

An Implementation Study of the Students with Amazing Goals (SWAG) Program Year One

Manuelito Biag, Jacob Leos-Urbel, Jamila Henderson,
Carolina Ornelas, and Amy Gerstein

November 10, 2016

The authors gratefully acknowledge the SWAG staff, leadership, and Steering Committee members who generously supported this study through their participation. Special thanks go to Leslie Patron and Nancy Mancini for their thoughtful responses to earlier drafts of this report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1
KEY FINDINGS..... 2
BACKGROUND 3
THE SWAG THEORY OF CHANGE 6
PROFILE OF SWAG PARTICIPANTS 9
IMPLEMENTATION STUDY FINDINGS..... 9
CONCLUSIONS & CONSIDERATIONS 15

INTRODUCTION

In response to truancy and low graduation rates among low-income and ethnic minority youth in San Mateo County, the County's Manager's Office initiated in 2015 the Students with Amazing Goals (SWAG) program. With support from Measure A funds and a state justice grant, SWAG is a three-year, cross-sector collaboration between the San Mateo County Manager's Office, Juvenile Probation, Human Services Agency (HSA), the Sequoia Union High School District, and Live in Peace, a nonprofit youth-serving organization in East Palo Alto.¹ Operating from the Live in Peace site, SWAG seeks to reduce truancy and increase high school completion among vulnerable youth—particularly those from East Palo Alto and the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park. The program also serves those currently or have been involved with the juvenile justice system.

The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at the Stanford Graduate School of Education partners with communities, researchers, and practitioners to produce evidence-based research to improve and strengthen the well-being of youth, inform policy and practice in the fields of education and youth development, and emphasize the importance of equity and capacity-building in youth-serving organizations. We focus on generating actionable knowledge through rigorous research and regular and iterative exchanges with partners. In collaboration with SWAG leaders and staff, the Gardner Center began in the summer of 2015 a three-year implementation and outcomes study of the SWAG program. Through a multi-method research design, we pursue the following questions:

1. How is the SWAG model being implemented?
 - a. How many students is the program reaching? What are the demographics and other characteristics of these students? What is their intensity and duration of program participation?
 - b. What key elements of SWAG have been fully implemented? What, if any, key elements of SWAG have not yet been fully implemented?
 - c. What do program staff consider to be the primary challenges to program implementation? What aspects of the program do staff consider to be going well? What suggestions do staff have for program improvement?
 - d. What barriers (if any) do students and parents see to program participation? What aspects of the program do students and parents consider to be going well? What suggestions do students and parents have for program improvement?

¹The Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) approved three years of funding from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Grant (Byrne JAG) to San Mateo County for the implementation of SWAG. Measure A is a half-cent general sales tax passed by voters in San Mateo County in 2012. Revenues generated from Measure A are designed to support county services in sectors such as youth and education; housing and homelessness; and public safety. For additional information about Measure A, see: <http://cmo.smcgov.org/measureA>

2. What is the relationship between participation in SWAG and student outcomes compared to similar students who do not participate?
 - a. Student outcomes may include school attendance rate, school suspensions, credits earned, high school graduation, employment, college enrollment, contact with the justice system, or others.²

These research questions were co-developed with partners and designed to produce a complete picture of the SWAG program, including detailed information about how students, families, leadership, and staff view and experience the program. The success and influence of programs, including those designed to change the educational trajectories of students in positive ways across multiple domains and delivery settings, often depends on how they were implemented (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Factors such as adherence to the program components and design, skill-level of service providers, and mid-course corrections made to the program can influence participants' outcomes. Since programs in practice differ from what was originally planned, this study allows SWAG partners to learn from the process of implementation.

This report highlights findings from the first year of our study, which focused on research questions 1a, 1b, and 1c. Findings are based on qualitative analyses of program documents, key informant interviews, and observations (Appendix A). Following a summary of key findings, we provide background information about trends in high school graduation and describe the Bay Area communities where many of the SWAG youth reside. We then discuss how the SWAG program is structured and profile its current cohort of participants. Following this, we identify the various components of the SWAG theory of change and how it informed our data collection and analysis. Next, guided by the four program assumptions that underlie SWAG, we discuss emergent themes and patterns found in the data regarding the program's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Finally, we conclude the report by highlighting issues, conditions, and processes that may help refine the program's goals, strategies, and service delivery as it moves into its second year of operations.

KEY FINDINGS

The research findings document considerable progress in the development, refinement, and implementation of the SWAG program in its first year of operation. Findings also point to possible strategic areas for continued program improvement as SWAG moves forward, informed by the SWAG theory of change as well as lessons from the field more broadly related to cross-sector collaborations to improve outcomes for youth. We summarize findings in four areas below.

Program Resources and Staff Capabilities. A majority of respondents report that SWAG youth face multiple barriers and hardships in their lives including mental health concerns, learning disabilities, and poverty-related problems. Given the range of barriers students face, which hinder their learning and overall healthy development, strategies to bolster capacity among staff and leverage SWAG partners' expertise may help address these challenges, as well as increase connections with caring adults—a primary aim of the program.

² Analysis of these student outcomes depends on the availability of data.

Processes for identifying, referring, and enrolling youth. Respondents report early challenges in being able to promptly and effectively identify, refer, and enroll youth in the program. Yet most agree that improvements continue to be made in recruiting students as increasing numbers of youth and families learn about the program, and as SWAG partners strengthen relationships with important stakeholders including the superintendent and local school administrators.

Program Data. All respondents agree that data are important to the evaluation and viability of the program yet also report that there is great room for improvement in tracking various encounters with SWAG youth. According to respondents, some of the challenges with maintaining student records stem from the complex and time-consuming nature of data collection; the shortcomings of using quantitative outcome data alone (e.g., grades, test scores) to measure program success; and a data tracking system difficult for staff to navigate.

Roles, structures, and processes. Evidence suggests that while SWAG involves a number of partners from different sectors, with varied organizational norms and practices, they all have a firm commitment to the goals of the program. However, because of their distinct roles, orientations, and philosophies of how to support at-risk youth, there are differences in perspectives and expectations for how the program should be structured and implemented. Evidence from the first year also suggests that there are opportunities to further articulate the roles and relationships among the different partners in SWAG at the system/policy level (e.g., school district, probation, etc.) as well as to clarify the roles that partners play in the day-to-day operations of the program. In clarifying roles, it is important to recognize the diversity of partners' organizational cultures and practices, and that each partner bring unique perspectives, skills, and capacities.

BACKGROUND

Relative to their peers without a high school diploma, students who graduate from high school are more likely to have greater life earnings, better health, and a longer life expectancy (America's Promise Alliance [APA], 2016). Nationwide and over time, graduation rates have been increasing. In 2014, graduation rates were at an all-time high at 82.3% (APA, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014) and California followed closely at about 81% (NCES, 2014). Yet notable gaps remain among different student populations. Racial/ethnic and linguistic minorities, migrant and newcomer students, and those from low-income backgrounds tend to complete high school at lower rates than their counterparts. In California, approximately 65% of students with limited English proficiency, 76% of economically-disadvantaged students, 68% of African Americans, and 77% of Latinos graduate from high school (NCES, 2014). About 40% of students who have been involved with the juvenile justice system drop out of high school (Sickmund & Puzzanhera, 2014; Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio & Thompson, 2004).

Income and Educational Disparities in San Mateo County

As part of the thriving economic region of Silicon Valley, San Mateo is one of the country's wealthiest counties. It is also home to some of the highest levels of income inequality. The average income of the top-earning five percent of households in San Mateo County is approximately \$615,000, while the average income of earners in the bottom quintile is \$22,000 (Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2015). The Self-Sufficiency Standard, which measures the minimum yearly income necessary to cover a family's basic expenses without public assistance, is estimated at \$80,000 for a family of three (two adults and one infant). The California Poverty Measure (CPM), a joint research effort by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) and the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, takes into account cost of living and social safety net benefits and needs (Bohn, Danielson, & Bandy, 2015); according to this measure, seventeen percent of families live in poverty and lack the resources necessary to meet their basic needs such as food, housing, child care, and transportation (Bohn, Danielson, & Bandy, 2015). This is compared to 8% based on the official poverty rate. The high cost of living in San Mateo County, stagnating wages for low-income households, and problems related to persistent poverty, hinder many families' ability to climb the economic ladder and invest in the types of resources necessary that ensure their children's success in school.

San Mateo County is comprised of 23 school districts and enrolls approximately 94,000 students. While students graduate at rates above the state's average, ethnic minority students complete high school at persistently lower rates than their peers. For instance, in the 2014-15 school year, the Sequoia Union High School District's (SUHSD) overall graduation rate was 86%; yet the completion rates for Latinos and African Americans were lower, at 77% and 83% respectively. Racial/ethnic disparities also exist in the area of school discipline. While Latino students comprise less than 50% of SUHSD's student body, they account for more than 70% of suspensions. Similarly, Pacific Islander students account for about 3% of total enrollment, but comprise 29% of all expulsions. The overrepresentation of ethnic minority students in school suspensions and expulsions can significantly diminish their sense of connection to school and opportunities to learn (Skiba et al., 2011).

East Palo Alto: A Rapidly Changing City

Within San Mateo County, youth from the City of East Palo Alto face particular challenges—most of which stem from poverty. Recent Census estimates indicate that East Palo Alto is home to about 30,000 residents, roughly 17% of whom live below the official poverty line. Sixteen percent hold a bachelor's degree or higher and the median household income in 2014 dollars was \$52,716, which is significantly lower than neighboring cities (e.g., \$115,650 for Menlo Park; \$81,955 for Redwood City).

Located in close proximity to Facebook, Google, and other Silicon Valley companies, East Palo Alto has and continues to undergo tremendous change. As a young city incorporated in 1983, East Palo Alto has seen notable shifts in its demographics. According to the 1980 Census, approximately 61% of residents identified as African American and 25% as white. More recent estimates from 2015 now show that a majority of residents identify as Latino (65%), followed by

white (29%), African American (17%), and Pacific Islander (8%). About 41% of residents are born outside of the country and almost three-quarters speak a language other than English at home. Silicon Valley's robust economic growth has made housing unaffordable for many residents. Once seen as an inexpensive place to live, the median home value in East Palo Alto according to Zillow is currently priced at \$676,800. Home prices have increased 18.2% over the past year with a predicted increase of 5.1% within the next year. The high cost of living has priced out many families. Harris & Cespedes (2015) note that "East Palo Altans have great pride in their rich history of community activism and their struggle to achieve self-determination" (pg. 3). However, due to unaffordable housing and the high cost of living, many residents have had to move to the outer fringes of the Bay Area, thus diluting the political voice that used to exist in the community (Cutler, 2015).

The struggles of East Palo Alto are reflected in the educational system and outcomes of its young people. Ravenswood School District (K-8) came under federal scrutiny for its lax oversight of Special Education students, after parents of eight children sued in 1996 over the district's failure to provide adequate services for youth with special needs. Recent data from the California Department of Education indicate that only 9% of Grade 8 students in Ravenswood met or exceeded standards in math, and 19% met standards in English Language Arts/Literacy. The high school completion among East Palo Alto youth in the Sequoia Union High School District is also low at approximately 55%; this is the lowest graduation rate of all of Sequoia's eight feeder districts (Castrechini, 2013). Given these challenges, the San Mateo County Manager's Office, in alliance with community partners, launched the SWAG program to improve students' prospects in school and beyond.

Students with Amazing Goals (SWAG)

SWAG is a cross-sector, community-based collaboration between the San Mateo County Manager's Office, Juvenile Probation, Human Services Agency (HSA), the Sequoia Union High School District, and Live in Peace. The program operates in a former community day school in East Palo Alto; the space is donated by the Sequoia Union High School District. Live in Peace, which provides the majority of programming and coordination for the program, is housed at this location. As a "youth sector" partnership, where a broad array of actors and agencies join together to affect positive change in youth learning and development (London & McLaughlin, 2014), SWAG is similar to other dropout prevention initiatives. It employs a range of strategies to help increase high school completion including helping students address personal and family issues; providing academic, career, and vocational opportunities; extending counseling and life skill coaching services; and building positive and caring relationships with peers and adults (Lehr et al., 2004).

Given the collaborative nature of SWAG, a variety of personnel are involved in the operations of the program including a program director; case managers to help serve as primary contacts for youth participants; "case navigators" to assist in the supervision of youth; halftime teachers and tutors to aid in credit recovery and provide academic support; a probation officer to help coordinate interventions and liaise with the Probation Department; and personnel from community-based agencies that provide programming and enrichment services such as Fresh Lifelines for Youth. A social worker from the Human Services Agency (HSA) also consults with SWAG on issues such

as mental health, abuse, and crisis intervention. To ensure that supports are appropriate and up-to-date, a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)—consisting of SWAG case managers, the probation officer, program director, and representatives from HSA and other partner agencies—meets regularly to discuss youths’ progress in the program. The MDT also provides a forum for SWAG personnel to discuss youth who are referred to and may be ready to exit the program. A Steering Committee, comprised of high-level individuals with extensive experience working in the community and with marginalized youth, guides SWAG on policy and budget-related issues. SWAG’s Steering Committee meets periodically and members include church leaders, city and county officials, and longtime community stakeholders.

SWAG is designed to serve 80 high school youth each year, including “5th year seniors” who are at greatest risk of not graduating high school. A majority come from adverse backgrounds and exhibit signs of disengagement from school such as poor attendance and low grades. SWAG participants are assigned to one of four case managers who serve as the primary contact for the program. The case managers are charged with recruiting youth into programs and services, and ensuring that participants receive the supports they need to succeed. Measures of participant success include increased test scores and grades, reduced truancy and absenteeism, successful completion of juvenile probation, and reduced gang involvement.

Students’ demographic and referral information, attendance, and program participation records are recorded and monitored by SWAG staff using Social Solution’s Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) system. As a secure, internet-based data system, ETO is meant to serve as a central resource to help in the intake, tracking, and assessment of program participants. ETO also captures clinical case notes that document students’ progress in the program, so that interventions can be course-corrected when necessary to more effectively address students’ needs. Documentation of SWAG program activities and services through ETO also support required reporting to funders at the state and federal level.

THE SWAG THEORY OF CHANGE

Our analysis of the SWAG program was guided by its program theory of change. Through discussions with partners, the Gardner Center drafted a working SWAG theory of change at the outset of the project (Exhibit 1). This theory supported partners’ conception of the program and informed our data gathering and analysis. Unlike a logic model, which focuses on the relationship between inputs and results, a theory of change is a guiding framework that establishes common principles; clarifies strategies and program activities; makes implicit assumptions explicit; locates gaps and areas for reform; and allows partners to draw connections between activities and outcomes (Weiss, 1995). While the SWAG theory of change is depicted in a linear way, the process of actual change is nonlinear, complex, and context-specific. Since practice plays out differently than theory, our implementation study seeks to illuminate these gaps and understand why these differences occur. We describe each component of the theory of change below:

- **Problem Statement.** The base of the theory of change identifies the central problem the SWAG program seeks to address: that significant numbers of young people from East Palo Alto and the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park are at risk of not completing high school because of low grades, poor attendance, disciplinary/behavioral issues, and credit deficiency.

- **Youth Context.** Research indicates that dropping out of school is long-term process—one that can happen over several years (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, & Pagani, 2009; Battin-Pearson et al., 2000). SWAG understands that youth at risk of not completing school face stressors or obstacles in different domains of their lives including their families, peer networks, schools, and communities, and may have experienced domestic violence, gang involvement, substance abuse, and low expectations from their teachers. At the same time, SWAG recognizes that families, peers, schools, and communities can also serve as critical sources of support, which can buffer students from negative influences that shape their learning and development.
- **Holistic and Coordinated Supports.** To address barriers to students' success, SWAG provides a safe and caring learning environment where participants can access a range of programs, supports, and opportunities. There are five program areas: (1) Case management and Advocacy; (2) Academics; (3) Career and Leadership Development; (4) Skill-Building and Enrichment Opportunities; and (5) Pro-Social Activities. These areas are interrelated and can affect one another; for instance, case management services may improve students' engagement in academic interventions and pro-social activities. While participation in programming varies based on the needs, interests, and circumstances of youth, SWAG leaders and staff posit that holistic and coordinated supports that address multiple aspects of youths' lives are more likely to bolster their success in school.
- **Key Assumptions.** For students to attain positive outcomes in the short-, intermediate-, and long-term, four program assumptions or conditions must be met: (1) There are sufficient material, financial, and human resources ; (2) There is a clear and agreed-upon system to identify, refer, and enroll youth; (3) Students actively participate in supports, programs, and interventions, and staff consistently maintain records of students' participation; and (4) There are clear roles, structures, and processes that facilitate productive and collaborative work among partners.
- **Short-Term Outcomes (1-3 years).** Youths' participation in SWAG programs, supports, and interventions can lead to positive short-term academic changes including increased attendance, credit completion, grades and test scores, and participation in academic-related supports and activities. Positive short-term behavior changes include reduced school disciplinary issues, reduced gang involvement and arrests, successful completion of probation (if applicable), and pro-social behaviors and habits of mind.
- **Intermediate Outcomes (3-5 years):** Having attained the short-term outcomes above, SWAG youth will complete high school or obtain a GED and attain some type of postsecondary degree or vocational training.
- **Long-term outcome (5 years and above):** Successful completion of college or vocational training will help SWAG youth acquire the skills, knowledge, competencies, and credentials necessary to secure the long-term employment at a livable wage.

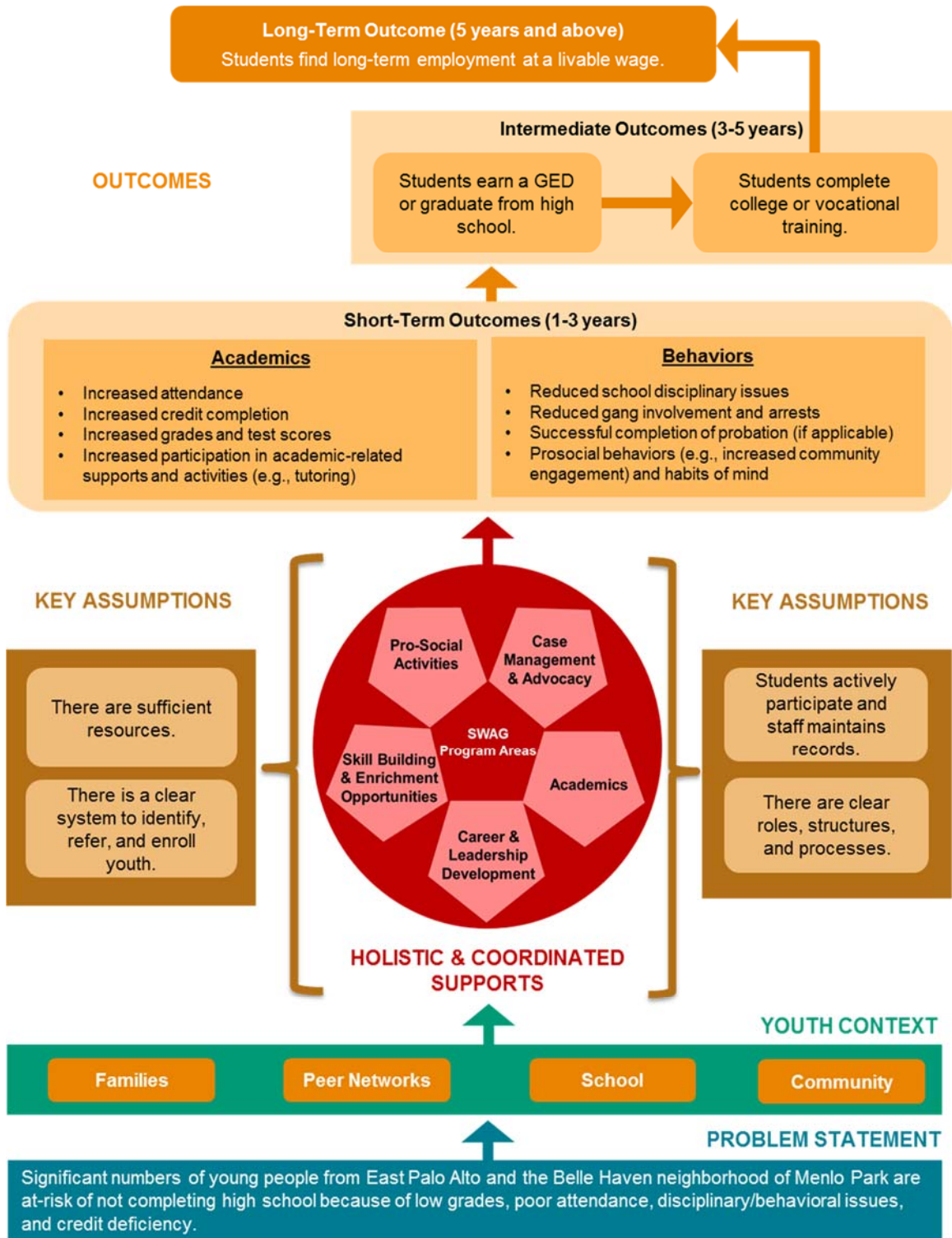


Exhibit 1. SWAG's Initial Program Theory of Change

PROFILE OF SWAG PARTICIPANTS

Based on administrative records shared by the Sequoia Union High School District and program participation data shared by Live in Peace, a total of 60 students participated in SWAG in the 2015-16 school year (Appendix B). Although we are unable to identify in the data the referral source for each participant, discussions with SWAG leadership and staff suggest that a majority of youth in the inaugural year were identified and referred by the Sequoia Union High School District, including rising 10th grade students involved in Aspirations Advocates—a district-sponsored truancy prevention program. Referrals from Juvenile Probation were also considered.

More than half of SWAG participants were male (60%). A majority were enrolled in grade 9 (37%)³ and identified as Pacific Islander (37%), followed by Latino (35%), and African American (23%). Approximately 28% were designated as English learners, and 17% had received Special Education services for learning disabilities. Compared to district averages, statistics for SWAG participants suggest an overrepresentation of male, Pacific Islander, African American, English learner, and Special Education students—possibly reflecting the demographic profile of students most at risk of not completing high school in SUHSD. We were unable to determine from shared data which SWAG youth were involved with Juvenile Probation.

On average, students attended the program 29 days during September 2015 to April 2016, with students attending more in fall and spring quarters (5 to 7 days per month), than the winter quarter (4 to 5 days per month). It is unclear whether these attendance rates accurately reflect youths' level of participation or if they reflect the amount of data recorded by staff. We are also unable to determine which types of SWAG activities students participated in, for how long, and how often. Most students (73%) were logged under the category "General Sign-In," followed by "Credit Recovery, GED, Tutoring/Homework" (19%), "Field Trip/Exposure Trip" (4%), and "Other" (4%). However, records indicate that "Other" captures multiple kinds of activities including "Conditioning," "Financial Management & Investing," "Scape Art Class," and "The Shop," to name a few.

IMPLEMENTATION STUDY FINDINGS

We report below recurrent themes and concepts found in the key informant interviews, meeting minutes, observational data, and other documents. Key informants include members of the SWAG Steering Committee, program leaders, as well as staff. We organize our discussion around the four fundamental program assumptions articulated in the SWAG theory of change (Exhibit 1). These findings are meant to inform ongoing program implementation, development, and improvement.

³ Demographic data pertain to the 2014-15 school year (the latest year for which the Gardner Center had Sequoia Union High School District student records); so students entering grade 9 in the 2014-15 school year may be rising 10th graders in the 2015-16 school year (the first year of SWAG implementation).

Assumption #1: There are sufficient resources *A majority of respondents report that SWAG youth face multiple barriers and hardships in their lives including mental health concerns, learning disabilities, poverty-related problems. Given these challenges, additional staff with the adequate background and experience may help ensure that students receive the different types of care they need to succeed, both in the program and beyond.*

Key informants agree that youth from East Palo Alto face a range of demands and learning barriers in their lives with little access to supports that would bolster their success in school and in life. For instance, respondents identify neighborhood challenges including violence and the presence of gangs and other negative peer models. As one case manager noted:

[They] walk down the street and they got drug dealers or they got peers just saying, 'hey let's go do this; let's go hit a house,' because they don't see the worth in doing education, but they see the worth in getting money and buying all these fly clothes.

There is also a recognition among informants about the changing demographic and economic make-up of East Palo Alto, and how increased rental costs and home prices have made it challenging to remain in the community. Respondents report how families, including those who have been in the community for a long time, are struggling to make ends meet and are forced to live with other family members in small and often-cramped apartments. As one staff member said:

And you see all of the mattresses, right—so this is the front door [outlines front door with hands], and these are all the mattresses in there—and you see 30 kids running through. And you're going, 'how could you study at home if you wanted to?'

With regards to academics, respondents report that SWAG participants are unsuccessful in school because they have not been given adequate help or “taught how to advocate for themselves” so that they are able to navigate systems within the school and learn. As one case manager observed:

The counselors at the schools have on average something like 380 students per counselor. That is phenomenal to me. Now, human nature is to gravitate towards success stories, so you're going to put your energy where you feel like you're going to be more successful and that leaves a lot of these kids—our target population—with this sort of cookie cutter, breeze through kind of conversations that they have with the counselors, if they have any at all...Nobody showed us how the system works.

Informants also note that SWAG youth fall behind academically because they lack a sense of connection to school, in that teachers and other school adults are unable to relate to their struggles because they have not lived through the same experiences. The importance of relationship building emerged as a strong and persistent theme in our analysis; relationships include those between adults, between students and adults, and between students and their peers. Data suggest that relationships serve both as the “glue” and the “grease,” in that it facilitated working relations and unified everyone who was part of the program. There is a fervent belief among partners that when students and adults have consistently strong and trusting relationships, they are more likely to feel safe, be motivated, and attain higher levels of achievement.

As an organization, Live in Peace places great value in relationship-building as a key strategy. We found that staff see themselves as a “surrogate family” for many of the youth. Staff and leaders alike note the importance of creating a learning environment where young people can establish bonds and feel encouraged and successful. Strong relationships will also help students change their mindsets about school, where they see the value of education and see themselves as capable and successful.

In addition to the community- and school-level challenges described above, respondents identified a host of other hardships including learning disabilities, parental stress, divorce, trauma, relationship issues with romantic partners, and substance use. One member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team stated:

Being hungry and that cycle of attachment and feeling safe and getting your needs met all the way through. How does that impact a classroom setting if you can't self-regulate; if you never met that need?... kids weren't getting enough food or consistently enough of the care they're needed, the stress of their parents; it's had a tremendous impact in the classroom settings.

One staff member wished that SWAG had a dormitory where students could reside. This way, youth would be sheltered from neighborhood distractions and other hardships and can focus on their academics. She said:

A dorm, kind of like how Eastside [Prep] had. Where they can just stay, especially for the kids who are just unstable, living with 30 people or what not. We can just have them live here, go to school.

Given the range of barriers students face, which hinder their learning and overall healthy development, bolstering staff capacity and expertise may help address these challenges, as well as increase connections with caring adults—a primary aim of the program. With the collaborative structure of SWAG, partners may be able to utilize their networks to locate the expertise necessary. Partners could include tutors in additional subject areas, family specialists to help orient and engage parents/guardians in the program, and behavioral health therapists who are able to link students quickly with services such as family counseling, housing support, and food aid. With only four case managers for a cohort of 80 students, leveraging expertise from new and existing partners could enhance SWAG program's intervention and support structure. In fact, SWAG case managers expressed feeling overwhelmed in their ability to help participants. While case managers are experienced, strongly passionate about helping youth, and deeply familiar with East Palo Alto, they reported feeling challenged by the magnitude of students' needs. One case manager summed it up this way:

Sometimes you're like, 'man, do I give up? Do I keep trying?' And, so, we just knew. We get it. We done been through it; we get it. We're gonna make the kids understand it 'cause we've been there and we have found a-- we thought, 'hey, we're gonna ace this program; they're gonna love us! We're gonna walk down to County...' and then we're sitting there going like, 'oh my God.' You wanna cry sometimes... We see movement. It's

just the movement isn't as fast as we thought it was gonna be.

Assumption #2: There is a clear system to identify, refer, and enroll youth. *Respondents report early challenges in being able to promptly and effectively identify, refer, and enroll youth in the program. Yet most agree that improvements continue to be made in recruiting students as increasing numbers of youth and families learn about the program, and as SWAG partners strengthen relationships with important stakeholders including the superintendent and local school administrators.*

Overall, there was broad agreement from SWAG partners that the program would serve a population of youth that faced many challenges and barriers to graduating from high school. However, with limited time for program planning, there remained a need to determine the mechanics of the program including how students are identified, referred, and enrolled in the program.

Similar to many other complex, cross-sector collaborations, SWAG partners experienced early challenges in operationalizing the design of the program. These design challenges are not uncommon in cross-sector collaborations, given their complexity and the amount of people involved. SWAG respondents expressed that the short grant application timeline inhibited opportunities for insuring alignment and consensus on the finer details of the program, including how it would be implemented; exactly which populations of youth the program would target; what types of data were relevant to track, who should track them, and how; and the role partners would play in the operations of the program.

Evidence suggests that early challenges in deciding which youth should be recruited into the program stemmed from institutional differences among partners. Live in Peace, as the main provider of programming and activities, engages a wide range of youth in the community from varied backgrounds and achievement levels; generally, no youth are turned away from taking part in their supports and programming. Moreover, Live in Peace's way of engaging youth tends to be informal, flexible, and organic so that approaches can be as responsive as possible to the specific needs and interests of each individual youth. By contrast, other partners conceived the program as being more formal, time-bound (i.e., students formally complete and exit SWAG immediately after graduating high school), and as serving a set number of students each year that meet strict eligibility criteria. As such, even though the program had technically started, there remained discussions among partners on how to narrow which youth were appropriate for SWAG and for how long they would be served, which youth would be better served by Live in Peace more generally, and which youth would be best served elsewhere.

To support partners, the Gardner Center team facilitated discussions in fall of 2015, which allowed SWAG partners to come to some agreement about initial eligibility criteria (Appendix C), along with an identification, recruitment, and enrollment process (Appendix D). Revisions of these criteria and processes may be necessary as the program continues into its second year.

Assumption #3: Students actively participate and staff maintains records. *All respondents agree that data are important to the evaluation and viability of the program. They report that there is great room for improvement in tracking various encounters with SWAG youth. Although the*

Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) data tracking system has been customized to fit the needs of Live in Peace, evidence suggests that the ETO system remains difficult for staff to navigate; as a result, staff are more likely to use existing systems such as Google Docs.

Interviews suggest that SWAG staff grasp the importance of data to the sustainability of SWAG, as well as to understanding the program's implementation, successes, and shortcomings. However, based on our interviews we note several barriers to data collection. First, caseworkers justifiably prioritize working with youth and may not feel that they have time to enter data. Second, staff may be reluctant to prioritize entering data because they are not confident that it is the "right" data to fully capture SWAG activities and what they mean for youth. Lastly, staff found the data system itself difficult to use.

Respondents realize that keeping track of data can be complex and time-consuming. As one respondent said, "data stuff is important, but it's a full time thing by itself. It takes a lot of time away, sitting in front of a computer." Similarly, another said:

All these data information, filling out this and that, is taking a toll on me where I'm like, 'oh, I'm about to pull my hair out.'...It's still a struggle for me... And then, [to] record it. I mean I just use my phone and record the conversations I have with the kids.

A majority agree that data are necessary to meet the reporting requirements to the state; the data hold SWAG partners accountable for how state funds or tax dollars are being spent to support youth in the community. Respondents also concur that data are needed for an effective and useful evaluation. Absent good data, there is no way to determine which program inputs or interventions led to any signs of progress or positive outcomes.

At the same time, some respondents believe that data, specifically quantitative outcome data such as grades and test scores, have important shortcomings and do not represent the "whole picture," including the time and effort that staff devote to building positive relationships with youth and to "changing their mindsets." Without a trusting relationship, some staff believe they will not be effective because they will not be able to undo the deficit-based mindsets that weigh down on low-income youth of color. These relationships are also seen as essential in helping youth meet high expectations, and be more accountable for their actions and decision-making. As one respondent expressed:

What we have to do is... get a change in their mindset. We gotta help them create a whole new set of values, we gotta motivate them, we gotta inspire them, and if we can do those things—change the value systems, change the mindset, increase the value of education in their minds, and make a commitment to it; all of those things—then they will become a student and all the other stuff goes away.

In addition, some informants feel that the small gains students make in their grades or school attendance are masked in the database ETO system. Staff report how youth make tiny but steady progress in improving their overall engagement and performance in school, but since participants' lives are unpredictable, any life changes can set them back significantly in school. As one respondent described:

Baby steps don't show on anything...They [her family] pull her out two weeks before Christmas [to] send her back to Tonga for a month and come back. [She] didn't get to finish her grades or anything, so she failed, so, to the program it looked like [that]. But if you saw up to that date? Wow... you'll see the improvement here [holds hand up high] and all of a sudden it falls off.

The system of ETO or any administrative data system does not capture the gains made or the nuanced reasons why a student's progress might suddenly fall off. The SWAG staff wondered about how those stories might show up in the data.

Evidence also suggests that respondents have different perspectives on which type of data are most relevant in guiding the collaboration's success and work with youth. While some informants have a strong preference for broad quantitative numbers, others see the value in more nuanced qualitative data. Given varied perspectives regarding which data points are important to monitor and how, it would be important for partners to come to an agreed understanding about which information is critical for the program's operational efficiency and ultimate success. Without this common understanding, some partners may perceive that the collaboration does not acknowledge their efforts and contributions.

Assumption #4: There are clear roles, structures, and processes. *Evidence suggests that while SWAG involves a number of partners from different sectors, with varied organizational norms and practices, they all have a firm commitment to the goals of the program. However, because of their distinct roles, orientations, and philosophies of how to support at-risk youth, there are differences in perspectives and expectations for how the program should be structured and implemented.*

Key informants agree that SWAG faced early implementation challenges, particularly around roles, structures, and processes. As one respondent said about the program, "It's a start-up and in any start-up there are lessons to be learned and people whose role has to change." Research shows that the process dimensions of collaborations are critical to their functioning and effectiveness (Vangen, Hayes, & Cornforth, 2014). How the partnership brings together diverse individuals and structure the interactions and decision-making will ultimately influence the efficacy and sustainability of SWAG.

Interviews suggest that there was a sense of urgency in launching the program, given the great need for program supports. As such, partners were unable to come to a consensus on the program activities and the manner in which they were to be conducted and measured to gauge progress. As mentioned above, such challenges are common among complex, cross-sector collaborations.

Despite early challenges, a majority of respondents expressed that SWAG is "learning and growing and making mistakes," and that progress continues to be made as the program matures into year two. For example, respondents identified the Multi-Disciplinary Team as a clear and useful process that has given structure to how students and interventions are discussed among providers. The MDT provides an ongoing forum to determine the needs of SWAG youth and how to best link them with services. Respondents also credited the Gardner Center in helping clarify

the program's desired outcomes, and raising important issues for discussion during monthly check-in meetings. As one respondent stated, "The role that you're (the Gardner Center) playing helps bring out issues in the space... You're drawing out issues and bringing us back to what's important."

Respondents recognize that the program remains in its early stages and that greater clarity around roles, structures, and processes was needed in several areas. This is needed because partners come from distinct organizations and engage in diverse contexts, which fosters different priorities and approaches in working with young people. Some areas respondents identified as needing more structure included the following:

- SWAG activities – What types of activities will happen, on which days, and how often; which staff are engaged and what are their roles and responsibilities
- Data entry and tracking – Greater consistency in tracking youth program participation and uploading data in ETO
- Youth recruitment – Clarity on processes regarding the identification, recruitment, and referral of students, including a more expedited way to secure parental consent for the release of student information, and how SWAG may complement existing systems for intervening with vulnerable youth
- Program expenditures – Clarity about how state funds may be expended to support students' success

As partners work to resolve these and other issues, they will need to strategize on how to balance the autonomy and identity of each partnering organization; reconcile potentially different expectations and ideologies, as well as any contested roles and functions; and build trust and legitimacy with external stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

As a cross- and youth-sector approach to the local high school dropout problem, SWAG brings together the knowledge, expertise, and resources of diverse partners to address the increasingly complex needs of at-risk youth. Because community collaborations are complicated and dynamic systems, we attend closely to the implementation of SWAG in its first year to identify challenges, opportunities, and potential areas for reform. Overall, our analysis suggests that the interactions between partners; how the alliance reconciles different norms, priorities, and engagement practices; and the community context in which the collaboration is embedded have a significant influence on the program. Our findings are consistent with theory and other research on cross-sector collaborations (e.g., Agranoff, 2012; Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Thomson & Perry, 2006).

To conclude this report, we highlight four dimensions that our analysis indicates as important for SWAG to consider as it continues to implement the program: (1) the types of capabilities needed; (2) roles and relationships; (3) governance, structure, and accountability; and (4) goal setting and

service delivery. While we discuss each dimension separately, it is important to stress that they are interrelated, where shifts in one area can affect others (Exhibit 2).

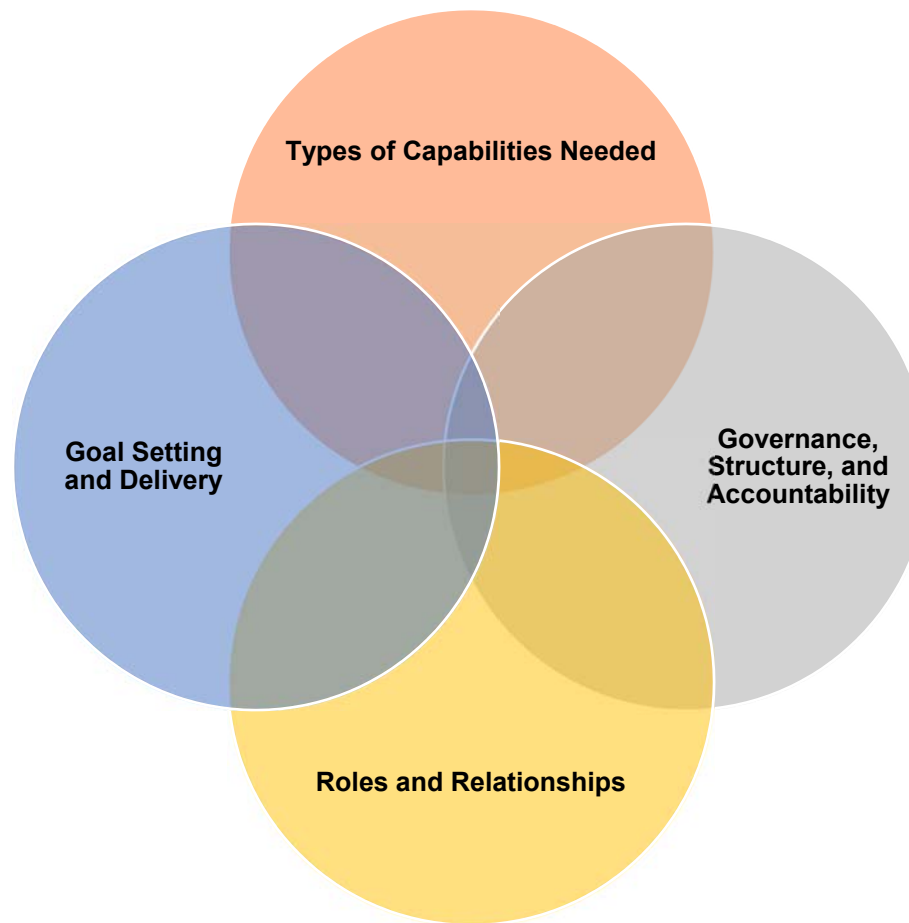


Exhibit 2. Key Dimensions of Cross-Sector Collaborations

Types of Capabilities Needed

Evidence suggests that SWAG can benefit from additional staff training and expertise. Because of the varied and complex needs of students, personnel within the collaborative or through new partnerships are needed to effectively help students succeed. The SWAG collaborative will need to assess the types of staff that would be most critical. For instance, is there a need to partner with an organization that can provide a full-time social worker to strengthen clinical case management support? Should tutors, who have expertise with Special Education students, be staffed at Live in Peace? How might a family outreach or engagement specialist help families with housing support, since this is a persistent need found in the data? Should SWAG staff receive data management training to aid in data entry, monitoring, and use?

By regularly evaluating the financial, material, and human capital resources, SWAG partners can plan how their expertise, networks, skillsets, and other assets can be efficiently used to help students. In enlisting the support of other partners, SWAG will need to make sure that new players have the attitudes, competencies, and capacities necessary to work well in the alliance. These include the ability to work across boundaries, engage in strategic planning, an openness to collaborate and participate in team-oriented work, and strong experience in involving other stakeholders, (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Quick & Feldman, 2014).

Roles and Relationships

Relationships are key to any collaboration and SWAG is no exception. Partners will need to be able to trust one another and have transparent and respectful communication, where they can raise and resolve grievances without fear of alienation or retaliation. Creating channels to listen and to respond to partners' needs, perspectives, and concerns establishes a forum for consensus-building, and fosters cross-sector understanding. Relationships outside of the collaboration are also important, as external program champions and sponsors can promote buy-in, shape a unifying identity, and muster support (Agranoff, 2012; Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015).

Moreover, clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, including decision-making authority, is critical to the success of all cross-sector alliances—especially since partners derive from different organizations with distinct norms, values, and expectations. Research indicates that real or perceived power imbalances can be a source of mistrust and a threat to sustainable collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Having clearly defined roles and responsibilities can help forge agreements and prevent misunderstandings by laying out specific action areas based on a partner's area of expertise and core competencies.

Evidence from the first year suggests that there are opportunities to further articulate the roles and relationships among the different partners in SWAG, including members of the Steering Committee, those working at the policy level (e.g., county supervisors), and the program staff directly engaging with youth and families. There are also opportunities to clarify the role partners play in the day-to-day operations of the program. For instance, what should probation's role be at the Live in Peace site, and in what ways can the probation officer support the program more broadly in the community? How might representatives from the Human Services Agency play a greater role in supporting the case management of students?

In sum, partners in cross-sector collaborations need to be clear and understand their roles, including distinguishing between single and joint responsibilities and accountabilities. Defining who does what will be critical for the sustainability and success of SWAG. In clarifying roles, it is important to recognize the diversity of partners' organizational cultures and practices, and that each partner bring unique perspectives, skills, and capacities. As the program moves into its second year, we posit that partners will continue to learn from one another and strengthen bonds through ongoing and respectful interaction and reciprocity (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012).

Governance, Structure, and Accountability

Vangen et al. (2014) offer a useful definition: "The governance of a collaborative entity entails the design and use of a structure and processes that enable actors to direct, coordinate, and allocate resources for the collaboration as a whole and to account for its activities" (pg. 8). A clear governance structure can provide direction, clarify decision-making and other responsibilities, and ensure equity and inclusion. A majority of cross-sector collaborations struggle in determining what structure is the best fit for the collaboration. It is important to emphasize that these challenges are par for the course and that SWAG is not an exception.

Inclusivity is especially important for those from East Palo Alto, a historically marginalized city. There is a strong sentiment that the residents of East Palo Alto have been treated unfairly in the past; as a result, many in the community have been and continue to be wary of outsiders. One respondent reported how East Palo Alto can, at times, be an "insular community;" stating "while this is a strength, it can also be a challenge particularly when the resources and expertise do not exist within the community." These community tensions are important to consider as research demonstrates governance structures are influenced by contextual elements including the quality of pre-existing relationships among collaborative partners (Cornforth, Hayes, & Vangen, 2014; Crosby, Stone, & Bryson, 2015; Siddiki, Carboni, Koski, & Sadiq, 2015).

Given that SWAG is comprised of partners from distinct sectors (e.g., nonprofit, law enforcement, education), who are accustomed to differing governance structures, the collaborative will need to determine exactly what type of governance structure will be the best fit to achieve the program's aims and mission.

Evidence suggests that there is opportunity to clarify governance, structure, and accountability-related issues as SWAG moves into its second year. Questions to consider could include the following: Which individuals are responsible for coordinating and ensuring that tasks, both at the program and policy level, are completed in a timely manner to allow the collaboration to progress? How will partners determine the success of efforts in Year Two, and who will be held accountable in meeting this success? How might data be used to establish indicators of success and promote accountability on target outcomes? Indeed, ensuring a user-friendly case management system that tracks the needs and strengths of SWAG participants, and establishing a practice of inquiry to promote continuous learning, will facilitate communication and collaboration among partners and allow them to pinpoint and modify the types of supports students need to succeed.

It is clear from the evidence that all SWAG partners are committed to the mission of the program and to demonstrating accountability and ownership for the actions they take to serve the needs of youth. Accountability, however, can be tricky in collaborative endeavors like SWAG, because it is unclear exactly to whom the collaborative is accountable and for what (Romzek et al., 2014). As the program brings in more stakeholders at the policy-, steering committee-, and program-operational levels to help students succeed, a shared vision on the governance structure—including members' roles and responsibilities and how they are held accountable—will be important. Doing so will facilitate coordination of policies, programs, and service delivery.

Goal Setting and Service Delivery

Developing a clear rationale and set of goals, while allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to internal and external demands, is critical for the success of any partnership. Consensus on program goals, working arrangements, and strategies helps bring partners together and solidify a common purpose. SWAG members will need to ensure that the aims and objectives are realistic, and that they have an ongoing way of monitoring and revising their efforts as they learn which endeavors are successful and which are not. In many ways, cross-sector collaborations are a forum for learning that can teach members about the conditions and process that allow them to be better at what they do.

There is goal alignment among the partners. A majority share the view that SWAG is, first and foremost, an academic intervention program designed to help youth get the credits they need to graduate. Many respondents shared the same measures of success for the program: improved grades and attendance; students graduating from high school and moving on to college; and students getting good jobs thereafter.

Moreover, evidence suggests that the program theory of change provides SWAG partners a guiding framework on the types of inputs necessary to realize short-, intermediate-, and long-term goals. The theory of change also highlights for partners the key program assumptions that must be met in order for the program to serve students well (e.g., there are sufficient resources). Agreement on the theory of change has helped provide a common understanding of, and agreement to, the vision and objectives of SWAG.

Based on the present study, we revised the initial theory of change in two ways to better represent what respondents report in this first year of the analysis (Exhibit 2). First, we depict SWAG's overall approach as a triangle with three main tenets: partnership, coordination, and relationship-building. These tenets frame the five interrelated and holistic types of supports the program provides: Case Management and Advocacy, Academics, Career and Leadership Development, Pro-Social Activities, and Skill Building and Enrichment (Exhibit 3). Second, we included positive youth assets as a short-term outcome, because caring relationships with adults, school connection, and positive mindset shifts about one's sense of self and about the value of education were issues raised consistently across interview respondents.

It will be important to continually revisit SWAG's theory of change, review the goals and targets of the program, and check that partners' efforts are on-track. As mentioned above, respondents feel that improvements can be made to the identification and referral process; the level of human

capital resources available to address student needs; and the ways in which data are recorded and used for continuous improvement. It will be important to revisit the theory of change as SWAG grows and as existing members are replaced with new ones. New partners will need to have a clear understanding of the purpose and problems addressed by the partnership, the service delivery model, and how efforts are refined to help students improve their educational outcomes (Bryson et al., 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2012).

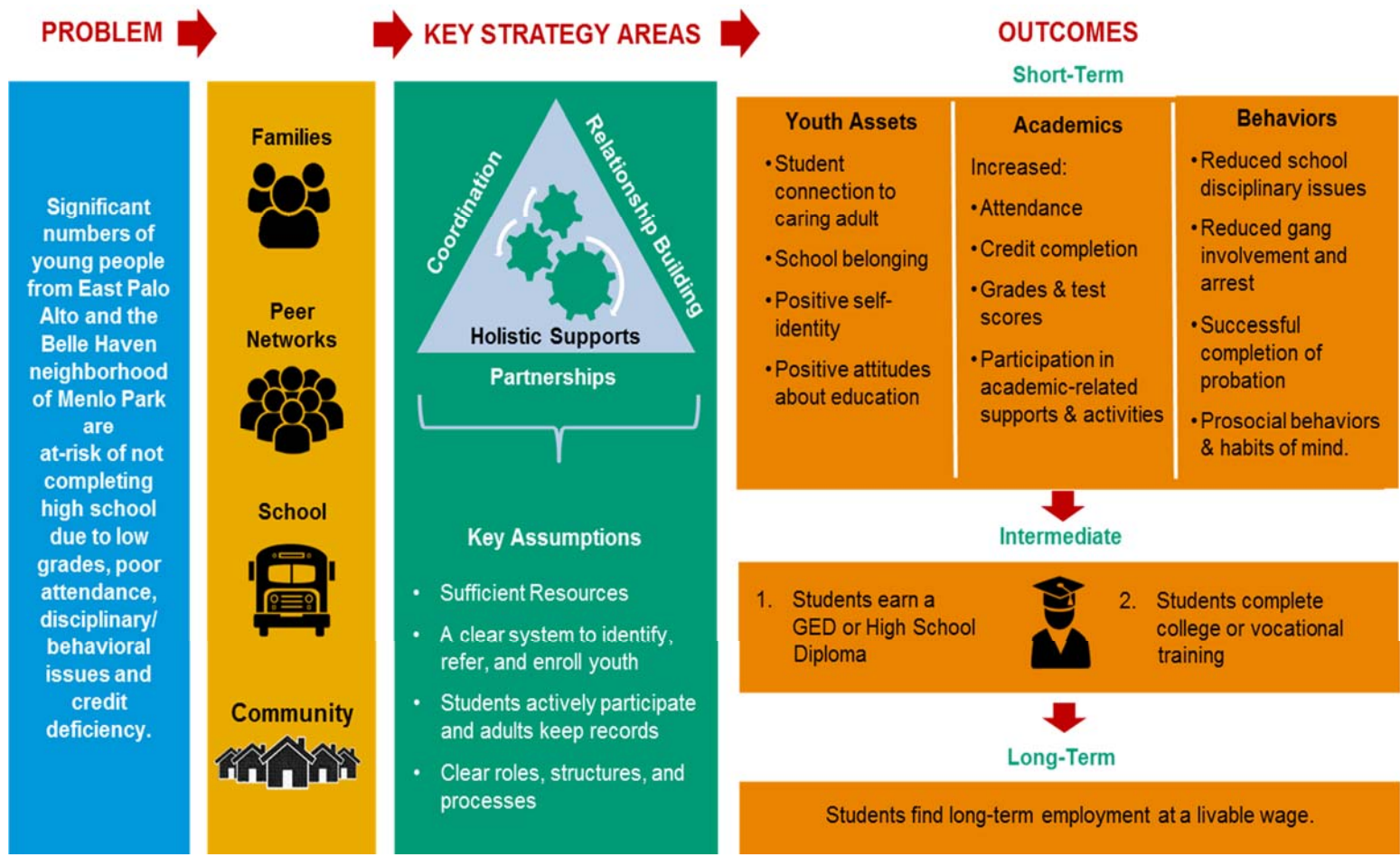


Exhibit 2. SWAG Program Theory of Change



Exhibit 3. SWAG Holistic Support

REFERENCES

- Agranoff, R. (2012). *Collaborating to manage: A primer for the public sector*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Horsey, C. S. (1997). From first grade forward: Early foundations of high school dropout. *Sociology of Education*, 2(70), 87–107
- America's Promise Alliance (2016). High School Graduation Facts: Ending the Dropout Crisis. Retrieved from <http://www.americaspromise.org/high-school-graduation-facts-ending-dropout-crisis#endnote02>
- Archambault, I., Janosz, M., Fallu, J. S., & Pagani, L. S. (2009). Student engagement and its relationship with early high school dropout. *Journal of adolescence*, 32(3), 651–670.
- Babiak, K. & Thibault, L. (2009). Challenges in multiple cross-sector partnerships. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38(1), 117–143.
- Battin-Pearson, S., Newcomb, M. D., Abbott, R. D., Hill, K. G., Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. D. (2000). Predictors of early high school dropout: A test of five theories. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(3), 568–582.
- Bohn, S., & Danielson, C., & Bandy, M. (2016). *Just the Facts: Poverty in California*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_PovertyJTF.pdf
- Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C., & Stone, M. M. (2015). Designing and implementing cross-sector collaborations: Needed and challenging. *Public Administration Review*, 75(5), 647–663.
- Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C., & Stone, M. M. (2006). The design and implementation of cross-sector collaborations: Propositions from the literature. *Public Administration Review*, 66(s1), 44–55.
- Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C., Stone, M. M., & Mortensen, J. C. (2008). Collaboration in fighting traffic congestion: A study of Minnesota's urban partnership agreement. Report no. CTS 08-25, Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota. <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Publications/ResearchReports/reportdetail.html?id=1714>
- Castrechini, S. (2013). *Graduation Rates for East Palo Alto Students in the Sequoia Union High School District*. Stanford, CA: John W. Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing theory* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cornforth, C., Hayes, J. P., Vangen, S. (2015). Nonprofit-public collaborations: Understanding governance dynamics. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 44(4), 775–795
- Crosby, B., Stone, M., & Bryson, J. M. (2015). Governance in an era of partnerships. In James L. Perry & Robert K. Christensen, (Eds.), *Handbook of Public Administration*, 3rd ed. (pp. 38–54). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

- Cutler, K. M. (2015). East of Palo Alto's eden: Race and the formation of Silicon Valley. Retrieved from <https://techcrunch.com/2015/01/10/east-of-palo-altos-eden/>
- Durlak, J. A., & DuPre, E. P. (2008). Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41(3-4), 327–350.
- Emerson, K., Nabatchi, T., & Balogh, S. (2011). An integrative framework for collaborative governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 22(1), 1–29.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies of qualitative research*. London, UK: Widenfield and Nicholson.
- Grounded Solutions, Ltd. (2016). Grounded theory online: What is grounded theory? Retrieved from <http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory/>
- Harris, L. R., Cespedes, S. (2015). East Palo Alto: An island of affordability in a sea of wealth. Berkeley, CA: Center for Community Innovation. Retrieved from http://urbandisplacement.t324.com/sites/default/files/east_palo_alto_final.pdf
- Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2005). Leadership in the shaping and implementation of collaboration agendas: How things happen in a (not quite) joined-up world. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(6), 1159–1175.
- King, A. (2008). In vivo coding. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*.
- Lehr, C. A., Johnson, D. R., Bremer, C. D., Cosio, A., & Thompson, M. (2004). Essential tools: Increasing rates of school completion: Moving from policy and research to practice. Retrieved from <http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/dropout/dropout.pdf>
- London, R. & McLaughlin, M. (2014). The youth sector: Supporting cross-institutional community collaboration through shared data. In N. Cytron, K. L. Pettit, G. T. Kingsley, D. J. Erickson, & E. S. Seidman (Eds.), *What counts: Harnessing data for America's communities* (pp. 177–190). San Francisco, CA: Federal Reserve Bank.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. M. (1984) *Qualitative data analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2014). Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), by race/ethnicity and selected demographics for the United States, the 50 states, and the District of Columbia: School year 2013–14. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2013-14.asp
- Quick, K. S., & Feldman, M. S. (2011). Distinguishing participation and inclusion. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 31(3), 272–290.
- Romzek, B., LeRoux, K., Johnston, J., Kempf, R. J., & Piatak, J. (2014). Informal accountability in multisector service delivery collaborations. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 24(4), 813–842.

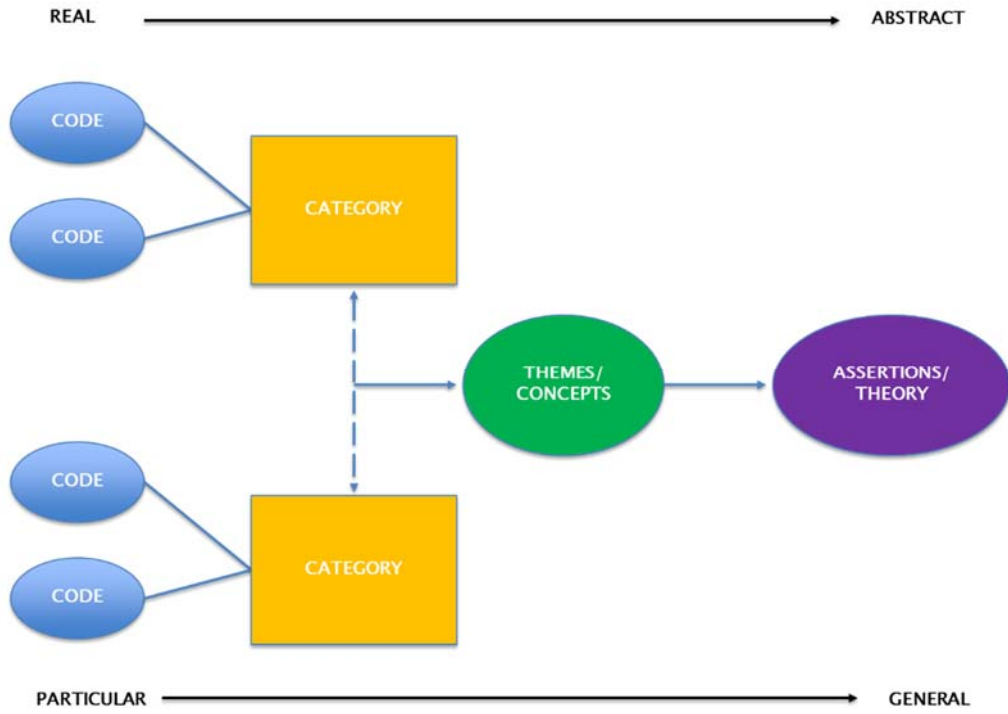
- Saladaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual of qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Sickmund, M., & Puzzanchera, C. (2014). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2014 National Report*. Pittsburgh, PA. Retrieved from <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/nr2014/downloads/chapter1.pdf>
- Siddiki, S. N., Carboni, J. L., Koski, C., & Sadiq, A. (2015). How policy rules shape the structure and performance of collaborative governance arrangements. *Public Administration Review*, 75(4), 536–547.
- Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies (2015). Income inequality in the San Francisco Bay Area. Retrieved from <https://www.jointventure.org/images/stories/pdf/income-inequality-2015-06.pdf>
- Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C., Rausch, M. K., May, S. L., & Tobin, t. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, 40(1), 85–107.
- Thomson, A. M. & Perry, J. L. (2006). Collaboration processes: Inside the black box. Special issue, *Public Administration Review*, 66, 20–32.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). American Community Survey, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table 1 [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://factfinder.census.gov>.
- Vangen, S., Hayes, J. P., & Comforth, C. (2014). Governing cross-sector inter-organizational collaborations. *Public Management Review*, 17(9), 1237–1260.
- Vangen, S., & Huxam, C. (2012). The tangled web: Unraveling the principle of common goals in collaborations. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 22(4), 731–760.
- Vangen, S. & Winchester, N. (2014). Managing cultural diversity in collaborations. *Public Management Review* 16(5), 686–707.
- Weiss, C. Carol (1995). Nothing as practical as good theory: Exploring theory-based evaluation of comprehensive community for children and families. In Connel, Kubisch, Schorr, & Weiss (Eds.), *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Concepts, methods, and contexts* (pp. 65–92). Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

APPENDIX A

Qualitative Data and Methods

We gathered qualitative data from multiple sources. First, we examined documents that provided rich description of the SWAG program. These included the joint grant proposal to the state; draft templates of program documents, such as life plans and Multi-Disciplinary Team student profile sheets; early versions of the program theory of change created by Live in Peace; transcripts from 13 team meetings (from July 2015 to March 2016); and field notes from one site-visit observation. Second, we analyzed transcripts from a total of 13 interviews with key informants including SWAG leadership, staff, and Steering Committee members. Thirteen analytic memos, which were completed by Gardner Center researchers immediately after each interview, were also part of our analysis. The intent behind an analytic memo is for the researcher to record and reflect upon the data immediately after the interview exchange. “Memos are primarily conceptual in intent. They don’t just report data; they tie together different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster, often to show that those data are instances of a general concept” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pg. 72). Finally, we recorded notes and observations from three data briefings with partners from the County Manager’s Office, Live in Peace, and the Probation Department.

To better understand the SWAG model, we followed a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in reviewing and analyzing interview data (see figure below) (Saladaña, 2013) to ensure that ideas or codes gleaned from interviews and data briefings reflected respondents’ and participants’ own words (King, 2008). The research team began analysis by first coding the same set of interviews. We first generated codes based on excerpts of the actual language found in the data records (e.g., interviews); codes reflect terms that interview respondents use themselves, which allows for their “voices” to be “heard” or to emerge from the data. Chief among our codes were the particular challenges, opportunities, and tensions that shaped the implementation of the SWAG program. Our codes also related back to the four main program assumptions depicted in the SWAG theory of change. Next, we reached consensus on the key codes or ideas across interviews and data briefings that seemed most important in answering our research questions. We then grouped these codes into categories. We provided clear definitions for each of these categories and then consolidated those that seem closely related to one another. Following this, we collapsed categories into themes/concepts, which are higher-level and more abstract constructs. Patterns or relationships between these themes/concepts then provided the evidence toward the development of particular theories and assertions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), the basis for grounded theory in which theory about a population of study is developed or grounded in the data for that population (Grounded Solutions Ltd, 2016). Finally, we examined how these assertions were related to the SWAG program theory of change.



APPENDIX B

Quantitative Data and Methods

The quantitative data come from the following data sources: Sequoia Union High School District (SUHSD) administrative records; SWAG administrative data from Live in Peace, including a SWAG roster with students' names and IDs; case manager assignments with SWAG start and end dates; and SWAG programming data (i.e., student name, the type of activity or program attended, timestamp of when the program occurred for the period of 9/22/15 to 4/28/16). To link SWAG students to SUHSD administrative and academic records, a unique list of SWAG students was compiled using the SWAG roster and case manager lists (N=92). We then linked this unique set of SWAG students to SUHSD records using the student's identification number when it was provided and the student's first and last name (and school and grade when it was available) when no ID was provided. A total of 64 of the 92 students matched to SUHSD records. Of these 64, 60 matched to 2014-15 SUHSD records (the latest year for which the Gardner Center had data) and the remaining 4 were matched to previous years' records). Among the 28 that we were unable to find in SUHSD records, 14 students were not expected to match as they had not yet entered high school or the district during the year in question (2014-15); 9 students attended East Palo Alto Academy (EPAA), a school for which the Gardner Center did not have data; this may be because EPAA only recently became a dependent charter under SUHSD and the data were either unavailable or had not yet been provided in extracts to the Gardner Center; the remaining 5 students did not match for unknown reasons (e.g., may no longer be in high school; misspelling of name). This information is also displayed in the table below.

Link status	Frequency	Percent
Matched to Sequoia Union High School District (SUHSD)	64	70%
Data unavailable	28	30%
Student had not entered the district (e.g., 9 th grader in 2015-16)	14	15%
Data unavailable for students at East Palo Alto Academy	9	10%
Student not found in Sequoia Union High School District (SUHSD) records	5	5%
Total	92	100%

Appendix B.1. Demographic characteristics of the SWAG 2015-16⁴ cohort, as compared to Sequoia Union High School District (SUHSD) Students

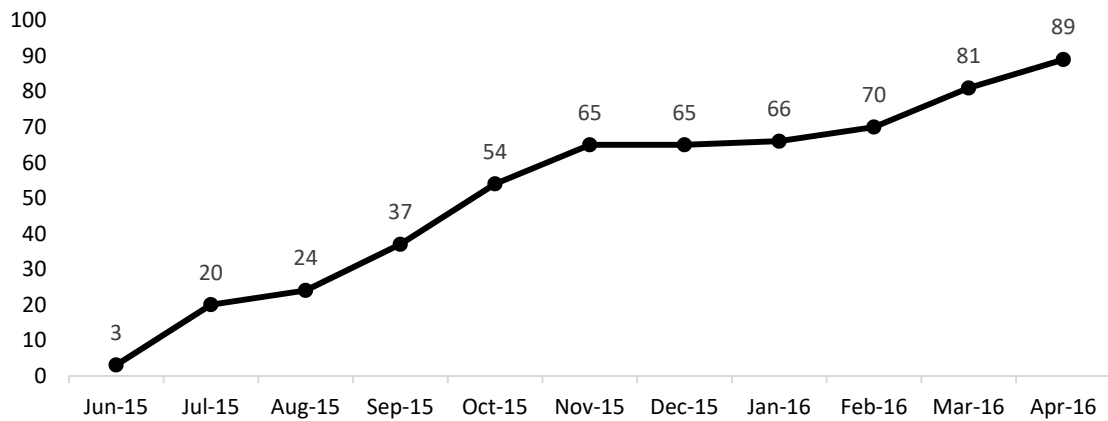
	SWAG		SUHSD	
	N	%	N	%
Overall	60	100	9,381	100
Sex				
Male	36	60	4,558	49
Female	24	40	4,802	51
Grade Level				
9	22	37	2,246	25
10	20	33	2,457	25
11	13	22	2,449	25
12	5	8	2,410	25
Race/Ethnicity ⁵				
Asian	< 10	2	769	8
African American	14	23	290	3
Latino	21	35	3,743	40
Pacific Islander	22	37	292	3
White	< 10	3	4,153	44
Special Education	10	17	642	7
English Learner	17	28	1,439	15

The table above compares SWAG students to students in Sequoia Union High School District. There were a total of 92 students participating in SWAG during the 2015-16 school year. Pacific Islander students comprised the majority of SWAG students, representing 37% of the population, a much higher proportion than in SUHSD (3%). Latino students made up a little over one third of the SWAG population and African American students made up nearly one quarter of the SWAG population. Compared to SUHSD, SWAG students were more likely to face potential barriers to learning due to about two times the proportion of English language learners and students receiving special education services.

⁴ The data displayed in this table pertain to the 2014-15 school year (the latest year for which the Gardner Center had Sequoia Union High School District student records).

⁵ For reference, the racial/ethnic population for the City of East Palo as a whole is as follows: Asian (3%), African American (14%), Latino (62%), Pacific Islander (12%), White (7%), (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

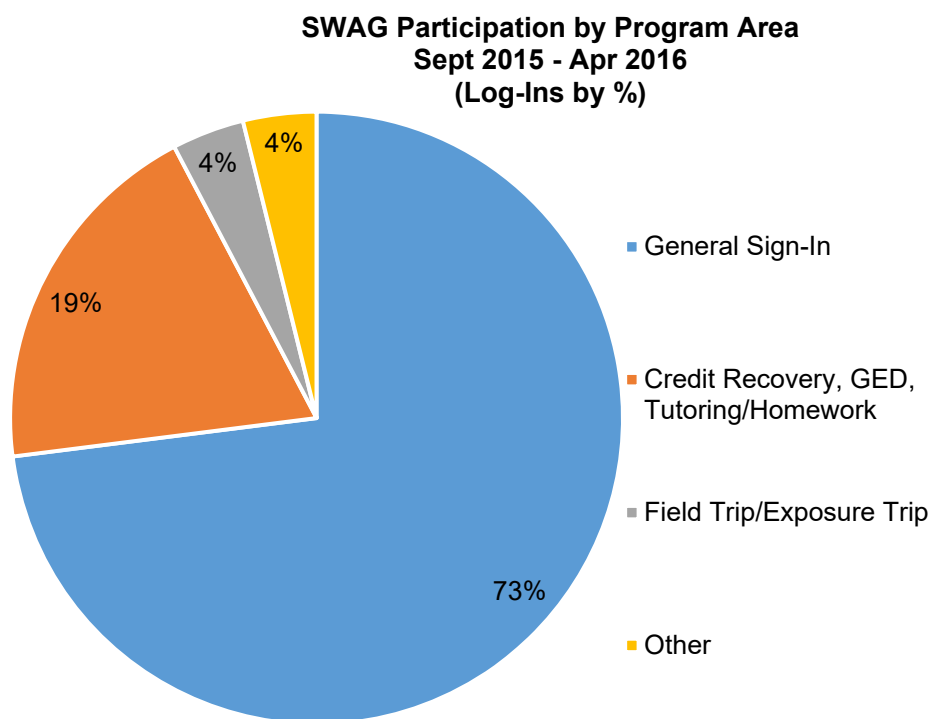
Appendix B. 2. SWAG Student Cumulative Enrollment by Start Date



Note: There are 20 students without SWAG start dates. For 17 of these students, the earliest SWAG program participation date was used as a proxy for SWAG start date. The remaining 3 students with missing SWAG start dates also had missing program data and are not displayed in the chart above.

Appendix B. 3. Student Attendance Log-ins for SWAG Programming, September 2015 – April 2016

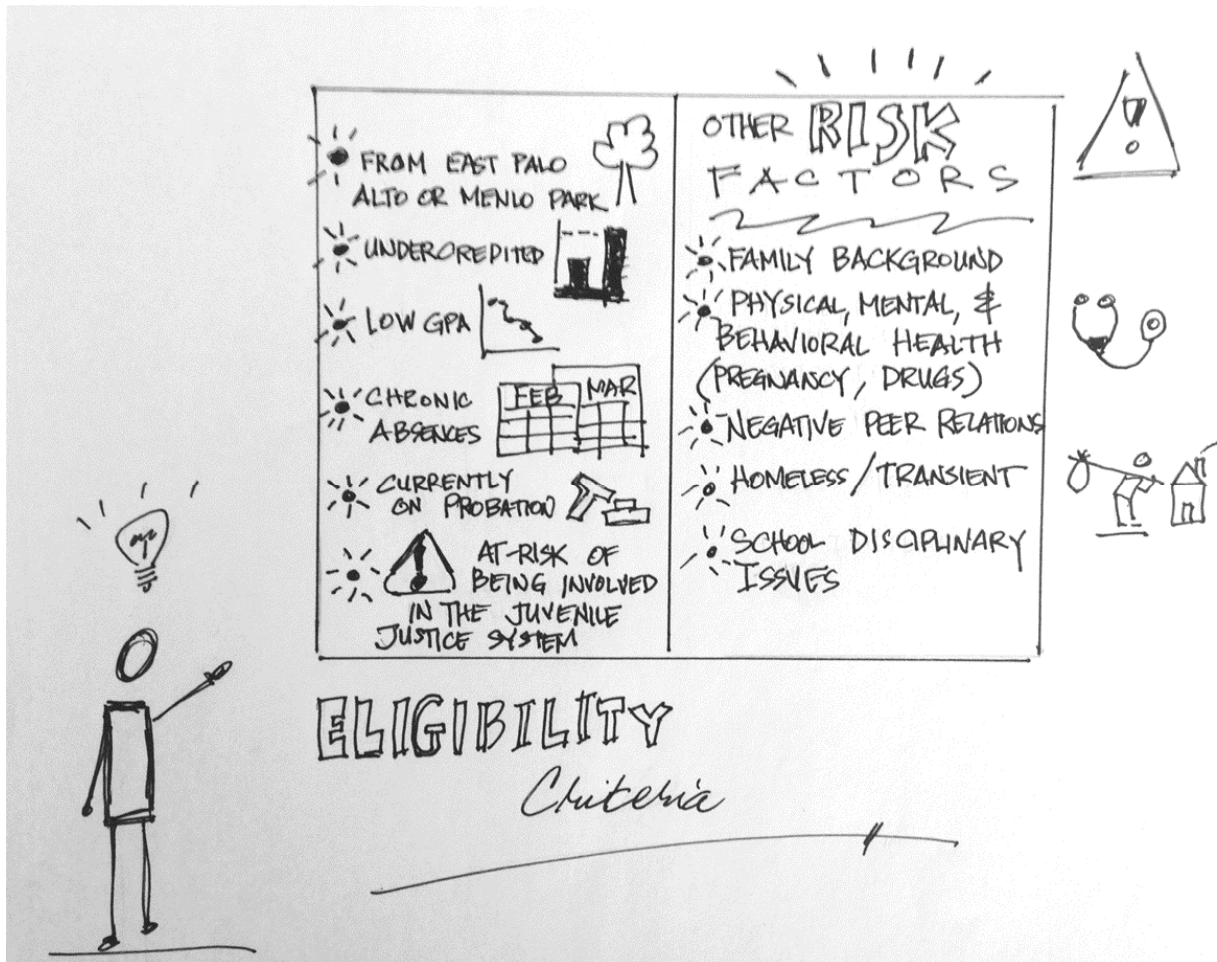
	N	%
General Sign-In	2,458	73%
Credit Recovery, GED, Tutoring/Homework	638	19%
Field Trip/Exposure Trip	140	4%
Other	149	4%



The "Other" category includes, Able Works (6), Conditioning (6), Financial Management & Investing (1), Fly (26), Golf (6), Personal Development (32), Scape Art Class (5), Skill Building (8), and The Shop (40). The numbers in parentheses represent the number of log-ins for the category listed. Data displayed pertains to 87 unique SWAG students. Five of

There were 3,385 instances of SWAG program student sign-ins logged between September 22, 2015 and April 28, 2016. Nearly three quarters (73%) of the log-ins were categorized as General Sign-In, a 30-minute group activity conducted each day. About one fifth (19%) of log-ins were for Credit Recovery, GED, or Tutoring/Homework. Four percent were attributed to Field Trip/Exposure Trips. Other activities such as The Shop (video production), Personal Development, and Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY) comprised 4% of log-ins.

APPENDIX C
Program Eligibility Criteria



APPENDIX D

SWAG Identification, Recruitment, and Enrollment Process

