



Youth make art at Mt. Airy Boys & Girls Club.



**INCREASING  
AFTERSCHOOL  
PARTICIPATION**



## ABOUT SPROCKETS

**Sprockets** is a network of many different afterschool and summer programs for youth in Saint Paul. It is a collaboration of community organizations, the City of Saint Paul, and Saint Paul Public Schools.

**Our vision:** All Saint Paul's youth will develop their abilities as learners, contributors, and navigators so they can recognize and achieve their greatest potential.

**Our mission:** Sprockets improves the quality, availability, and effectiveness of out-of-school time learning for all youth in Saint Paul through the committed, collaborative, and innovative efforts of community organizations, government, schools, and other partners.



Mentors help youth prep for interviews at CLUES YAI program.

## INCREASING AFTERSCHOOL PARTICIPATION

**Showing up to an afterschool program. Coming often. Returning year after year. It makes a difference.**

Walking into an afterschool program can change a young person's life. Whether that program focuses on gardening, choir, soccer, or civic engagement, afterschool programs can give youth the chance to explore new opportunities and learn new skills.

Participation in a high-quality afterschool program can also lead to better school grades and attendance, fewer behavior problems, higher engagement in school community, decreased likelihood of taking part in at-risk behavior, and development of social and emotional skills.<sup>1</sup> These benefits for youth are stronger when youth participate frequently, regularly, and over a sustained period of time.<sup>2</sup>

So it's important to know who is showing up to afterschool programs, how often they are there, and whether or not they come back from year to year.

## THAT'S WHERE SPROCKETS MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

Because participation in afterschool is key to youth success, Sprockets provides reliable information on youth involvement in afterschool and summer learning across Saint Paul. And we provide free access to the Sprockets Shared Data System for organizations serving youth in the city.

This year, we're reporting on **22,442** youth from **38** organizations, with **20%** of those youth attending programming at more than one organization. The young people in the Sprockets network reflect the diversity of Saint Paul. Sprockets serves young people who face opportunity gaps: **79%** of Sprockets youth are from communities of color, and **72%** qualify for free and reduced lunch.

The Sprockets Shared Data System helps partner organizations easily track participants and their attendance, and links this information with Saint Paul Public Schools data. As a result, programs can look at participants' academic outcomes at an aggregate level. This gives programs the tools to better understand who they're serving - and how often.

This data also gives the Sprockets network a broad picture of who is participating in life-changing afterschool opportunities in Saint Paul – and it shows us who we're missing. And then we work to fill the gaps. Sprockets has built a strong network of collaborators who can find solutions and take action, working together to ensure that we're giving ALL youth in Saint Paul the opportunity to participate in afterschool.

"From Sprockets data, we saw an opportunity gap for youth living on the East Side of Saint Paul. Since Saint Paul Urban Tennis' mission is to provide tennis and education programming for underserved youth in Saint Paul, we decided to focus efforts in that geographic area to help fill those gaps." – Becky Cantellano, Executive Director of Saint Paul Urban Tennis

<sup>1</sup> "Taking a Deeper Dive into Afterschool: Positive Outcomes and Promising Practices." Afterschool Alliance, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Little, P., Wilmer, C. & Weiss, H. (2008). After School Programs in the 21st Century: Their Potential and What It Takes to Achieve It. Harvard Family Research Project.

## 2016-2017 PARTICIPATION BY THE NUMBERS

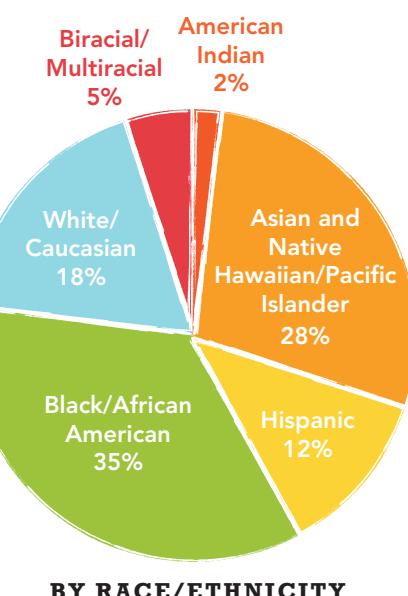
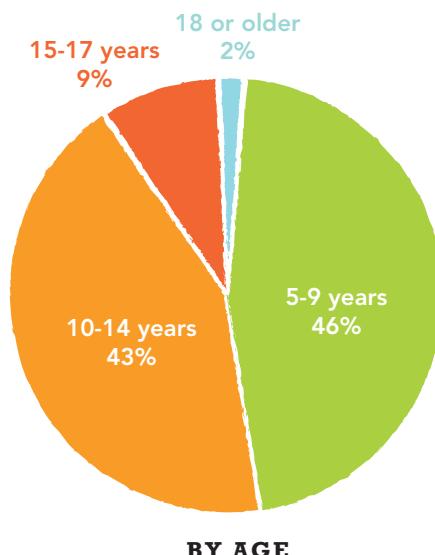


**22,442**  
youth attend Sprockets  
network programs.

**20%**  
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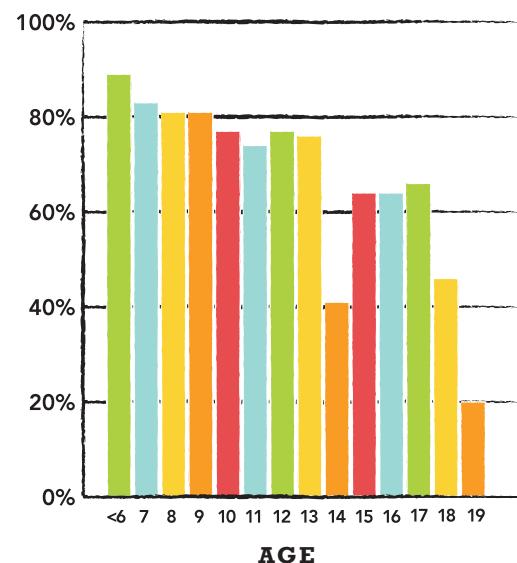
**72%**  
of Sprockets youth  
qualify for free or  
reduced lunch prices

### Who attends Sprockets network programs?



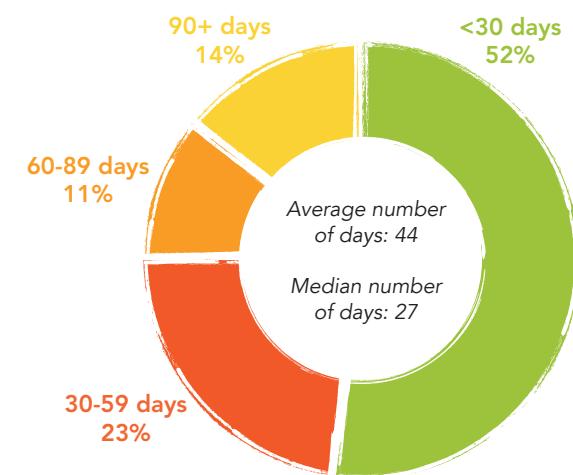
### Who comes back?

Retention of Sprockets Network Youth from 2015-16 to 2016-17 in any Sprockets Program  
(Date reflects age as of 9/1/2016)

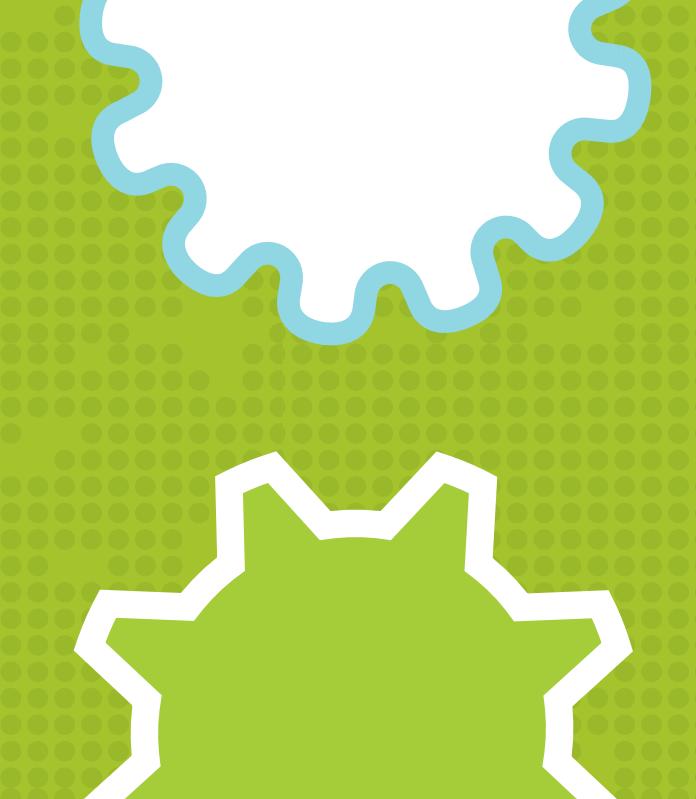


### How often do youth attend?

Number of Days Participated by Sprockets Youth



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## BRIDGING THE GAPS

The benefits of afterschool programs increase when youth attend programs year after year. At least 70% of Sprockets youth ages 6-12 participate in programming that they return to the next year. But what happens once middle school ends? Sprockets retention data shows a drop-off during the all-important transition from middle school to high school – at age 13, only 42% of Sprockets participants return to the same or other agency the next year. How can we build strong afterschool pathways as youth age out of programs and transition to the next step in their education?

## HOW DO SPROCKETS PARTNERS INCREASE PARTICIPATION?

In the Sprockets network, we're all about learning from each other so that we can better support youth in Saint Paul. We looked to the Sprockets Shared Data System to find examples of programs that were doing a great job with different aspects of participation over the last year. Here are a few organizations in our network who have a strong record of recruiting youth, getting them to return to programming, and retaining them year after year. How do they do it?

SEE THE CASE STUDIES BELOW



### CASE STUDY #1 TWIN CITIES HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

**Twin Cities Housing Development Corporation** runs youth programs at the Liberty Plaza Resource Center for youth that live in their housing development, but also for families in the surrounding neighborhood. To **RECRUIT** more youth to their programming, they're intentionally reaching out to the community and establishing consistent and proactive communication with parents. This includes reaching out to new residents, and using interpreters to make sure non-English speaking families are aware of program opportunities. To make sure that youth want to come back, Liberty Plaza is also offering a variety of new programs that are more aligned with the interests of youth that participate, including a new makerspace that started up last year. They're also working to retain volunteers and staff so that youth have consistent and positive relationships with adults in the program.

"We heard about the PLUS-time program from our neighbors when we moved here last spring! Now we come to the program almost every day because we do lots of activities, including learning how to sew. We like our teacher and the staff and volunteers, making friends, trying new things, and teaching others. Liberty Plaza is a fun place to be!"  
– Fatoumata, age 8 , Morris, age 5, and Assata, age 10

**CASE STUDY #2 >**



Fatoumata, age 8 , Morris, age 5, and Assata, age 10 at Liberty Plaza Resource Center.



Deborah, age 12, participates at West 7th Community Center

## CASE STUDY #2 KEYSTONE COMMUNITY SERVICES

The **Keystone Community Kids Program** has been successful at getting youth to participate and **RETURN** frequently and consistently throughout the year. How do they manage it? First of all, they offer a high number of “contact hours” where youth can be in programming. They’re open for afterschool programs, opportunities on release days, and an 8-week summer program - all of which totals 950 hours annually. They’re intentionally not a drop-in program and regular attendance is specified in registration materials. They offer a wide variety of activities that meets the interests of the youth who participate – ranging from tutoring to Lego League to Ethiopian dance to disc golf. Community Kids has also structured youth voice and choice in program design, with students helping to plan and lead activities at every age level. They’ve grown their teen program because the teens were involved in redesigning their space and planning activities. Keystone Community Kids is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center administered by the MN Department of Education.

“I’ve been at this program for almost 6 years now. It’s such a great way to make friends. Some activities are educational and some are FUN – I like how they balance it out. When I was going into 6th grade everyone at Keystone had to participate in summer school. I thought I was going to fail middle school but the summer school program at Keystone helped me get ready and I didn’t fail any classes!” – Deborah, age 12



Tania, age 15, participates in the CLUES YA! program

## CASE STUDY #3 THE YOUTH IN ACTION (YA!) PROGRAM AT COMUNIDADES LATINAS UNIDAS EN SERVICIO

The Youth in Action (YA!) Program at **Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES)** does a good job of **RETAINING** students in their program all through high school. It makes sense – because the YA! program is structured as a four-year experience building skills and getting ready for college. In addition, YA! focuses on community building to create a supportive culture where participants build relationships with each other and have a sense of journeying together through the program. Participants also have added accountability because they’re paired with a mentor to support them.

“I decided to join YA! because it offered a mentor to support me through high school and the chance to get prepared for college. I come back each month because I learn something new each time – it gives me an opportunity to be part of my community and share my voice to become a better leader. YA! provides a very welcoming and engaging environment where we can share our opinions and be part of a group.” –Tania, age 15



## WHAT'S NEXT? ADVOCATING FOR INCREASED FUNDING FOR AFTERSCHOOL

As a network, we need to keep raising the bar on participation to help young people gain the benefits that afterschool programs provide. Let's **recruit** more young people to participate. And then to get them to **return** to the program on a regular basis. And **retain** them over time, so that they're building skills and relationships year after year.

Everyone can play a part in getting youth involved. Program managers can work to set up programs with enough flexibility and opportunity for youth to participate frequently, and build in youth voice so that youth want to return. Youth workers can recommend new programs for youth to join as they age out of programming. And we all, as caring adults, can work to connect young people with programs that cultivate their passions and enrich their lives.

There is a lot of work we can do to improve participation in our programs but we also have to recognize that our network can't just keep serving more youth more frequently without additional resources and capacity. Quality programs that provide many opportunities for participation require significant investment. Decreases in funding from the United Way, shifts in 21st Century Community Learning Center funding, and consistently declining support for afterschool programs across Minnesota present significant challenges for our network.

Sprockets, using our Shared Data System, will be closely tracking changes in afterschool participation as our local funding landscape changes. We will keep shining a light on participation gaps within our community and keep bringing partners together to provide opportunities for alignment and collaboration for increased impact. We'll continue to find innovative ways to support our partners to grow their capacity to provide programs for youth. And we'll always advocate for increased funding for afterschool so that programs can reach more young people and help them lead, grow, thrive, and succeed.

<sup>3</sup> Minnesota Out-of-School Time Primary Funding Streams Report: Fiscal Year 2012. Minnesota Department of Education, 2013.

