

Spring 2025 Site Visit and Observation Results

Prepared by Apter & O'Connor Associates, Inc. for The Business Training Institute at
Utica City School District
April 28, 2025

Observation Dates: March 25 and April 3, 2025

Buildings Observed: Donovan Middle School, Kennedy Middle School, and Proctor High School

The Apter & O'Connor (A&O) evaluation team observed a variety of after-school classes spanning all grade levels. The evaluation team documented observations from a total of 10 classrooms across 3 buildings, using a modified out-of-school time (OST) observation instrument developed by Policy Studies Associates, Inc.^{1, 2} Class sizes ranged from 2 to 29 students (multiple staff were present in several observed activities).

Table 1. BTI at UCSD Spring 2025 Observations

Building	Class Activity	Grade Level	Type of Class
Donovan MS	Art	7–8	Enrichment
Donovan MS	Financial Management	7–8	Academic
Donovan MS	Lego Building (STEM)	7–8	Academic/Enrichment
Kennedy MS	College and Career Ready	7–8	Enrichment
Kennedy MS	Drama	7–8	Enrichment
Kennedy MS	ESL Tutoring	7–8	Academic
Kennedy MS	Math Tutoring	7–8	Academic
Proctor HS	Chemistry Club	9–12	Academic
Proctor HS	Mindful Connections	9–12	Enrichment/SEL
Proctor HS	Spanish	9–12	Academic

Implementation Fidelity / Successes

Overall, these observations provided strong evidence that the grant is being implemented with fidelity to the original, NYSED-approved plan. The implementation included a mix of academic and enrichment programming offered by UCSD staff. For all observations, the space used was suitable for the activity, there were sufficient materials and supplies, and there was an appropriate level of adult supervision.

More broadly, the abundant presence of UCSD staff working in the program supported a strong linkage to school-day curricula, behavioral expectations, and rapport with students. In addition to teachers, clubs were led by guidance counselors, a social worker, and a building administrator. Overall, the sample lesson plans were high-quality and implemented with fidelity. All classes observed were well organized. Most of the classes (8 out of 10) involved skill practice or progression. Instructors integrated hands-on or interactive activities to

¹ Pechman, E.M., Mielke, M.B., Russell, C.A., White, R.N., & Cooc, N. (2008, February). Out-of-school time (OST) observation instrument: Report of the validation study. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

² Evaluators also observed but did not rate snack time at two schools; program dismissal; and a health, wellness, and fitness group that was nearly complete upon evaluator arrival.

promote student interest (e.g., chemistry lab stations, *Snow White* play rehearsal, financial games, Lego kits, group discussions). Two classes (College and Career Ready and Spanish) incorporated guest speakers, supporting the grant focus of community partner utilization. Classes were age-appropriate in preparing students for their future (e.g., reviewing steps for teenage employment, helping ESL students with their English skills, discussing self-determination, writing a check in the financial management class).

Evaluators recorded very strong scores (i.e., 5 to 7 on a seven-point scale) on the OST observation tool.³ Half of the staff (5) received a rating of 7 in each OST area. Overall, aggregated class ratings increased in the spring, compared to the fall; however, the evaluation team intentionally visited the buildings on a different day of the week in the spring to observe different classes and program staff. The following strengths were evident in several classrooms and are organized according to the four categories of the OST instrument:

Youth: Relationship Building (program average: 6.9 spring 2025 / 6.1 fall 2024)

Students were consistently relaxed and respectful with one another and positive toward staff. Students collaborated in drama club, ESL tutoring, and chemistry club. There were many positive interactions in discussions, such as reviewing a self-assessment checklist in the Mindful Connections class and a question-and-answer period with a Proctor High School graduate who visited the Spanish class to share her college and career experiences. Students helped one another in nearly every class (e.g., following the steps in the Lego kits, playing games in the financial management class).

Youth: Participation (program average: 6.9 spring 2025 / 6.5 fall 2024)

Students were observed as being highly engaged in activities and on task. They were documented as listening actively to both their teachers and peers, responding to staff questions, and following directions. Several classes allowed for students to make meaningful choices (e.g., role in drama club, art projects).

Staff: Relationship Building (program average: 7.0 spring 2025 / 6.3 fall 2024)

Staff consistently created a positive class climate (i.e., welcoming, peaceful) and used a pleasant tone in their communications. They observed and listened to the students, ensuring everyone participated in group and independent activities. Staff demonstrated a personal interest in the students and guided positive interactions when discussing plans for part-time summer employment and students' responses on the self-determination assessment.

Staff: Instructional Strategies (program average: 6.5 spring 2025 / 6.1 fall 2024)

The goals and expectations for each class observed were clear. Most of the classes (7 out of 10) appropriately challenged students to develop intellectually, creatively, and/or developmentally. Teachers assisted with activities without taking control. They provided praise and encouragement for student efforts. Overall, a variety of teaching strategies were documented. Several classes reinforced school-day learning, fulfilling a grant expectation.

³ In the OST rating scale, 1 represents *not evident*, 5 represents *evident*, and 7 represents *highly evident and consistent*.

Challenges / Recommendations

A&O conducted debriefing meetings with the BTI program coordinator and UCSD site coordinators while on site at each building. The following recommendations were shared and discussed:

- Ask the site coordinators to share the program schedule with the BTI program coordinator and evaluator on a **shared electronic platform** so that all parties involved have real-time access to ongoing schedule updates.
- Provide **additional lesson plan critique and support** as needed to ensure the plans are fully completed, accurately reflect learning standards, and are specific to each week.
- Multiple classes had a **second instructor** when the student-to-teacher ratio did not warrant a second adult (i.e., the class size was less than 15). The site coordinators indicated each instructor facilitates student-staff relationship-building and brings a unique area of expertise (contributing to student academic success). If 21st CCLC program expenses need to be decreased, these classes could be pared back to 1 staff member.