Spring 2026 Site Visit and Observation Report

Prepared by A&O Evaluation and Strategy

for Business Training Institute at Utica City School District

May 11, 2026

Observation date: April 23, 2026

Sites: Donovan Middle School, Kennedy Middle School, and Proctor High School

Number of classrooms observed: 13

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths:

Observations conducted by the A&O evaluation team indicate a well-organized and effectively implemented program that is operating with fidelity to the NYSED-approved 21CCLC plan. Key strengths include:

- **Highly rated classroom observations:** Most classes received a score of 6 or more out of 7 in each of the four out-of-school time (OST) observation instrument components, indicating that effective instruction, student engagement, and positive student and staff relationship-building were all evident or highly evident.[1] Relationship-building and student engagement were particularly strong.
- **Knowledgeable instructors:** Program staff are school-day teachers who bring experience and competency to after-school activities.

[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.; On the OST rating scale, 1 represents *not evident*, 5 represents *evident*, and 7 represents *highly evident and consistent*.

- **Strong lesson plans:** Lesson plans were consistently available and contained substantive material and an appropriate level of detail.
- **Adequate supervision, space, materials, and supplies:** Supervision, space, supplies, and materials were adequate in all observed classrooms.
- **Successful classroom management and instruction:** The vast majority of evaluator-observed classes were well organized (92%), involved practice or progression (77%), and challenged students appropriately for their grade level (85%).

Challenges:

The observation team identified the following implementation challenges:

- **Low attendance in some classes:** In each building, some classes had low student attendance (i.e., five or fewer).
- **Higher than necessary staffing levels:** In two buildings there were classes or clubs led by two staff when the size of the student group did not warrant a second adult (e.g., a ratio of 2 staff to 3, 4, or 8 students).[2]

[2] Although adding a second adult could enhance student-staff relationship-building, a single staff member is capable of effectively supervising groups of students similar in size to their regular school-day classes from a budgetary perspective.

Table 1. BTI at UCSD Spring 2026 Observations (*n* = 85)

Building	Class name / activity	Type of class	Grade levels	Number of students
Donovan	Health, wellness, and fitness	Enrichment	7–8	3
Donovan	Karma closet (service learning)	Enrichment	7–8	4
Donovan	Chess club	Enrichment	7–8	6
Donovan	Cooking	Enrichment	7–8	5
Kennedy	Math tutoring	Academic	7–8	8
Kennedy	Health, wellness, and fitness	Enrichment	7–8	3
Kennedy	English as new language tutoring	Academic	7–8	10
Kennedy	STEM / 3-D design / entrepreneurship (in 2 classrooms)	Enrichment	7–8	15
Proctor	Health, wellness, and fitness	Enrichment	9–12	12
Proctor	Science book club	Academic	9–12	4
Proctor	Science tutoring and chemistry club	Academic	9–12	4
Proctor	Please Stand Up (anti-bullying)	Enrichment	9–12	3
Proctor	Tech & me: STEM/robotics	Enrichment	9–12	8

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME (OST) INDICATORS

Evaluators recorded consistently strong scores on the OST observation tool, with the majority of classrooms receiving scores of 6 or more on a 7-point scale. The strengths outlined below were evident in multiple classrooms and are organized according to the four domains of the OST instrument.

Youth: Relationship Building (program average: 6.7)

OST Indicators (what observers looked for): *Youth are friendly, relaxed, and respectful with one another and socialize informally. They assist each other—for instance, by reaching out to help a peer complete a project. They are collaborative; they share materials and strategize about how to complete the activity. They interact with staff in a positive manner. They refrain from derogatory comments or disrupting others' work; if disagreements occur, they resolve constructively.*

Observed Evidence:

- Students were positive, friendly, and collaborative with one another.
- Observers noted multiple examples of positive peer interactions, including:
    - Assisting each other with 3-D designs
    - Collaborating during a fitness class

- Helping one another during a lab about glucose.

Youth: Participation (program average: 6.7)

OST Indicators (what observers looked for): *Youth are attentive and on task, following along with staff and/or following directions for the activity. They contribute their perspective to discussions; they listen actively to peers and staff and respond to staff and one another, including with constructive feedback. They have opportunities to make meaningful choices and to take on responsibility or leadership roles.*

Observed Evidence:

- In all observed classes, students were on task and appeared engaged in the activities.
- Students were highly participatory across activities, including by:
  - Discussing their ideas during a science lab
  - Asking questions during math tutoring
  - Contributing to a discussion during chemistry club.
- Students made meaningful choices during activities, for example by creating their own 3-D designs during a STEM class.

Staff: Relationship Building (program average: 6.6)

OST Indicators (what observers looked for): *Staff show a caring affect and an interest in youth as individuals. They listen attentively and pay attention as youth complete tasks, encouraging participation regardless of ability or other differences; staff do not favor or ignore a particular youth or group. Staff guide positive peer interactions, use positive behavior management techniques, and set consistent behavioral standards that are appropriate for the age group and activity. Staff may explain why negative behavior (such as teasing) is unacceptable, and offer alternatives. If it is necessary to discipline, they do so firmly while refraining from harsh criticism or anger.*

Observed Evidence:

- Staff were consistently positive throughout the observed classes and demonstrated strong rapport with students.
- Staff used a variety of strategies to build positive relationships with the students, including:
    - Listening actively during a science discussion
    - Engaging personally with students as they made tissue-paper butterflies for an anti-bullying mural
    - Asking questions while students developed their own 3-D designs.
- Staff encouraged participation of all students—for example, by asking them to share their own ideas during a conversation about robotics.

Staff: Instructional Strategies (program average: 5.5)

OST Indicators (what observers looked for): *Staff communicate the purpose, goals, and expectations of the activity, and use a range of instructional techniques to engage those with different learning styles. They acknowledge participation and ask youth to expand upon their ideas, posing "why," "how," and "if" questions. Staff structure activities so that youth work cooperatively with one another; the focus is youth-to-youth, rather than youth-to-staff. Staff assist youth without taking over the task, coaching to help youth complete an action on their own. They give feedback to help youth gauge their own progress and to push themselves creatively and/or physically.*

Observed Evidence:

- In seven out of ten classes where instruction was observed, staff utilized effective instructional strategies, such as asking students to expand on their answers to questions and praising the students' efforts and contributions.
- In some classrooms, staff challenged students to push their own thinking, including by:
    - Encouraging students to determine their own strategy during a STEM activity
    - Prompting them to develop their ideas during a discussion about molecules
    - Asking follow-up questions about the students' suggestions for health and wellness.

Recommendations:

- Regularly monitor attendance by class. In cases where attendance is low, follow up with enrolled students to identify and address barriers to participation.
- Improve the cost-effectiveness of clubs with consistently small group sizes:
    - Limit small classes to one instructor.
    - Establish guidelines for staff to go home if a group size does not warrant multiple adults.
    - If low attendance for a given club is an ongoing issue, combine students with another class.