hour-long class every day, which can serve two purposes: to provide a forum for the youth to voice their concerns about any issues, public or private, and to offer guidance on work-readiness and postprogram goals. She covers topics like résumé writing, professional communications, college access, and career assessment. These classes often take place in the computer lab so students can conduct hands-on research on colleges and potential career paths. The case manager also takes youth on trips to colleges around New York City. She meets one-on-one with individuals on an as-needed basis. Although she used to offer one-on-one weekly sessions, students rarely attended them because many did not think they needed case management. Additional support service referrals are usually made outside of the agency. When participants do use other agency resources, it is most often immigration and legal services.

Internship Services

Internship services are organized around a theme that guides the activities and the lessons. The theme for summer 2013 was recycling. Students spent the first two weeks of the program learning research skills, presentation skills, and concepts of community service and project-based learning. Examples of projects include presentations on the importance of recycling and what should be recycled at a children's summer camp, hosting a composting workshop with a community partner, and painting flowers made from recycled plastic bottles. The academic instructor at the site also leads the internship activities. Youth who are eligible for internships are divided into two groups to accommodate her instruction and preparation schedule. One group meets for six hours over two days; another, over three days.

Transition

The testing and transition process was undergoing changes at the time of the site visit. Up until the end of fiscal year 2013, the TABE was administered to enrolled students at the end of each session. Those scores were used to decide which youth were ready to move on. Starting in the summer 2013 session, most students will be tested every six months (over two sessions). Students who perform well in the classroom can receive the instructor's recommendation to be tested sooner. Once YAL students are reading at a seventh-grade level, they are eligible to move into a higher-level ABE class at the site, which is for adult learners of all ages. Once they reach the ninth-grade level in reading and the seventh-grade level in math, students can take the official practice test to prepare for the HSE exam. If they pass, arrangements are made for them to

take the HSE test at another location. Referrals are also made to other youth-specific HSE programs in the community, most of which serve young people under the age of 21.

Site D

Host Organization

Site D is located in an adult learning center operated by a public library system. The site runs a morning and an evening YAL program, as well as a DOP-CEPS program.[4] YAL and DOP-CEPS students receive the same services and are taught in the same classroom. The library system also runs YAL programs at two other locations. All of these programs, and the adult learning centers where they are housed, are part of the library's $4 million adult literacy program. The program offers ABE, ESOL, and family literacy classes at eight locations across the borough in which the library operates. Besides YAL, Site D runs another pre-HSE class that is open to all adults and that is less structured and intensive. The library started running the YAL program in 2008, when it was first launched, at another site. Site D was added in 2009.

Key Staff

All four YAL programs at the library *and* the DOP-CEPS program share management and administrative staff. A full-time program coordinator oversees all five programs. The manager of the library's adult literacy program provides additional supervision and guidance.[5] Intake and data-management support for all programs is provided by two part-time program assistants. The academic and the social support staff are different at each of the three locations where the programs operate. At Site D, a part-time teacher provides instruction for the program with the support of a part-time teaching assistant. At this location, a full-time case manager supports all youth in the two YAL programs, as well as the DOP-CEPS program. Staff for all programs meet once a month; day-to-day coordination is done through informal check-ins and e-mails.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Most youth come to the YAL program through referrals from community-based organizations or through word-of-mouth referrals. The library itself is a substantial source of recruitment as well; its adult learner program also runs an open house every quarter. Currently, youth may enroll in the library's YAL program at any point during a session, though the leadership reported that they were planning to stop rolling enrollment in the future.

[4]Findings presented in this report are based on data collected from the morning program.

[5]The current manager of the library's adult literacy program assumed her role in 2012 and has had a more hands-on role in the day-to-day operation of the program than her predecessor, according to the staff.

Intake at Site D takes between one and two days. When youth first come to the site, they complete an application that requires them to write a short essay about themselves. The case manager explains the program structure and rules to youth and discusses their educational background and life needs; tests are then administered. If youth are pressed for time, they only take the reading portion of the TABE on the first day to assess eligibility for the program. If they pass, they may come back the next day for the math portion of the test; staff said that the discussion about the structure of the program sometimes deters people from applying.

Academic Instruction

Youth generally receive 10 hours of literacy and 5 hours of math instruction each week, but the instructor indicated that the schedule can vary from day to day. He develops his own lessons based on standard curricula that the library has used in the past. The teacher also uses materials provided by YDI, though he does not typically use the instructional approaches recommended by YDI. The instructor reported using pre-HSE textbooks, news articles, excerpts from fiction and nonfiction books, and online resources to plan lessons; students reported using primarily pre-HSE textbooks in class. The instructor tries to incorporate students' interests into his lessons, and often adapts these in class. The classes do not follow a regular schedule. The teaching assistant offers individualized classroom support to accommodate students' different educational levels. The program also makes an e-learning product related to the TABE that is available to students with higher math proficiency levels.

In the classroom observed by the study team, students worked on two interactive exercises. The class was divided into two teams. In the first exercise, each team prepared a skit based on a section of the pre-HSE textbook — checks and balances in the three branches of government — and had a discussion about same-sex marriage and gun laws. In the second exercise, the teams competed against each other in a game of Jeopardy, which was meant to serve as a review of past lessons. The teacher drew on questions from a pre-HSE textbook. In the last part of the class, students worked on autobiographies they had started writing in a previous class. The instructor did not give a math lesson, though a few math-related questions were asked during the Jeopardy game.

Social Support Services

The case manager reported spending part of each day in the classroom observing students and assessing their needs. He reported that he tries to interact with each student every day, no matter how briefly; individual meetings are held on an as-needed basis. One day a week, students participate in a life skills and work-readiness class for an hour or two. This class covers a standard set of topics that are suggested for all of the library's YAL programs. Among these are internship and job applications, résumés, business writing, choices and decision making,

self-esteem building, interpersonal skills, and finances, as well as various student-driven discussions and the like. In terms of external support, the case manager reported that youth mostly request assistance with applying for public benefits. For other needs, like housing and child care, he refers them to social service organizations in the community. In addition, the library brings in partners to conduct life skills workshops; examples include substance abuse prevention, financial literacy, and nutrition. At some branches of the library, students can also attend free job-readiness and computer training services.

Internship Services

The library hosts a "boot camp" every Friday at Site D for all of the youth in their YAL and DOP-CEPS programs. The boot camps offer project-based learning opportunities, as well as skills training, which overlap somewhat with the social support workshops described in the previous section. During this session, students had the choice of working on (1) a beautification project at another library, (2) a child care certification course offered through the American Red Cross and a volunteer program at a child care center, or (3) a play based on *The Hunger Games* novels,[6] with the help of the Teen Services Librarian. When not working on the projects, students participated in team-building activities and workshops related to their community service projects and to life and work skills such as time management and goal setting.

Transition

At Site D, youth take the TABE at the end of each session to determine whether they are ready to transition out of the program. The process can vary, depending on students' individual interests and needs. The site offers an official practice test for the HSE exam to students who score at the eighth- or ninth-grade level on the end-of-session TABE. The staff noted the difficulty of convincing students to transition to another HSE program once they know they have reached the grade level required to take an official practice test. The staff do make referrals, however.

Site E

Host Organization

Site E is located in a public library and is operated through a partnership between the library's adult literacy program and a not-for-profit community development agency (CDA).[7]

[6]Collins (2008).

[7]This operational arrangement is unique in the YAL portfolio, as most of the other organizations — including the libraries — no longer use subcontractors to deliver services. Libraries have used subcontractors in the past to deliver some YAL components, namely, case management.

The library has a large, $3 million adult literacy program that offers ABE and ESOL classes at various branches; the YAL program, though overseen by the leadership of the adult literacy program, is not operationally connected to the library's adult literacy program. The library runs the YAL program at three locations, two of which were launched in 2008; the study location was added in 2012.[8] The CDA subcontractor implements all of these programs. YAL is part of the CDA's out-of-school portfolio, which includes two other programs that focus on youth with criminal justice backgrounds. The staff reported a recent focus by the CDA leadership on re-structuring and consolidating the agency's practices for their out-of-school programs, which has resulted in staffing and operational changes for the library's YAL programs since the second quarter of 2013. The staff also discussed other potential changes, suggesting that the description provided in this report might just be a snapshot of the session visited.

Key Staff

All three of the YAL programs share the same full-time staff, except for the academic instructors, who are employed part time, managed by the CDA, and work at only one location. On the library side, the programs are under the leadership of the director of adult literacy and a full-time coordinator, who shares the task of day-to-day management with a coordinator from the CDA. There is one case manager and one internship coordinator for all three YAL programs at the library. Although the staff have a rotating schedule among the programs, on-the-ground needs often dictate their location.[9] One staff member of the YAL program reported that the senior management staff of the host organization met regularly, but there were no formal meetings for the rest of the staff, who coordinate informally via e-mails, phone calls, and in-person check-ins when possible.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Like other sites, most YAL youth who come to the library programs are referred through word-of-mouth, through schools, or through CBOs. Site E reported relying primarily on referrals from other HSE programs at CBOs and at local community colleges with which they have established regular working relationships. The library's multiple branches and adult learning centers also refer students. The program hosts a few information sessions each quarter.

[8]In spring and summer of 2013, program staff tried to differentiate the three YAL programs by placing students who are at the same academic level together at each program (for example, youth who read between the fourth- and sixth-grade levels). However, since students can return for multiple sessions, and sites experience drop-off at different times, the academic separation has not worked seamlessly, the staff said.

[9]Before spring 2013, when the CDA restructured their out-of-school portfolio, the library coordinator and a coordinator from the CDA (who is no longer with the program) split the task of management and academic instruction at the three programs. The library coordinator did not teach or provide academic guidance to the instructors at the program during the time of the visit.

Site E enrolls youth as a cohort at the beginning of each session but must fill slots until near the end of the session to compensate for youth who drop out. This was the only site where staff indicated that recruitment has been a challenge. The intake process has two main steps designed to orient youth to the program. In the first step, the TABE is administered to establish eligibility and youths complete an application package. If youth are referred from another HSE program where they took the TABE recently, that score can be used to establish eligibility and staff will not retest the person. Youth under 18 years of age may take the application home to obtain parental permission. If the case manager is available at the site, she will talk to youth about their background, goals, life needs, and the YAL program. If she is unavailable, another staff member will provide basic program information and the conversation with the case manager will occur at another time. In the second step, eligible youth are invited to a one-day orientation, which involves going over program policies, getting to know the staff, and participating in team-building activities. The staff said that they observe youths' behavior — visibility of motivation, punctuality, and so forth — during the intake steps, primarily to "keep an eye on them, not to turn them away." Youth are officially enrolled after one or two weeks if they attend regularly.

Academic Instruction

Students receive about 14 hours of literacy and numeracy instruction each week: an hour and a half of math and about two hours of literacy each day. The instructor, who began teaching in spring 2012, administers diagnostic tests in the classroom at the start of each session, and develops her curriculum based on demonstrated deficiencies. She also tries to align it with the Common Core State Standards. The class operates on a regular schedule and generally starts with math instruction. The instructor reviews material from the previous class and then introduces a new lesson; students then work individually on problems and review the answers as a class. At the beginning of the literacy portion of the class, students read independently from a book of their choice for 30 minutes; the instructor often helps them choose books from the library. The activities that follow vary but generally include some vocabulary work and writing.

Besides the books they read independently, students read mostly nonfiction and news articles in class. For writing, they generally work on exercises from the pre-HSE textbooks, focusing on persuasive writing. For math, the teacher uses pre-HSE textbooks and online resources to design worksheets, and tries to keep her approach to the lessons "as basic as possible." At the beginning of a program session, she asks students about their future goals and refers to those goals to boost motivation when students are struggling.

The instructor said that differentiated instruction is not needed, as she finds most students to be at a similar proficiency level. If youth are particularly strong in a subject, she asks them to help others. In addition to the assistance provided by YDI, the instructor receives guidance from an education specialist employed by the CDA for all of its education programs. The CDA staff

reported that the education specialist is currently managing an undertaking aimed at improving and standardizing the curriculum and pedagogy across all of the education-related programs CDA manages, and that she will coordinate with YDI on the academic component of YAL.

Social Support Services

The case manager is responsible for providing social support services to youth in all three of the library's YAL programs. She rotates among the sites according to situational needs on the ground. Because of this service structure, the library coordinator and the CDA coordinator often help to provide social support services at locations where the case manager is not present. Students are scheduled to receive services each week through an individual meeting with the case manager as well as a one- to two-hour group session that focuses on life skills. At the time of the research team's visit to the site, this schedule appeared to be in flux, with both staff and students reporting that they were occurring less frequently than scheduled.[10] If students need assistance accessing support services, the case manager usually refers them to programs within the CDA, which runs transitional housing and child care programs.

Internship Services

Site E offers opportunities to engage in both project-based and job-shadowing internships.[11] In the summer 2013 session, all students participating in an internship were job shadowing: one student was placed at a catering business, two at an elderly services center, and three at the Salvation Army. Staff try to place students at jobs according to their interests — participants take a survey during orientation — and the availability of opportunities in the community. Youth shadow at their respective work sites for six hours every Friday, and the internship coordinator visits the site twice a month to check in and collect time sheets. Students also attend an hour-long job-readiness workshop each week.

Transition

At Site E, youth take the TABE at the end of each session. When students score at or above the eighth-grade level, the case manager helps them to enroll in an HSE program in the community. The site has established relationships with local HSE programs for recruitment, so students are generally referred to those when they are ready. Staff generally contact the programs before sending students to them. Youth arrive with formal referral sheets containing their

[10]The CDA coordinator said that they were in the process of revamping the social support component of the program and aligning it more with the academic instruction. For example, an after-class group session where the teacher is present is under consideration.

[11]The library coordinator indicated that the site would be focusing more on community service projects in coming sessions.

own individual information, as well as contact information for their liaison at the HSE program. The case manager reported working with students on setting goals and providing assistance with regard to postsecondary exploration. However, because the social support component of the program appeared to be undergoing changes, it was not apparent that the students were receiving services as intended.

Chapter 4

Lessons from Implementation at the Study Sites

Based on an analysis of the similarities and variations observed across the five study sites, as well as input from practitioners and participants, this chapter presents findings on common features and practices of high-performing sites and factors that challenge the implementation of the Young Adult Literacy (YAL) program.

Common Features and Practices at High-Performing Sites

While this study was not designed to test how different strategies and practices affect program performance, the implementation analysis presented in this report found that sites that performed best on the main outcome measure in fiscal year 2013 (see Table 1.1), and continued to implement YAL in a similar manner at the time of the study visits, shared several features and practices. These were identified through conversations with program staff, observation of program activities, student feedback, and input from the Youth Development Institute (YDI).[1]

The first part of this section covers the organizational features common among the top-performing sites, while the second part focuses on challenges to program implementation.

Organization and Staffing

- **Strong leaders with experience in youth programs and broad involvement in implementation and management were common at the high-performing sites.**

The management staff who guide and coordinate YAL have held their positions for a number of years and have considerable experience operating programs for disadvantaged youth. They received training in youth development principles before YAL became a part of their portfolio and led an organizational effort to focus on programs for out-of-school youth. Management staff view YAL as an integral part of their organizational mission in the community. Most important, they have invested in creating the infrastructure necessary to implement the program successfully, including hiring high-quality staff and investing in their professional growth, creating a system of regular supervision, and securing necessary resources for the program. While

[1]Based on their work with both Community Education Pathways to Success and YAL, YDI has reached conclusions about successful implementation strategies for the model that are similar to the findings presented in this report. YDI advises the adoption of many of these practices at YAL sites; however, based on the research team's observations, their implementation varies widely across sites.

these leaders are not overly "hands-on" in their management style (for example, they are generally not involved in academic curriculum design), they make themselves available to students and staff on a day-to-day basis and are a constant presence at the sites. They also attend YDI trainings to stay informed about recommended practices and coordinate with staff to ensure that those practices are implemented. The leaders at these high-performing sites reported that they are not complacent when they achieve good outcomes and that they continually strive to improve their programs and the experiences of the participants.

- **A collaborative, structured community environment, where YAL is integrated into a larger organizational effort, characterizes successful sites.**

At the high-performing sites, YAL is housed in programmatic units where it is a part of the continuum of youth services offered and where all of the unit staff work as a team to serve their participants. Both YAL students and staff are supported by other unit staff who do not have a formal role in the program, and by staff who play similar roles in different programs and who share information and provide support. For example, at one high-performing site, the YAL teacher reported working with instructors of the on-site High School Equivalency (HSE) program to plan for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and to address the upcoming changes to the HSE. During intake orientation, staff members at this site introduce all of the staff in the unit to new students and identify their area of expertise (for instance, education or mental health). This allows students to feel comfortable reaching out to any staff at a time of need, whether or not they work in YAL. Moreover, if youth need assistance in a particular area, like mental health or housing, they can seek out a staff member with expertise in that specific area. Another high-performing site holds bimonthly, role-specific team meetings where counselors and teachers from different education programs meet. Intake duties for all programs are rotated among all department staff, allowing students to get to know everyone. Students at both of these sites said they would contact anyone in the program for help with academic or life challenges. In response to a question about what he liked most about YAL, one student said, "You have different people you can speak to in the program even if they're not your counselor or your teacher."

- **Staff members at high-achieving sites have the ability to leverage organizational resources and community partnerships.**

Staff at the high-performing YAL programs take full advantage of the host organization's existing resources and use the infrastructure to leverage new resources. One example of this is the way these sites pool grants from different contracts to allocate resources and staffing between YAL and the other programs in an effective and efficient manner. At one high-performing site, the social support and internship staff in YAL also play a similar role for the on-site HSE program, ensuring continuity in relationships and services for the participants as

they move from YAL to an HSE program. As for tapping new resources, one site reported raising funds from foundations specifically to offer students additional experiential opportunities, like a culinary arts training program.

High-performing sites also rely heavily on outside partnerships and the host organization's relationships in the community to provide social support and internship opportunities. For example, one of the sites hosted a "resource fair" as one of its life skills workshops, where more than 20 social service organizations gathered to inform youth about various services that are available in the community. Staff at these sites also foster relationships within their organizations to bring in services from other units — such as technology training and mental health services — or workshops on a particular skill or topic.

Program Practices

- **A structured intake process, with multiple levels of assessment to determine participants' suitability for the program, is an important feature of strong programs.**

Staff at these sites require interested youth to go through a multiday intake process before gaining entry into YAL. While many staff do not think of this process as a screening tool for participant selection, the process does increase the likelihood of some youth selecting themselves out of the program by not showing up for the next step. Sites did not collect consistent data on intake, so it was not possible to measure how many students drop off during the process, why they drop off, and whether the steps involved in the intake process deter certain types of students from participating in the program. Some staff at these sites believe that the relatively demanding process allows them to set high expectations for the program and select students who are committed and ready to make a change in their lives. Staff reported looking for "readiness," "commitment," and "motivation" as demonstrated by attendance, punctuality, and behavior during the intake process. Multiple staff stressed the need for youth to be "ready" for YAL because it is a daily, structured program with a significant time commitment, unlike many other adult literacy programs. A senior staff member at one high-performing site addressed why the program instituted a multistep intake process: "In the beginning, we took a lot of people into the program who really were not ready [for the commitment of the YAL class], and we were asking them for a lot." At another high-performing site, the staff said that their retention and attendance outcomes have improved since adopting a multistep intake procedure.

It may not be just intrinsic motivation or readiness that prevents youth from completing the process and joining the program; barriers and upheavals in their lives can also play a role in drop-off. Also, when youth learn more about YAL during the introductory step, they may realize that they cannot make the time commitment required due to personal circumstances. Staff at

one site reported that they try to determine barriers faced by applicants early in the process in order to have a realistic conversation about how these obstacles may affect program attendance and whether the program is a good option. For example, if applicants have a full-time evening job, can they come to class on time every morning? Or, if applicants have children, do the applicants have a regular child care arrangement? If staff determine that candidates are not likely to attend the program regularly because of life needs or challenges, those candidates are referred to other, less structured literacy programs.

The intake and screening process has important implications for assessing a program's impact, as opposed to measuring the outcomes produced. "Impact" refers to the difference between the outcomes of participants who attended the program compared with the outcomes of a population that is characteristically similar or equivalent and that did not attend the program. Sites that screen for motivation and barriers to enrollment may achieve strong outcomes, but the outcomes could be influenced by the selection of students who are more likely to succeed, with or without the program, and not entirely as a direct result of the program itself. In other words, these sites may report strong outcomes but not necessarily larger impacts than those that recruit harder-to-serve students with inherently different characteristics.

- **Consistent reinforcement of rules and expectations that are clearly articulated to students before they enroll typifies programs that have had positive results.**

All study sites discuss rules and expectations with students when they first come to the program, and, in most sites, students receive written documents that spell out these requirements in regard to attendance, lateness, and participation in the different program components. The sites reported that strictly enforcing the rules is difficult because of the multiple barriers in students' lives that make steady participation challenging; all sites reported the need to be flexible and understanding of obstacles faced by students. While top-performing sites maintain some flexibility in the way they approach discipline issues, the staff at these locations reported stricter and more consistent adherence to enforcing the rules than lower-performing sites. These staff were also consistent about the message they conveyed to the students about the rules. For example, students who come in late after a certain period of time has passed are not allowed entry into the class. Students with a certain number of late arrivals and absences are formally notified about the possibility of dismissal and must attend meetings with staff to identify a way forward. A senior staff member at one of these sites said that having stricter attendance policies has increased retention, adding:

> You need to have clearly articulated expectations and consequences that are fair. Youth have to be held accountable. This is tough to do because you don't want to send someone back out there; you want to help them. But you're also not helping them if you allow them to attend without adherence to rules.

A staff member at another site said that it has had good outcomes as a result of having:

> …figured out pretty well what the balance is between setting a clear set of expectations and also understanding that people are not going to get there right away. It takes a while and we need to hang in there with people and work with them as they continue on in this process.

- **Academic instructors who allocate ample time for lesson planning and who run structured, thoughtful classrooms are common in outstanding programs.**

Developing curricula and planning daily lessons is time consuming for most educators, but can be particularly challenging for YAL instructors due to the range of skill levels in the classroom and the combination of new and returning students. The sites that performed best academically in fiscal year 2013 and appeared to have the most successful classrooms during the study visits (based on observations and student input) employ full-time instructors who are able to devote a good deal of time each week to planning their lessons. These teachers have a number of qualities in common. They establish a daily routine of classroom activities to minimize wasted time and to keep students on track for the entire duration of class, and they reinforce the routine with a written agenda each day. They are prepared and knowledgeable about what is taught in the classroom and present information clearly, encouraging students to engage deeply with their work and think through their responses when answering questions. These instructors solidify reading comprehension by engaging text in multiple ways — reading aloud, working with vocabulary words, and guiding class discussions through text-dependent questions. Finally, they integrate math and reading skills in creative ways and reinforce previous learning. For example, when discussing the use of the word "disproportionately" in a reading lesson, one teacher reviewed proportions and fractions to help students understand what the text intended to convey.

During the observations, most of the students in these classrooms appeared interested, actively participating in discussions and answering questions. Students at these sites praised their teachers' ability to "break things down," whether this was done by using steps to solve a math problem or guiding the class through a piece of complicated text. These youth also expressed appreciation for the individualized support they received. One student at a high-performing site said, "The teacher helped me understand math; math is my worst subject. When I didn't understand, he was patient. He'd help me to understand a little more no matter how long it took."

During focus groups, many students expressed a preference for more structured classrooms with a daily agenda, especially those youth at a site where the teacher did not follow a daily routine. When asked what they liked about the YAL program, students often cited the teacher and the classroom instruction, especially at the high-performing sites. Their suggestions for im-

provement also related to the program's academic component. Moreover, most YAL students cite the HSE as their main goal for attending the program and report spending most of their time in the classroom. Taken together, these findings indicate that the quality of academic instruction is one of the most important factors in engaging and retaining students in the program.

- **The development of personal relationships and the encouragement of regular communication distinguish exceptional programs.**

The youth development framework that underlies YAL emphasizes the need for students to build caring relationships with adult staff and their peers. Not surprisingly, the top-performing sites are more successful at fostering such relationships by creating a community environment and a culture of communication. While none of the sites in the study reported regular conferences between staff and students, the staff who provided social support at the top-performing sites made themselves available in a consistent manner and often in a very personal way. At one site, the social support counselor greets students in the classroom every morning to build rapport, and, according to students, makes herself available whenever they need something, even if it is just to talk. This staff member said, "Building relationships is the most important thing you can do. You cannot call someone into your office and start telling them about themselves without building a relationship. We really, really try to do that…. Just give people compliments. Notice them. Be intentional. Learn people's names." At another site, every morning a staff member sends a text message to one of her primary students, who "has a lot of distractions in her life," encouraging her to come to class. Staff at this site also set up Google Voice numbers for all of the students to ensure that they have a consistent way to reach them and to promote regular communication. In this way, students can reach staff directly if they need to be absent or if they need assistance. At this site, students must provide updated contact information — new e-mail, new address — every two weeks, a requirement that is key for follow-up.

Top-performing sites also try to foster relationships among students by hosting events to mark the end of a session or to celebrate student accomplishments. Establishing peer relationships can be important for several reasons. Instructors and participants reported that students sometimes help each other in the classroom in order to allow the teacher the time to accommodate the different learning levels of the students. In addition, peer relationships encourage attendance, since students are more likely to come to class if they know they will see their friends. Finally, these relationships make it easier to reach students for follow-up; staff reported communicating with students' peers in order to keep tabs on participants who stop attending class. At one high-performing site, staff provide lunch during both group talks and internship activities in order to create a relaxed atmosphere and to help students get to know each another. Students at this site reported that meeting and interacting with their peers was one of the aspects of the program they liked the most.

- **Setting goals inside and outside of the classroom is a hallmark of high-performing sites.**

Managing students' expectations is one of the most commonly mentioned challenges for YAL staff. Nearly all students come to the program seeking HSE services and most do not have a realistic sense of their academic proficiency level. Staff reported that students who test on the lower end of eligibility are often frustrated when they do not make enough progress to transition to HSE preparation or testing after two or three sessions. To retain students long enough to reach the program's main target outcome — an eighth-grade reading level — is very difficult for all sites, even the high-performing ones. A senior staff member at one of the top-performing sites said that it is important to be honest with youth when they first come in for services. She said:

> Make it very clear that they might be there for more than one cycle. Set realistic expectations. If someone comes in at the fifth-grade level, the conversation is [about the fact] that the youth might be here for a year; [with] someone who has a seventh-grade reading level, you might be able to transition out of this cycle.

At most sites, social support service and academic staff reported that they discuss students' goals during intake or at the beginning of class. However, follow-up discussions about those goals can be inconsistent due to a lack of regularly scheduled student conferences, even at high-performing sites. At the same time, the teachers at the high-performing sites are closely involved in managing student goals.

"Expectations and goal-setting is one of the most important things we can do in the beginning of and throughout [the session] to develop and maintain rapport with the student," one instructor said. In the first week of class, he works with students on an individual basis to discuss their immediate, medium-, and long-term goals. Students fill out a chart outlining their personal, work, academic, and community goals and the actions they want to take to reach those goals in two weeks, a month, a few months, and so on. Achievement of the short-term goals helps youth feel a sense of accomplishment, while longer-term goals help them contextualize their experience in the program. At another site, the instructor starts each new student off with a goal sheet and refers to it in class at least once a week. On top of long-term goals, students are asked to detail exactly what they will do to prepare for the HSE in their reading, writing, and math classes and to set goals that are measurable and time-anchored (for example, "I will be able to write an organized essay on any topic within the next month"). The instructor says that the task helps her individualize her classroom efforts. Students work on their own goals for parts of some classes, especially if they are higher or lower in proficiency than the average student. This makes students responsible for setting and achieving their goals. In conversations with students and staff, goal-setting emerged as one of the most important tools (other than academic involvement) for engagement and retention because it helps students establish concrete

steps and visualize a successful path out of the program. At one study site where teacher turnover occurred in recent months, students spoke fondly of a former teacher who did "goal charts" with them and hoped the new teacher would adopt this activity.

While students may not have a realistic sense of their own academic standing when they enter the program, most of the youth who attended the study's focus groups were able to articulate realistic postprogram goals, which generally included getting their HSE credential and then pursuing employment, training, or postsecondary options. Staff at most sites reported that students often do not know the concrete steps they need to take to reach their goals (for example, applying for financial aid to pay for training or college), making a structured goal-setting process even more important. Youth need assistance to explore their goals in order to understand whether or not they are the right ones, staff said, and then they need to learn the steps that are needed to accomplish them.

- **Helping students make a deliberate and structured transition to HSE preparation is a high priority at successful programs.**

Two top-performing sites benefit from having in-house youth-specific HSE programs, and they facilitate a structured transition to HSE preparation classes for students who complete YAL. All sites reported difficulty in convincing students to go to an HSE preparation class after completing YAL; most youth come to the program when seeking their HSE credential and many just want to take the test when they are ready for transition. For those sites with an in-house HSE program, the transition process is easier because youth are already familiar with the environment and the staff. In addition, on-site HSE programs aid retention because they allow students to visualize a concrete next step that will lead to their ultimate goal. YAL and HSE instructors at these sites coordinate their practices to create consistency in the classroom. One site has a transitional breakfast with students and staff before a formal hand-over. The instructor at one site that does not offer an HSE program said that she keeps students in YAL until they are ready to take the HSE test because referrals to HSE programs have not worked well in the past. These higher-level students receive regular YAL services in terms of social support and internship opportunities; for academic instruction, they attend classes with the other YAL students half of the time and receive individualized HSE-specific instruction from the teacher or a volunteer tutor the rest of the time.

Challenges to Implementation

As discussed, the nature of the target population can be a major challenge when implementing the program. Staff at the study sites also reported a few other structural factors that challenge implementation of YAL. Challenges most often mentioned by program staff are enumerated below.

- **Setting and managing expectations for a disadvantaged, low-skilled young adult population is difficult.**

All study sites reported that they spell out program expectations and rules about attendance and participation at the outset of the program. However, the population served by the program are often socioeconomically disadvantaged and have barriers in their personal lives that make steady participation in YAL challenging. Many staff reported that they were often unable to enforce the program rules regarding lateness and attendance very strictly because the students have life needs that take precedence over the program (for example, an appointment for a public benefit recertification or accompanying a disabled parent to a doctor's appointment). Such disruptions pose challenges for the academic instructor; late and absent students often fall behind on classwork and require more time-consuming, individualized support. These breaks in the program routine also make planning internship activities, which are project-based and require group work, difficult.

Moreover, most YAL students come to the program seeking HSE credentials, and, according to the staff, very few have a realistic sense of their own academic proficiency. In other words, many students do not realize that they are reading at a fourth- or fifth-grade level because they completed tenth or eleventh grade in high school. Even though the staff discuss the Test for Adult Basic Education scores of students with them during intake, they often do not understand the need to attend multiple sessions of YAL to reach the program's main target outcome — reaching the eighth-grade level in reading. Besides retention, youths' expectations also make it challenging for staff to develop curricula and activities, especially for the academic component of the program. As witnessed in focus groups across most study sites, students believe that they are capable of high-level academic work. Multiple instructors reported that they are challenged to find teaching materials that are complex enough to engage students but that are not too difficult for people at lower literacy or math levels to understand. "Anything that sounds like it's not hard, they're not into it," one instructor said, adding that students let her know if they think she has given them work that they perceive to be too simple or low level. "You think we're in kindergarten," they have said.

- **The challenge of designing curricula and activities that engage both new and returning students, as well as students across skill levels, cuts across sites and staff roles.**

Academic, social support services, and internship staff all reported that they struggle to revamp activities from session to session to keep returning students engaged, while introducing new students to concepts that may have already been covered. Staff and students both said that youth who return, as well as students with higher-level skills, become disinterested if they feel they are not learning new skills.

It is easier to deal with this issue in some areas than others. For example, during reading instruction, academic staff at the top-performing sites rely heavily on news and journal articles about current events. In this way, students can practice the same skills with different content — an approach recommended by YDI and one that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards, which require greater use of informational texts. However, this method can be more challenging when teaching a math or a work-readiness class. For example, a case manager at one of the sites reported that returning students were bored with résumé workshops that were held during each session but that she believed they were important for the new students.

Most of the study sites deal with these issues by offering some options for individualized instruction. A couple of the sites have a part-time staff or a volunteer who offers additional assistance in the classroom by working with individual students. One site offers an e-learning product to students who are more proficient in math; they work on computers while the teacher conducts a math lesson for the rest of the class. At another site, a group of students who are advanced in math work together when the teacher conducts a math lesson for the rest of the class. The teacher works with the advanced group while the rest of the class is working on practice problems.

With regard to social support services and the internship component of the program, study sites have begun to bring in more partners to conduct presentations and to run workshops. The goal is to provide variety, even when covering such routine topics as financial literacy and interview skills. YDI also expects the programs to view the supportive activities held outside of the classroom as opportunities to develop skills like critical thinking and team building, and not just focus on a task, like creating résumés. YDI suggests making these workshops engaging by planning thoughtful endeavors based on participants' lives and environments. For example, in an internship workshop observed at one site, the internship coordinator held a debate between two groups of students on New York City's "stop-and-frisk" policy. By choosing a topic that was relevant and engaging to the students, the instructor sought to teach effective communications skills while improving literacy. Youth had to make clear arguments for their side — pro or con — using facts found through research accessed on their cell phones, and they were awarded points only if they used the facts to support their arguments.

YDI also recommends using thematic instruction to deal with the challenge of teaching a wide range of students. Themes can also be used to connect the different components of the program and to enforce the relevance of the topics covered. An example of such student-centered, thematic instruction was observed at one of the top-performing sites, where the theme for the summer 2013 session was the environment. The teacher began the session with lessons on climate and various other environmental topics, but soon realized that the students considered their community to be their environment. When asked to do a research project, students chose issues that affect their community, such as drugs or violence. The teacher encouraged and

supported them by incorporating relevant materials into her lessons and shaping the internship project as a community-based research project. Students formulated questions, conducted a neighborhood survey, analyzed the data, and put together a written report with charts and graphs — combining their classroom knowledge with experiential learning.

Academic staff at all sites found YDI's technical assistance with curriculum and activity development to be very valuable in dealing with the challenges posed by students of different levels and program experience. In fact, they wanted more of it; YDI staff reported that they are working on a larger curriculum base. Staff also reported that lesson planning was made challenging by the short amount of time they have with the students each day. One teacher noted that most academic standards and pedagogical approaches, like the Common Core State Standards or Balanced Literacy, are developed for K-12 education cycles that last nine months and have longer class periods. Programs like YAL need more assistance in applying these guidelines to meet the needs of an 11-week, cyclical program for adults, he added. Some instructors cited short class lengths in YAL as the reason why they did not fully adopt the Balanced Literacy approach when planning their lessons. They noted that the range of activities required to create a balance between direct and indirect instruction in both reading and writing can be difficult to cover in the allotted time. When using Balanced Literacy, "you could spend 45 minutes on two sentences," one instructor said. Teachers also reported that planning a Balanced Literacy lesson can be very time-consuming, making its use especially difficult for sites with part-time teachers.

- **Engaging students and maintaining their ongoing participation in the internship component requires a great deal of effort.**

Most sites reported that they struggled to engage all youth who are eligible to participate in the internship component.[2] Staff cited different reasons why this task was challenging, the most frequent one being that many students had life needs that took precedence over what they considered an after-school activity. For example, some students need to work full time or take care of family demands. The internship coordinator at one site indicated that in many cases he had difficulty getting students to see the value of the internship. Those who participated were more motivated and did not need much convincing. The coordinator said "Those that come [to the internship], enter the program with that level of understanding from the get go. It's hard to convince the others who don't come why this is valuable for them." At another site, the program director said that often students and parents did not see the value of the internship and

[2]The internship component was added to YAL to boost retention and attendance after an experimental evaluation found that adding a paid internship had a positive impact on participant retention during a summer session in 2009 (Westat and Metis Associates, 2011). A follow-up correlational study found that internship participants had significantly higher levels of attendance in literacy classes than did non-internship participants. However, the evaluation could not control for the possibility of self-selection and the possibility that more motivated participants may enroll in the internship (Westat, 2013).

wanted to focus on HSE preparation. A lot of the students in the focus groups echoed similar sentiments and said that their main goal was to earn the HSE credential.

Based on student feedback gathered during the focus group, it is likely necessary to make deliberate connections between the internship and students' academic and career goals early in the program. Many of the students who came to the focus group were not able to articulate the purpose of the internship or describe what they were learning. This is not entirely due to lack of staff effort: a lot of the internship staff said that their goal was to get the students to think about translating their internship experience to the world of work and to articulate the skills learned to employers. It may be helpful to start this conversation in the recruitment and enrollment phase when the program is marketed to the students, linking their participation to their postprogram goals in an explicit way. (HSE and work were most often mentioned by students.) It is also necessary for the programs to plan and design activities that are equally rigorous from week to week. Based on site observations, the quality and rigor of the internship activities can vary; they range from making presentations at a community organization one week to participating in an arts and crafts project the next.

- **Implementing regular student conferences can be a burden for staff.**

While the original Community Education Pathways to Success model strongly advocated regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings with a primary person, YAL has moved toward a more group-based approach in order to impart life skills and soft skills in the social support component of the model. Providing five hours of social support services per student each week seemed to impose resource burdens on the programs. These obstacles often resulted in services that lacked purposeful planning and integration with other components of the program, and left no time for the staff to schedule regularly held formal check-ins with the students. Nearly all staff interviewed for the study emphasized the need to build interpersonal relationships with students for the purposes of retention and engagement. However, students at some of the sites said that they would not seek out program staff for assistance with academic or life challenges, preferring the guidance of peers or friends instead. This choice suggests that more effort might be necessary to foster relationships that can help students overcome barriers and to engage effectively with the program. Regularly held one-on-one meetings could be a way to build relationships, though a case manager at one of the sites said that she had a difficult time engaging students through formal, one-on-one meetings because they did not see the need for "case management." Instead, she offers a daily, hour-long class that is often used as a forum for students to voice their concerns about public or private topics and to have a discussion. While the study team did not find consensus among staff and students about the best strategy for delivering the social support service component, it was evident that the current approach needs some fine-tuning.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this report indicate that the YAL program fills an important gap in services for disconnected and disadvantaged youth who lack critical academic and employment skills. While the findings are limited by the small number of sites in the study, they offer some important insights into implementation of the YAL model and can guide the future direction of the program.

Most sites did not report any challenges with recruitment, reinforcing the need for these services in New York City. However, some sites struggle to maintain regular attendance and retain participants long enough to get them ready for HSE classes, suggesting a need to strengthen implementation of some program elements.

Students interviewed for the study emphasized that HSE attainment was the main motivation for their participation in the program. At the same time, they generally liked the academic services they received at YAL, which offered an experience unlike the ones they had had in their prior schools. Students cited small class sizes, one-on-one support, and the ability to learn at their own pace as the reasons they liked the program. The quality of instruction is one of the most, if not the most, important factor in a student's decision to remain in the program. Teachers at better-performing sites work full time, can allocate more time to plan lessons, and receive strong supervision and guidance from leaders and other academic staff in the organization. Students reacted negatively to teacher turnover at a couple of sites, indicating that staffing stability and consistency in the classroom, where they spend most of their time in the program, is very important for engagement and retention.

Setting short- and long-term goals early on in the program, planning next steps for their accomplishment, and continuously revisiting them may also help manage student expectations and retain them in the program long enough to produce target outcomes. More formal coordination among YAL team members who provide different services — academic, social support, and internship — may produce a more cohesive package that deliberately connects each component to overall student goals.

Some staff said that the program could benefit from a more centralized effort to build its identity and presence in the participants' communities; examples include a city-wide outreach and marketing campaign for YAL, a city-wide event dealing with youth literacy, and a program-wide celebration of youth who complete the program successfully.

YAL draws considerable financial, administrative, and staffing support, as well as in-kind resources, from the organizations in which its programs are housed. The infrastructure and resources of the host organizations, and the program staff's ability to leverage them, greatly affect how the program components are implemented, suggesting that these factors should be a consideration for future implementation of YAL and other similar programs.

Appendix A

Glossary of Widely Used Terms and Acronyms

Balanced Literacy. A set of practices that encompass methods for teaching literacy skills to a class, to small groups, and to individuals according to need and interest. The foundation of the instructional plan rests on the belief that all five areas of reading — phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency — are critical to improving literacy. Students receive explicit instruction in reading, writing, and word study, as well as time to practice their skills by reading and writing about topics of interest at their reading level. Responsibility for learning is gradually released to students as they become more proficient and independent. For example, a teacher models how to read a text by reading aloud, guides students by working through the text with them, divides students into small groups to practice reading, and allows them to read independently.

Center for Economic Opportunity. A unit within the Office of the New York City Mayor that works with both City agencies and the federal government to implement antipoverty initiatives in New York and in partner cities across the United States. Established in 2006, CEO has funded nearly 50 programs and policy initiatives for young adults, the working poor, and families. CEO worked with the Department of Youth and Community Development to design YAL and continues to work with the agency to implement, monitor, and evaluate the program.

Common Core State Standards. Established by an initiative led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and by the Council of Chief State School Officers, these standards specify what students from kindergarten through twelfth grade should know in the foundational areas of English and mathematics. Intended to prepare students more adequately for college and the workplace, the standards have been adopted by 43 states and the District of Columbia, as of December 2014. New York State implemented the standards in the 2014-15 school year.

Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS). A pre-High School Equivalency (HSE) program that served as the model for YAL. CEPS was developed by the Youth Development Institute, in partnership with community-based organizations, to target youth who have dropped out of school and who read between the fourth- and eighth-grade levels. The CEPS model combines rigorous academic instruction, personal support, and work readiness within a youth development framework. Principles of the framework promoted by YDI include building caring and sustained relationships between students and adults, ensuring the safety of youth, helping them to gain a sense of belonging, using available opportunities to build students' sense of competency and mastery, providing youths with engaging activities, encouraging them to meet high expectations, and being responsive to their voice and general needs.

Conceptual Mathematics. An approach to math instruction that focuses more on an understanding of concepts and relationships between mathematical ideas than on memorization of procedures. Using this approach, teachers do not just demonstrate a procedure for solving a problem; they explain the problem's underlying structure. Teachers and students explicitly discuss mathematical relationships and why procedures work the way they do.

Department of Probation's Community Education Pathways to Success (DOP-CEPS). A pre-HSE program that serves young adults between the ages of 17.5 and 24 who are under direct probation supervision. The program was launched at seven locations across New York City in fiscal year 2012 through the Young Men's Initiative. Some of the DOP-CEPS sites also

run the YAL program. Participants in the two programs generally receive the same services; the only differences relate to eligibility criteria, funding streams, and reporting requirements.

Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). A City agency that provides a range of youth and community programs. DYCD collaborated with CEO and YDI to design the YAL program. The agency oversees the implementation of the program, sets policies and practices, and monitors quality and performance through observation and data collection.

High School Equivalency (HSE) exam. A test that allows students who did not complete high school to demonstrate abilities and skills normally acquired at this level of study. Those who pass the HSE are awarded a certificate that is equivalent to a high school diploma. For many years, the General Educational Development (GED) test has been the most common assessment tool used to confer HSE credentials in New York and in other states. In 2011, The American Council on Education, a not-for-profit group that has administered the GED since 1942, partnered with the Pearson Publishing Company to revamp the administration and content of the GED. In 2014, a new for-profit organization began to administer the GED as a computer-ized-only test with more difficult content and a higher price tag. In 2014, New York State replaced the GED with the **Test Assessing Secondary Completion™ (TASC™)** as a means to award a high school equivalency certificate. The TASC™ will be available as both a paper- and computer-based exam and will be composed of five subject sections: (1) English Language Arts Reading, (2) English Language Arts Writing, (3) Mathematics, (4) Science, and (5) Social Studies.

Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE). A tool designed to measure skills commonly found in adult basic education curricula. State and city agencies require administration of the TABE for students seeking entry into adult education and workforce development programs that receive government funding. The test includes a series of "locators" in three content areas (reading, language, and math) for use by programs that serve students at various levels of ability. The results of the locators determine which level of the TABE is used in each content area.

Youth Development Institute (YDI). A New York-based intermediary organization that works with not-for-profit and public agencies to address gaps in services for youth and to build their capacity to successfully implement youth programs by providing professional development and technical assistance. YDI launched the Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) program in 2008 to address the literacy needs of dropout youth with low academic proficiency. In addition, YDI provided input on the development and implementation of YAL and currently provides technical assistance to its providers.

Young Men's Initiative (YMI). Launched by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2011, this cross-agency enterprise developed new initiatives and expanded existing programs, including the YAL program, to address disparities between young black and Hispanic men and white men in the areas of education, health, employment, and the criminal justice system.

Appendix B

Supplementary Tables on the Common Core State Standards and Balanced Literacy

Appendix Table B.1

Common Core Curriculum Shifts

Shift	Description
English Language Arts/Literacy	
Balancing informational and literary text	Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts.
Knowledge in disciplines	Students build knowledge about the world (domains/content areas) through text rather than through the teacher or activities.
Staircase of complexity	Students read the central, grade-appropriate text around which instruction is centered. Teachers are patient; create more time, space, and support in the curriculum for close reading.
Text-based answers	Students engage in rich and rigorous evidence-based conversations about text.
Writing from sources	Writing emphasizes use of evidence from sources to inform or make an argument.
Academic vocabulary	Students constantly build the transferable vocabulary they need to access grade-level complex texts. This can be done effectively by spiraling similar content in increasingly complex texts.
Math	
Focus	Teachers significantly narrow and deepen the scope of how time and energy are spent in the math classroom. They do so in order to focus deeply on only the concepts that are prioritized in the standards.
Coherence	Principals and teachers carefully connect the learning within and across grades so that students can build new understanding onto foundations built in previous years.
Fluency	Students are expected to have speed and accuracy with simple calculations; teachers structure class time and/or homework time for students to memorize, through repetition, core functions.
Deep understanding	Students deeply understand and can operate easily within a math concept before moving on. They learn more than the trick to get the answer right; they learn the math.
Application	Students are expected to use math and to choose the appropriate concept for application even when they are not prompted to do so.
Dual intensity	Students are practicing and understanding. There is more than a balance between these 2 things in the classroom; both are occurring with intensity.

SOURCE: www.engageny.org.

Appendix Table B.2

Expectations for Instructors Using Balanced Literacy Approach, Defined by the Youth Development Institute (YDI)

Component	Description
Component 1: Close reading of complex text and text-dependent questions	Provides Common Core State Standard(s) (CCSS) on board, in handout, or for students to record
	Provides learning objectives (linked to CCSS) on board, in handout, or for students to record
	Models a reading strategy by reading aloud and having students read aloud
	Facilitates instructional conversation using text-dependent questions to assess themes and central ideas, knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and structure
Component 2: Academic vocabulary	Identifies 5 to 8 words from complex text
	Emphasizes words embedded in complex text
	Uses 1 or more teaching vocabulary strategies (for example, word families, synonyms and antonyms, etc.)
Component 3: Discussion	Establishes discussion language norms and protocols
	Connects discussion to theme
	Requires students to support/challenge responses/questions referencing textual evidence, multiple perspectives, peers' and experts' ideas
	Provides scaffolds to create, guide, and document student discussion
Component 4: Writing from sources	Requires writing types (persuasive, explanatory, narrative) and tasks with transparency and intentionality
	Requires citation of evidence (increasingly from multiple sources)
	Requires multiple edits on computer
	Provides appropriate scaffolds

SOURCE: Youth Development Institute.

Appendix C

Side-by-Side Comparison of Program Implementation at the Study Sites

Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program

Appendix Table C.1

Overview: Organization and Staffing

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Where YAL is housed	Youth education and workforce department, located within a larger Children and Youth Division.	Youth and adult education department. YAL is in 2 locations; 1 location has DOP-CEPS. Agency only serves people with criminal justice background.	Adult literacy center	Adult literacy program. Has 4 other YAL programs. Site D also has DOP-CEPS.	Adult literacy division; services subcontracted to a community development agency (CDA).
When launched	2012. Previously worked with YDI on the CEPS program.	2012. Previously worked with YDI on training staff in youth development services.	2008. One of the original pilot YAL programs.	2008. Launched program at 2 other sites; Site D was added in 2009.	2008. Launched program at 2 other sites; Site E was added in 2012.
Other programs in the unit	Mostly serves out-of-school youth. 3 other programs, including an HSE program. Also has HSE testing.	2 other programs for youth -- DOP-CEPS and an HSE program. Offers ABE classes.	Numerous ABE and ESOL classes; none youth-specific.	ABE, ESOL, and family literacy classes, including a pre-HSE class for all adults that is less intensive than YAL.	ABE and ESOL classes at various literacy centers, which are not operationally connected to YAL. CDA runs other out-of-school youth programs.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.1 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
YAL Staffing	1. Director of children and youth services: leadership 2. Manager of youth education and workforce: program coordination, social support 3. Teacher: academics 4. Intake coordinator: recruitment, intake, social support 5. Internship coordinator: internship, social support 6. Others who help: case manager for another program, job developer, teachers of the HSE program, administrative assistant	1. Director of the education unit: leadership 2. Youth education coordinator: program coordination, internship 3. Teacher 1: academics, intake 4. Teacher 2: academics, internship; program coordination at the second location that also has DOP-CEPS 5. Counselor 1: social support, intake 6. Counselor 2: social support, intake 7. Technology lab coordinator, internship	1. Director of adult literacy center: leadership 2. Program coordinator: program coordination, recruitment, intake 3. Teacher: academics, internship 4. Case manager: social support, recruitment, intake	1. Manager of adult literacy program: leadership 2. Program coordinator for all 4 YAL programs and the DOP-CEPS program 3. Case manager: social support, recruitment, intake 4. Teacher: academics (part time)[a] 5. Teaching assistant: academics, intake (part time)[a] 6. 2 assistants for all 3 sites: administrative, intake (part time)[a]	LIBRARY 1. Director of Adult Literacy: leadership 2. Library coordinator: program coordination, management, oversight, intake, social support when necessary CDA 3. CDA coordinator: program coordination, recruitment, social support when necessary 4. Case manager: social support, intake 5. Teacher: academics (part-time) 6. Internship coordinator: internship

(continued)

Appendix Table C.1 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
YAL staffing (continued)		Others who help: volunteer tutors, administrative assistant.			All staff but the teacher work on all 3 library YAL sites. Others who help: administrative assistant employed by the library, 2 education specialists from CDA who offer academic guidance.
Coordination among staff	The whole department meets every other month; the coordinator meets with each staff member every month. Informal check-ins among staff help to coordinate day-to-day services.	The whole department, including staff from both locations, meet twice a month; role-specific meetings between counselors and teachers also occur twice a month.	Coordination is largely informal and happens through phone calls, e-mails, and informal check-ins; staff meet during the breaks to plan for each session.	All library YAL staff meet once a month. Day-to-day coordination is done through informal check-ins and e-mails.	A staff member reported that there were meetings among the management staff but there were no formal meetings for the rest of the staff, who coordinate with each other informally via e-mails, phone calls, and in-person check-ins when possible.

SOURCES: Interviews with YAL staff at study sites.

NOTES: [a]Staff work part time at the organization and YAL.

Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program

Appendix Table C.2

Overview: Recruitment and Intake

	Community-based organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Recruitment activities	Mainly recruits for their HSE program. Outreach to other programs within the agency, CBOs that work for the poor, local schools.	Recruits for all classes in the education department. Outreach to Department of Probation.	Does not recruit actively. Community relationships produce steady pool of applicants.	Recruits for the adult literacy center, but also specifically for YAL. Outreach to CBOs, local high schools, and community businesses. Offers incentives for word-of-mouth referrals by participants.	The community development agency (CDA) recruits for its out-of-school portfolio. Outreach at community-related events, community board meetings, presentations at partner organizations. Library's adult learning center hosts recruitment events for all adult literacy offerings.
Major sources of recruitment	• Word-of-mouth referrals • School officials -- deans, guidance counselors • HSE programs • Alternative or transfer schools • Interagency programs • CBOs	• Interagency programs • Courts • Probation officers • Word-of-mouth referrals	• Word-of-mouth referrals • Interagency programs • CBOs • School officials -- deans, guidance counselors	• Word-of-mouth referrals • Library • CBOs • Human Resources Administration	• HSE programs • Word-of-mouth referrals • Alternative or transfer high schools • Library • CBOs
Age eligibility	16-24	17-24	16-24	17-24	16-24

(continued)

Appendix Table C.2 (continued)

	Community-based organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Identification documents	Required	Required	Required (students under age 18 need high school discharge papers)	Not required	Required (more lenient; sometimes Social Security number is enough)
Time of enrollment	Enrolls in cohort at the beginning of each session. Generally does not allow new students in throughout the session.	Enrolls in cohort at the beginning of each session. Allows new students until the last 2-3 weeks. 1 location allows new students at any point.	Enrolls in cohort at the beginning of each session. Allows new students in for a month after a session begins.	Enrolls in cohort at the beginning of each session. Allows new students until the last week. Planning to stop rolling enrollment in the future.	Enrolls in cohort at the beginning of each session. Allows new students until the near end.
Length of sessions (based on FY 2014 plans)	Summer: 9 weeks Fall: 11 weeks Winter: 11 weeks Spring: 11 weeks	Summer:11 weeks Fall: 11 weeks Winter: 11 weeks Spring: 11 weeks	Summer:12 weeks Fall: 11 weeks Winter: 11 weeks Spring: 11 weeks	Summer: 7 weeks Fall: 15 weeks Winter: 13 weeks Spring: 10 weeks Tries to align sessions with the regular school calendar	Summer: 9 weeks Fall: 13 weeks Winter: 11 weeks Spring: 12 weeks
Intake steps	STEP 1: Information session. Youth learn about the program and take the TABE in reading and math to establish eligibility. Staff calls with results within 5 days.	STEP 1: Agency-wide admissions process used to collect demographic information from youth and to assess needs for referrals (i.e., if no high school diploma, send youth to the agency's education department).	STEP 1: After staff assess initial eligibility (age, school status, etc.), youth fill out a short application to gather basic demographic and contact information. Staff call youth for next step.	STEP 1: Testing, application, and interview. Youth meet with a staff member, generally the case manager, to discuss background and goals for joining and to learn about program.	STEP 1: Interview. Staff discuss the program with the youth and inquire about their goals for attending. Schedule youth for testing and intake.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.2 (continued)

	Community-based organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Intake steps (continued)	STEP 2: Application pick-up. Youth receive an application package for the appropriate program (below 8th grade = YAL; above = HSE program). STEP 3: Intake interview. Youth return completed application and are interviewed by staff, who assess background, goals, and barriers to regular attendance, like child care or full-time employment. Staff also look at behavior; for example, punctuality and ability to follow directions.	STEP 2: Day 1 of orientation to the education department. Youth fill out paperwork, write a short essay, and take the TABE locator tests and the reading TABE. STEP 3: Day 2 of education orientation. Youth take the math TABE. Completes interview, which includes a reading exercise. STEP 4: Assessment for YAL. Youth participate in YAL classes for a week, write a long essay about themselves, make a presentation to the class, and interview with staff again. If they complete the process, they are enrolled. If not, they are referred to an ABE class at the site. Step is intended to test their level of commitment and readiness for a structured program.	STEP 2: Day 1 of orientation and testing. Youth learn about the program, and take the TABE locator tests and the reading TABE. Staff ask them to come back the next day if their reading scores qualify them. STEP 3: Day 2 of testing. Youth take the math and language TABEs STEP 4: Intake interview. Youth meet with case manager to discuss goals, background, and life needs. Case manager looks to see if the student really wants to attend or is being pushed by parents or guardians; case manager says it is to mostly gauge service approach and not to screen youth.	STEP 1 (continued): Fill out an application with a short writing sample and take the TABE locator, reading, and math tests. STEP 2: Only happens if student can't complete the testing on the first day. They can take the math test on another day. Official enrollment takes place after 2 weeks of classes.	STEP 1 (continued): If youth were referred from an HSE program where they were already tested, those scores are sufficient to determine eligibility. STEP 2: Testing and intake. Youth take the TABE locator, reading, and math tests. If eligible, they complete an application package; youth under 18 can take it home for parental review. STEP 3: Orientation. Applicants from 3 library programs gather at 1 site to learn about program structure and the staff, and to participate in team-building activities.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.2 (continued)

	Community-based organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Intake steps (continued)	STEP 4: Orientation. Youth participate in team building, life skills, and job-readiness workshops for 3-4 days. Class starts after this orientation, and official enrollment takes place after about a week.	Steps above are for the site location where majority of the YAL youth receive services. Youth at the second location do not go through the 2-day education orientation or the YAL assessment process, as that location also runs a DOP-CEPS program and conducts recruitment and intake for the 2 programs simultaneously.	STEP 4 (continued): The interview may take place after a student starts class, depending on date of application. Official enrollment takes place after about a week. The process has varied in the past from cycle to cycle. Site has held large orientations, inviting parents if there was a large group of applicants at one time; other times there have been smaller group orientations.		Official enrollment takes place after 1 or 2 weeks of classes. The orientation was a 4-day process but was recently revamped because students dropped out along the process.
Actions for youth who are found not eligible for YAL	If students test high on reading but low on math, they are placed in their HSE class (they are asked to come to math tutoring).	Generally placed in the other ABE classes offered by the department.	Generally placed in the other ABE classes offered by the department; some are referred to other HSE programs if they read at or above the 8th grade level.	If youth read below the 4th grade level, they are referred to alternative high school or in-house ESOL class, depending on need.	If youth read below the 4th grade level, they are referred to classes at the library's adult literacy center. Students are told to return once they reach a 4th grade level.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.2 (continued)

	Community-based organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Actions for youth who are found not eligible for YAL (continued)	Staff try to find alternative places for youth who have special education needs that the program cannot meet, and youth who do not meet the academic eligibility criteria for YAL.		If youth read below the 4th grade level, the case manager will keep an eye on them and bring them to YAL when they reach a 4th grade level.	If youth read above the 8th grade level, they are referred to an HSE program or alternative high school. If they read at a very high level, they can take the HSE Official Practice Test. If they do well, they are referred for HSE testing.	If youth read above the 8th grade level but below the 10th, they are referred to an HSE program. If they read at around the 10th grade level, they can take the Official Practice Test. If they test higher, they are referred for HSE testing.
Intake process for youth returning from prior session	Returning students are asked to attend orientation but many simply show up for classes. Students have to take the TABE again if they are returning after 3 months.	Returning students write an essay. Students have to take the TABE again if they are returning after 3 months.	Returning students can just come to class when they start. Students have to take the TABE again if they are returning after 6 months.	Returning students can just come to class when they start. Students have to take the TABE again if they have not attended the program for a month.	Returning students have to go through orientation again. Students have to take the TABE again if they are returning after 3 months.

SOURCES: Interviews with YAL staff at study sites.

Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program

Appendix Table C.3

Overview: Participant Characteristics at Study Sites, Summer 2013

Characteristic (N)	Number of Youth at Each Site				
	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E
Total number of youth enrolled	16	30	23	14	15
Female	8	6	7	6	2
Age					
Less than 18 years old	3	4	1	1	2
18-20 years old	8	12	11	7	5
21 years old or more	5	14	11	6	8
Experience in YAL program					
Completely new to YAL this cycle	9	11	16	3	3
Attended 1 cycle of YAL	1	8	3	4	5
Attended more than 1 cycle of YAL	6	11	4	7	7
Race					
Non-Hispanic black	6	13	19	7	8
Hispanic/Latino	10	16	1	5	7
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	2	2	0
Non-Hispanic white	0	1	1	0	0
Has children	4	8	5	1	2
Has a criminal/juvenile history	3	30	7	4	0
Reading grade level[a]					
Below 4th grade	0	0	0	1	0
Between 4th and 6th grade	8	7	14	10	6
Between 6th and 8th grade	8	23	9	3	9
Above 8th grade	0	0	0	0	0
Math grade level[a]					
Below 4th grade	2	3	3	3	1
Between 4th and 6th grade	5	17	14	6	5
Between 6th and 8th grade	8	10	5	4	8
Above 8th grade	1	0	1	1	1
Attends YAL (on average per day)[b]	9	7	14	10	6
Internship participation					
Qualified for internships[c]	16	12	15	9	6
Attending internships	12	6	10	6	2

(continued)

Appendix Table C.3 (continued)

SOURCES: YAL study sites.

NOTES: [a]Reading and math grade levels assessed by the TABE. For first-time YAL students, reading and math scores from the intake process are reported. For students who have been in the program for more than 1 session, scores from their most recent TABE is reported.

[b]Average daily attendance is calculated by taking the average number of youth in attendance per day for each month and then averaging across months over a year.

[c]Students who attend 70 percent of the academic classes are qualified to participate in the internship.

Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program

Appendix Table C.4

Overview: Academic Services

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Goals of academic services (as stated by instructors)	"To have [youth] get their HSE and be generally successful -- whether it be in school/college or in employment."	Location 1: "To make [youth] see that they can achieve the things that they want to achieve… see that they are critical thinkers." Location 2: "They will learn to love learning… they will find something that they love, something that they are passionate about, which could be an author or a topic."	"Main goal for them is to learn the curriculum. HSE is the end goal."	"Try to get them to see the bigger picture in everything they do so they can be more engaged."	"To get them to a point where they could do better than they did before. Grade level improvement is a part of it, but my personal goal is to help them develop as learners, to really appreciate and like learning."
Schedule of academics	4 days, less than 4 hours each day. Starts with a 15-minute warm-up where students complete a worksheet to review past lessons. Then reading and writing for about 2 hours and math for an hour and a half.	5 days, generally 3 hours each day. Location 1: 2 hours of reading and 1 hour of math. Reading first twice a week; math first twice a week. Starts with a warm-up activity, like reviewing vocabulary from reading of the day or working on problems based on previous math lessons.	5 days, 3 hours each day. An hour of reading, an hour of writing, and an hour of math every day. Covers math first, starting with a warm-up activity to review previous lessons.	4 days, less than 4 hours each day. The breakdown of literacy and math hours vary, as the instructor does not follow a strict routine and looks to students to determine lessons and classroom activities.	4 days, 3.5 hours each day. Starts with an hour and a half of math, followed by about an hour and 45 minutes of reading. In math, there is a review of previous concepts in the beginning. In reading, students read independently for the first half-hour.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Schedule of academics (continued)		3-hour class on Friday combines literacy with life skills. Students work with a book about stories of teens who have overcome struggles. Location 2: Math twice a week for 2 hours; 8 hours of readings. Starts with warm-up activities, usually vocabulary for reading and an introductory exercise in math based on the lesson of the day. Friday class is about an hour and a half and focuses a lot more on work skills than Location 1.		Generally students start each day with a discussion of a quote or a short reading, or a "mini-activity" on a math topic.	
Curriculum development	For literacy, teacher develops his own lessons using the BL approach for about half of his classes, using a lot of news and journal articles; the rest of the time he uses pre-HSE textbooks.	The curriculum at each location reflect the staff and the student interest. Staff at both locations set a theme for each session that ties the academic and internship components together.	The teacher says she develops her curriculum using the Common Core Standards as a guide.	The teacher develops his own curriculum based on standard curricula that the library has used in the past, as well as materials provided by YDI.	The teacher uses the TABE results from the intake process, as well as results from diagnostic tests in the beginning of each session, to decide what she needs to cover in class.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Curriculum development (continued)	When developing curriculum, he takes into account students' goals, skills, and interests. To do so, he uses information from the intake process (TABE and application), as well as a goal-setting exercise in the first week of class that asks students to spell out their immediate-, medium-, and long-term goals and the actions they can take to reach them.	The instructors develop their own curricula using these themes and often involve the students' opinions and goals when deciding on specific activities and topics. Location 1: Teacher mostly uses news articles, nonfiction books, and online resources to plan curriculum. She often finds lessons on Web sites and tailors them for her class. Fictional texts and pre-HSE textbooks are sporadically used for reading. For math, she uses pre-HSE textbooks and online resources. Location 2: She takes curricula she already has (from her teaching experience, from YDI) and tailors them on an as-needed basis. She uses a lot of fictional texts and some nonfiction and news articles for reading. Students fill out "goal sheets" outlining their short-term and long-term academic goals; the teacher uses them to plan lessons and design activities.	She uses a mix of pre-HSE and TABE textbooks, excerpts from fiction, news articles, and other non-fiction texts for reading. For math, she uses the McGraw-Hill Number Powers books, as well as pre-HSE and HSE books.	He uses pre-HSE textbooks, news articles, excerpts from fiction and nonfiction books, and online resources to plan lessons and activities; students report using pre-HSE textbooks the most in class.	She uses pre-HSE textbooks, news articles, journal articles, and nonfiction books for reading. For math, she uses online resources, pre-HSE textbooks, and McGraw-Hill Number Power books. Students can pick their own books for independent reading in class; she often makes suggestions and takes them to the library to find books.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E
Assessment mechanism	1. TABE tests: Administered twice per session -- midway and at the end. 2. Other tests: Quizzes when they finish learning different concepts (like whole numbers or basic parts of speech). Number can vary. 3. Portfolios: Students keep a "literacy notebook" of all of their class-based BL lessons, which the teacher reviews. They keep another folder for everything else they do in class, which they can take home.	Location 1: 1. TABE tests: Administered at the end of each session. 2. Other tests: No. 3. Portfolios: Students keep a binder of their work in class. Teacher has done portfolio reviews with some students in the past but not in recent months. 4. Student conferences: Typically one-on-one meetings during the session are about behavioral issues and not academics. There is an end-of-session review of performance. 5. Observations: Teacher circulates around the classroom when students are doing any kind of independent work.	1. TABE tests: Until recently, administered at the end of each session. Starting summer 2013, the program plans to test students every 6 months. Students who express desire not to stay with the program will get tested at the end of the session. The teacher can recommend an end-of-session TABE for students who show a lot of progress in the classroom. The teacher also administers the TABE when they first start classes. 2. Other tests: Quizzes at the end of teaching a skill. HSE predictor tests midway through the session. 3. Portfolios: No portfolios. But teacher collects work sometimes and gives feedback.	1. TABE tests: Administered at the end of each session. 2. Other tests: No. 3. Portfolios: Teacher said that he keeps a portfolio of student work. 4. Conferences: As needed. 5. Observations: Teacher looks at class work.	1. TABE tests: Administered at the end of each session. 2. Other tests: Teacher administers diagnostic tests during first week of class. Quiz once a week, mostly in math. 3. Portfolios: No. 4. Conferences: Teacher says she does not have time (she is parttime). She might pull people out of the room when other students are working on something. There is an end-of-session review of performance; can be with a staff member other than the teacher.

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Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

	Community-based organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E
Assessment mechanism (continued)	4. Student conferences: As-needed basis during the session; teacher is available before or after class. He also tutors twice a week where he does one-on-one work with some students. 5. Observations: Assesses them informally daily through observations and class work, especially for writing. Teacher also does "completion checks" in class to make sure that students are actually finishing their tasks: every time they are asked to do something, he will give them a check or nothing.	Location 2: 1. TABE tests: Administered at the end of each session. 2. Other tests: Quizzes once in a while. 3. Portfolios: Students keep their work in the classroom in one place. The teacher does not review the portfolios. There is a portfolio presentation at the end of each session and students get to take them home. 4. Student conferences: As needed. Individual meeting with students on goals once a month. There is an end-of-session review of performance. 5. Observations: Teacher observes class participation.	4. Student conferences: There is an end-of-session review of performance. 5. Observations: Teacher talks to the students and walks around the classroom a lot to observe and assess informally.		5. Observations: In literacy, the teacher looks at students' writing, how they read and respond to her questions. She doesn't grade the writing but she makes corrections.
Feedback mechanism	Feedback during session is mostly informal and given in the classroom by questioning of students' work.	Location 1: Teacher collects work at least once a week to give formal feedback. She gives informal feedback daily in the classroom when she is walking around observing their work.	Informal feedback in the classroom during session. There is an end-of-session review of performance with each student.	Informal feedback in the classroom.	Informal feedback in the classroom. There is an end-of-session review of performance; can be with a staff member other than the teacher.

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Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

	Community-based organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E
Feedback mechanism (continued)	There is an end-of-session review of performance with each student.	There is an end-of-session review of performance with each student. Location 2: Teacher says she provides feedback at least once a week -- formal or informal. There is an end-of-session review of performance with each student.			
Availability of a teaching assistant or a tutor	Teacher offers tutoring twice a week for an hour and a half.	Location 1: A volunteer-led study group meets weekly for an hour. It is a drop-in tutoring center for the whole education program. Location 2: Volunteer tutors are available during class once or twice a week. They often do individual work with students who are lower or higher in proficiency than the rest of the class.	Not available.	There is a teaching assistant in the classroom, who helps with intake. Tutoring available at the adult learning center.	Not available.

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Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Academic guidance from leadership	The program coordinator gives the teacher a vision of what she wants to see in the classroom, based on what she was taught at YDI and other academic trainings she has attended, and lets the teacher figure out how to implement it. She meets with the teacher once a month. The YAL teacher works closely with instructors of the on-site HSE program; they share lesson plans and strategize on coordinating their approach to teaching. The teachers also share office space and provide informal feedback regularly.	The YAL teacher and the teachers of the on-site HSE program meet with the coordinator of youth education at the site. The education counselors (social support staff) are often in the classes with the teachers and provide feedback on instruction.	Teacher submits a weekly report to the program coordinator and the director of adult literacy, which outlines her lessons for the week. She said that she sometimes gets feedback. The director of adult literacy said that he tries to pay attention to trends (for example, is the teacher spending too much time on 1 area of the curriculum?) when reviewing the reports.	The program coordinator said that he does classroom observations and that all YAL teachers at the library have to submit some lesson plans. The teacher said that he speaks with other YAL teachers during staff meetings, which happens once a month.	The teacher submits lesson plans to the education specialist at the CDA. The CDA staff reported that the education specialist is managing an effort to improve and standardize curriculum and pedagogy across all of the education-related programs that they manage, and that she will coordinate with YDI on the academic component of YAL. The library coordinator said that she provides informal feedback to the teacher.
What works in engaging students	"Topics that are relevant and interesting to them."	Location 1: "Tasks they want to get feedback on. Give them specific tasks that they can complete."	"Sense of humor.... Asking questions. Encouraging them to go up to the board."	"Finding a way to connect to them." The teacher also said that variety is important.	The teacher likes to bring interactive exercises and games into the classroom, depending on the students' preferences.

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Appendix Table C.4 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (2 locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
What works in engaging students (continued)	The teacher uses a lot of current events (for example, stop-and-frisk, the soda ban, etc.).	"Discussions are also often engaging -- when people share answers -- helps them make good connections."	Engagement strategy depends on students, the teacher said; some require more hands-on help.		
Teacher thoughts on Balanced Literacy (BL)	BL works well, he said. In terms of differentiating between students who have been in YAL before and new students, BL is better because the content is new and there are many activities: "There are so many built-in ways that it does differentiate [various]...ways for students to show what they are good at -- word work, discussions, writing, etc."	Location 1: The teacher thinks BL works well because it is very "active and engaging" and there is a lot of variety, especially for young people who "get really antsy really fast... it's not just read a text and discuss," she said. Students get to be very active throughout the lesson. Location 2: The teacher says BL "works as well as any other" instructional approach.	BL is good for students who are at a very low level, the teacher said, adding that BL lessons are a lot to cover in one day because of the many activities and the limited time she has with the youth.	The teacher learned of BL for the first time at a YDI training. He does not really use it and said: "A theoretical approach is different than actually being in the classroom. Sometimes it works; a majority of the time it doesn't."	The teacher did not have much to say about BL, which she does not use much in the classroom. But she did say that the Common Core "push" assumes that the students are more advanced than they actually are.

SOURCES: Interviews with YAL staff at study sites.

Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program

Appendix Table C.5

Overview: Transition from YAL

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (two locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Availability of on-site HSE preparation	The site has a contract for a HSE program that serves youth 21 years old or younger and for a HSE testing service. YAL students are encouraged to transition to the HSE program, which operates on the same calendar as YAL.	Location 1: Has a HSE program on-site, which serves the same age range as YAL, and students are encouraged to transition there. Location 2: The teacher keeps students in the program until they are ready to take the test. The students do a lot of individual work with her or with tutors to prepare for the HSE exam.	Youth can prepare for the HSE exam in a higher-level ABE class at the site once they reach a 7th grade level equivalency in reading. Once they reach the 9th grade level in reading and the 7th grade level in math, students can take the HSE Official Practice Test (OPT). The site also makes referrals to other youth-specific HSE programs in the community, most of which serve young people under the age of 21.	Not available on site. Students are referred to other programs if they are willing to attend HSE exam preparation. The site administers the OPT to students who do not wish to attend another program and will schedule them for the HSE exam if they do well.	Not available on site. Students are referred to other HSE programs.
Transition process	Students take the TABE midway through the session, which helps the instructor assess each student's potential for transition at the end of the session.	Both locations: All students take the TABE at the end of each session, unless they started late, and the instructors sit down with students to discuss their performance.	The testing and transition process was undergoing changes at the time of the site visit.	End-of-session TABE results are used to determine whether students are ready to move out of YAL.	End-of-session TABE results are used to determine whether students are ready to move out of YAL.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.5 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (two locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Transition process (continued)	The teacher shares the information with the program coordinator to help her gauge how many students need to stay in the program longer and how many new students she has to recruit. The staff may also have a preliminary conversation with students they think are ready for HSE exam prep. A more formal conversation takes place after the students take the end-of-session TABE. The instructor generally schedules meetings with students within days of a session's completion to discuss their performance. The program coordinator organizes a "transition breakfast" where the YAL teacher "hands over" the transitioning students to the HSE teachers.	Location 1: The teacher goes through the roster of students with the education counselor to see who qualifies to move on to the HSE program, who needs to take a break, and who should move to a general ABE class because they are not participating in YAL activities. If they are eligible to move on to HSE, staff call or meet with students during the break to start the process. Location 2: Staff retain students in the YAL program until they are ready to take the HSE test. The teacher administers official practice tests to students who show promise for passing, and based on the results, schedules them to take the test.	Until the end of fiscal year 2013, the program administered the TABE to enrolled students at the end of each session and used those scores to decide which youth were ready to move on. Starting in the summer 2013 session, most students were tested every 6 months (2 sessions). Students who perform well in the classroom can receive the instructor's recommendation to be tested sooner. A combination of teacher input and test scores is used to make transition decisions.	The transition process can vary for each student, depending on whether they want to go to a HSE program or take the test while still at YAL.	The site has established relationships with local HSE programs for recruitment, so students are generally referred to those when they are ready. The site generally contacts the programs before sending students there with formal referral sheets containing student information and the contact information for their liaison at the HSE program.

SOURCES: Interviews with YAL staff at study sites.

Implementation of the Young Adult Literacy Program

Appendix Table C.6

Overview: Program Rules and Expectations

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (two locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Attendance rules	Students who are absent from the program more than 3 times a month risk dismissal. Students have to bring in documentation for absences to be excused. The staff meets with students who are absent without notice. If the behavior continues, students get a letter stating that they are at risk of dismissal and outlining what they have to do to remedy that.	If attendance drops below 70 percent for a student, the program staff will meet as a team; the student is asked to be present but often is not. The student is asked to sign a participation agreement after the staff identifies an action plan. If attendance continues to drop, the staff asks the student to stop attending class for a certain period of time and to address the life challenges that are causing the absences.	No defined attendance or lateness policy. Students who come only 1 or 2 days a week without any prior notice will be exited from the program, the case manager said. She added that the staff have a hard time enforcing attendance policies because students often "have really good reasons" for not coming. If students communicate with the staff about why they need to be absent, they can generally stay in the program.	The written policy states that students who miss more than 5 classes in a row have to register for the program again. The program coordinator said that they are flexible with the attendance and lateness policies because they are serving disconnected youth, adding that students who are absent without any contact with the program for 2 weeks will be dismissed.	Students are allowed 2 excused absences a month and they have to bring in documentation. They are excused for things like medical, legal, or benefits appointments. Students who miss more than 2 days have to talk to the case manager before returning to class. If a barrier is preventing them from attending regularly, the case manager said she works with them.

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Appendix Table C.6 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (two locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Attendance rules (continued)	The program coordinator said that she generally does not keep students who are absent more than 5 or 6 times, but they try to be flexible and take into account students' challenges.	The staff maintains contact with students who are asked to leave and may ask them to come back. No hard-and-fast rule on discharge in terms of number of days they have been absent. Most of the time the decision is made through staff discussion.			If no barrier can be identified and students are repeatedly absent, they go on probation and have to sign a document stating that they will improve their attendance. If the site does not hear from students for 2 weeks, they are dismissed.
Lateness rules	2 occurrences of lateness equals 1 absence. Students can come to class up to 15 minutes after it has started and not be counted late. They are counted late if they arrive between 15 and 30 minutes of the start of class. After 30 minutes, they are not counted present, although they can sit in the classroom. They do not get a MetroCard if they are late.	Location 1: There is a 15 minute grace period after which students are marked absent and are not allowed in class. Late students can get their MetroCards. Location 2: After the 15-minute grace period, students can remain on site and choose to work in the public area. The teacher will count them present. But she says most choose to go home and are not counted present.	No defined lateness policy. Staff talk to students who are repeatedly late.	The written policy states that students can be 15 minutes late to class and still receive their MetroCards. The program coordinator says that they have been flexible and often leave the decision to the discretion of the teacher or case manager.	The library coordinator said that the site had a "zero tolerance" policy for lateness in the past. Students were allowed into the classroom if they were 10 to 15 minutes late. More recently, students have been allowed into the class later than that and the teacher has the discretion to enforce the policy.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.6 (continued)

	Community-based organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (two locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
How attendance is tracked	The teacher takes attendance in class. Students sign in in the morning and then again in the afternoon after their break. Other staff take attendance during their time with the students. A case manager from the youth education and workforce unit makes daily calls to absent youth based on the sign-in sheet.	Location 1: Students swipe an agency-issued ID card in the classroom. The teacher calls absent youth at the end of the day. If she cannot reach students, she lets the education counselor know. Location 2: The education counselor goes into the classroom 15 minutes after class starts and takes attendance. He starts calling absent youth when he returns to his desk. The teacher also has an attendance-tracking chart in front of the classroom, on which she puts "dots" for students who come in on time. She thinks the public attendance chart has really helped with attendance.	The teacher takes attendance in class and during internship, which she coordinates: students sign in. The case manager takes attendance during the life skills class she teaches. The teacher calls absent youth every 2 days. The case manager checks with the teacher at the end of each day about attendance; she follows up with hard-to-reach students.	The teacher's assistant takes attendance in class every day; students sign in. Staff call youth who are absent for 2-3 days.	The teacher takes attendance in class; students sign in. The case manager said that she used to call the students each day that they were absent, but now she waits to see whether they are absent for more than 2 days before calling.

(continued)

Appendix Table C.6 (continued)

	Community-based Organizations			Libraries	
	Site A	Site B (two locations)	Site C	Site D	Site E
Incentives **(All sites give MetroCards to students who attend class and a weekly $50 stipend to students who attend internship hours)**	Movie tickets based on attendance (100% attendance for the month, 2 movie tickets; 85% attendance, 1 movie ticket). The program has to recognize students for performance. For example, students who were in the internship component and were able to transfer to the HSE class received $50. Students were taken out for lunch if they had 100% attendance for the year.	MetroCards for students who attend class. For perfect attendance for a week, students receive $25; for 80% attendance, they receive $20. Anyone who increases a grade level or more on the TABE gets 2 free movie tickets. Students are awarded with reading, writing, and math certificates and attendance certificates.	No other incentives besides the $50 stipend and MetroCards.	The site has various incentives for attendance and participation. Students get a $25 gift card for perfect attendance for 2 weeks. For perfect monthly attendance, they get a $50 gift card. Students with good attendance, participation, and general behavior throughout the program receive additional incentives, like electronics or gift cards.	Students receive a $10 McDonald's gift card for lunch on Friday during the internship. No other incentives besides the $50 stipend and MetroCards.

SOURCES: Interviews with YAL staff at study sites.

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