

Best Starts for Kids School Partnerships Evaluation Plan Final Draft Executive Summary

Puget Sound Educational Service District

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Introduction

Best Starts for Kids (BSK) supports partners to ensure school environments are safe, supportive, respectful and engaging for young people, staff and families, and that race, ethnicity or cultural identity does not impact access to these environments.¹ “Throughout King County, Best Starts for Kids has built partnerships with over 205 schools and school partners. These partnerships bring communities, schools and school districts, and families together to embrace a whole school, whole child approach to education.”²

The purpose of this evaluation is to illuminate the characteristics of equitable partnerships in schools with multiple Best Starts for Kids School Partnerships investments, and the conditions that support them, including King County processes and systems. The evaluation is also designed to explore the relationship between equitable partnerships and school-wide changes in practices, policies, systems, school environments, and key student outcomes.

This evaluation plan is a living document and will be adjusted as we learn with our evaluation advisors and the School Partnerships community (awardees, partners, youth, families, and King County staff).

Goals & Objectives

Evaluation questions

Question 1: In schools and school districts that receive multiple BSK School Partnerships investments, how and why do dosage (both breadth, including the number and type, and reach, e.g. whole school, targeted group of students, families, or staff, of SP investments; and depth, e.g. the intensiveness of a program/intervention), leadership, and coordination among schools and school-based partners impact characteristics of school-based partnerships (including shared vision; aligned, responsive implementation; shared accountability for success; and partnership synergy)?³

Question 2: Taken altogether, to what extent and in what ways do multiple School Partnerships investments in schools influence changes in the following areas?

- a. Schoolwide practices, policies, and systems
- b. School environments
- c. Key student outcomes

Question 3: To what extent and in what ways do funding agency practices and cross-strategy work among BSK/King County staff help support and influence collective action in schools that received multiple School Partnerships strategy investments?

Methods

This is a mixed methods study that uses quantitative and qualitative approaches to better understand the implementation and outcomes of the collective work of School Partnerships (SP) investments. The complex nature of School Partnerships’ multifaceted, multilayered, multisite interventions requires that our team use methods that reflect the interrelated nature of the interventions and allows for “the opportunity to build incrementally toward a knowledge base for effective implementation” (Huynh et al., 2018⁴).

¹ Best Starts for Kids School Partnerships Convening presentation. December 5, 2018.

² Best Starts for Kids Blog. (2018, September). Retrieved December 2018, from <https://beststartsblog.com/>.

³ Lasker, R.D., Weiss, E.S., & Miller, R. (2001). Partnership synergy: A practical framework for studying and strengthening collaborative advantage. *The Millbank Quarterly*, 79(2), 179-205.

⁴ Huynh, A. K., Hamilton, A. B., Farmer, M. M., Bean-Mayberry, B., Stirman, S. W., Moin, T., & Finley, E. P. (2018). A Pragmatic Approach to Guide Implementation Evaluation Research: Strategy Mapping for Complex Interventions. *Frontiers in public health*, 6, 134.

To begin this study, we will focus on those schools where multiple awards have been made and where implementation is underway. We will work with BSK SP leads to review this information and identify schools where multiple investments are certain. See **Appendix: Schools with Multiple BSK SP Investments** for a current listing of schools with multiple BSK SP investments.

The BSK School Partnerships Logic Model (see **Appendix: BSK School Partnerships Logic model**) guides sequencing and emphasis in each study year. The Year 1 (2018-19 school year) evaluation will focus primarily on **partnership development** in schools with multiple investments, and **how supports from BSK/King County are influencing partnerships** in these schools. Secondly, Year 1 will include an exploratory inquiry of the current state of key **practices, policies, and systems** of interest to awardees and partners in each subsample school. Understanding baseline Year 1 school **environments**, and student outcomes such as **attendance** and **discipline** will be an exploratory focus, in partnerships in subsample schools working toward changes in these areas.

Year 1 will also have a strong focus on establishing advisory capacity. More details can be found in the Advisory Function section.

The Year 2 (2019-20) and 3 (2020-21) evaluation will continue the inquiry into **partnership development** and **supportive conditions**. Year 2 and 3 will also include a deeper focus on changes to **practices, policies, systems, school environments, and student outcomes** as relevant for the subsample schools. This Year 1, 2, and 3 sequencing assumes that partnership development and supports from BSK/King County in Year 1 help create the conditions for changes in practices, policies, systems, school environments, and student outcomes in Years 2 and 3.

Years 2 and 3 will include two-three case studies to examine the development and functioning of BSK-funded school partnerships and look more deeply at the effects of the collective School Partnerships investment.

This mixed methods study aims to deepen understanding of partnerships and their influence on changes to practices, policies, systems, school environments, and student outcomes for the purpose of learning and improvement. It is not designed to generate findings that can be generalized to all schools with multiple BSK School Partnerships investments.

Limitations

Various limitations are associated with our methods and the context in which this study takes place. They include complexities of school-based collective action, varying levels of program implementation, and tradeoffs associated with limiting the study to schools with multiple BSK SP investments.

Advisory Function

Our evaluation team aims to have the voices of those most impacted by disparities and unjust systems help lead the evaluation design and implementation. There are numerous awardees and stakeholders, and we want to create opportunities for them to participate in ways that make sense for their schedules, available time, etc. Advisory functions are integrated throughout the study.

Communications and learning

The communications plan addresses dissemination products for students and families; BSK School Partnerships awardees and partners; BSK staff; King County Executive; King County Council; and the public. In addition, we outline how we will communicate with and engage stakeholders during implementation of this evaluation plan. The communications plan aims to support ongoing learning and continuous improvement.