Evaluation of the Summer Academy for Integrated Language Learning

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Executive Summary

Summer Academy for Integrated Language Learning

The Summer Academy for Integrated Language Learning (SAILL) is an expanded learning opportunity offered to high school students who are classified as English learners (ELs) and are relatively new to the educational system in the United States. For EL newcomers, there is a compound challenge of developing proficiency in English while also navigating a new schooling system and culture. In addition, ELs often face inequitable access to high-quality content-area instruction compared to non-ELs. The purpose of SAILL is to expand access to core academic coursework through a five-week summer program that includes integrated ELD supports.

Key Findings

An independent evaluation was conducted by Rockman et al Cooperative to research the impact of SAILL in a large California school district on student achievement, educational progress, and English language proficiency. The two-year quasi-experimental study used propensity score matching to compare the outcomes of SAILL students to matched students who opted to not participate. Our regression models estimated the effects of participating in the five-week program on student-level outcomes among two cohorts of learners. Specifically, the measured outcomes were proximal GPA, on-track status for on-time graduation, and performance on the annual state assessment for English language proficiency. The impact study addressed three research questions.

What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' academic achievement as measured by fall semester GPA compared to EL newcomers who opt out of the summer program?

The SAILL summer program significantly improved overall academic achievement as measured by the fall grade point averages. On average, students in SAILL attained significantly higher GPAs than students in the comparison group.

What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' educational progress as measured by their on-track status towards high school graduation?

Findings also demonstrated a significant positive effect of SAILL on educational progress in the fall following the summer program. There was a significantly higher percentage of SAILL students than comparison students that were on-track in their credit earning towards high school graduation.

What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' English language proficiency in the following spring?

>Despite significant program effects on academic achievement and progress, students on average performed similarly on the state English language proficiency assessment during the second half of the school year.

Discussion

As hypothesized, the impact analysis found EL newcomer students in the SAILL program achieved a higher GPA on average than similar EL newcomer students who opted to not enroll in SAILL. In addition, the impact analysis also confirmed that SAILL students were more likely to maintain or attain on-track status for on-time high school graduation. While there was evidence of positive effects on indicators of achievement and education progress, the study unexpectedly did not find a program effect on the state assessment of English language proficiency. Some potential explanations for this latter finding are shared in the report, and we also describe teachers' positive perceptions of student growth in English language understanding and use.

Evaluation of the Summer Academy for Integrated Language Learning

The Summer Academy for Integrated Language Learning (SAILL) is an expanded learning opportunity for English learners (ELs)[1] in high school who are relatively new to the U.S. school system. The SAILL program offers robust academic coursework embedded with scaffolded language and literacy supports during a five-week summer program.

A quasi-experimental design with propensity score matching was used to study the effectiveness of SAILL on student outcomes compared to the outcomes of eligible students who chose not to participate. The key outcomes in this study were academic achievement, educational progress, and English language proficiency. Specifically, we estimated causal effects on Fall semester GPA, on track status in making progress towards high school graduation, and performance on the state standardized assessment of English language proficiency. This impact study involved student-level data from two successive cohorts of the annual summer program.

Background

In the United States, the growing number of culturally and linguistically diverse students classified as English learners (ELs) represents over 10%, or 5.3 million, of all public school students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024). Among some states, the percentage of ELs is much higher. In California, for example, approximately 19% of students are classified as English learners (NCES, 2024). In many ways, U.S. schools continue to face great challenges in effectively and equitably meeting the needs of its students with EL status. Wide gaps exist between ELs and non-ELs in academic achievement (NCES, 2023a; 2023b) and high school graduation rates (Leger et al., 2023). Research shows ELs often face inequitable access to high-quality academic content (Callahan, 2005; Umansky, 2018), including persistent obstacles to STEM learning (Johnson, 2019a; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2018). Improved access to high-level academics for ELs includes effective linguistic scaffolding to support development of multi-disciplinary academic language (NASEM, 2017). This is particularly critical for ELs who are newcomers—students who are relatively new to the United States school system (Umansky, 2018).

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[1] In this report, we primarily use the term English learners to align with both federal-level legal terminology and the eligibility requirement used by the SAILL program (current English learner classification). However, the more umbrella term multilingual learner is more frequently used and preferred in practice by the program and school district overall to emphasize and celebrate the strengths of multilingualism.

The SFUSD Summer Academy for Integrated Language Learning (SAILL) program is an innovative five-week academic enrichment program offered each summer to newcomer ELs in the district to support them with integrated English language development (ELD) instruction in high school academic courses required for graduation. Each year, the program recruits newcomer ELs to provide them additional opportunities to earn course credits towards high school graduation through the summer program. Prior research about an earlier version of this program provided promising evidence that it helped to improve student outcomes (Johnson, 2019b).

To support ELs in STEM and other academic learning, research highlights the need for increased opportunities for teacher collaboration and professional development (NASEM, 2017). Teachers who teach in the SAILL program are engaged in a professional learning experience that involves advancing their use of integrated ELD strategies in math, science, and humanities (Baker et al., 2014). Professional learning is supported through advanced learning workshops, a rich curriculum, modelled instruction, authentic classroom practice (during program implementation), and continuous, collaborative reflection about learning and instruction among SAILL educators. Anecdotal program evidence has suggested participation enhances teacher self-efficacy to integrate ELD practices into advanced academic content areas.

Impact Study

Study Description

Research Questions

The confirmatory research questions addressed by this study were:

1. What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' academic achievement as measured by GPA at the end of the subsequent fall trimester compared to EL newcomers who opt-out of the summer program in grades 9–12?

2. What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' educational progress as measured by their on-track status towards high school graduation in the fall semester compared to EL newcomers who opt out of the summer program in grades 9–12?

3. What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' English language proficiency at the end of the subsequent school year compared to EL newcomers who opt-out of the summer program in grades 9–12?

Intervention Condition

The Summer Academy for Integrated Language Learning (SAILL) is a five-week summer program in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) for newcomer English learners (ELs) in high school to take academic classes with supports for English language learning. The program is

aimed at increasing newcomer EL students' access to and success in rigorous academic content in high school, including humanities, math, science, and computer science. Three key components are involved in implementing the SAILL intervention. Information about these key components of the SAILL intervention are depicted in a logic model (see Appendix A), which includes hypothesized mediators and outcomes.

The first key component is the **SAILL program** itself. In the summer program, students experience project-based learning that is both collaborative and interdisciplinary. The SAILL program consists of 25 consecutive summer days each lasting 5.5 hours long. Classes in ELA/humanities, math, and science include integrated ELD instruction.

The second key component of SAILL is **teacher professional development**. Each school year, teachers are recruited from within the district to teach the summer program. Teachers of SAILL receive more than 35 hours of professional development over several weeks before the start of the summer program.

The third component further supports teachers by providing **collaboration structures**. During the implementation of the program, the daily schedule includes common meeting times for teachers for collaborative reflection, planning, and lesson preparation.

Program Implementation

Details about the implementation of the program in both years of the study are described in the Implementation Study section of the report and in Appendix B. Briefly, fidelity to the program model was attained in both cohorts. Implementation of the student program adhered to the model, and fidelity criteria were met for delivery of the professional development and teacher collaboration structures. A total of 21 unique teachers implemented the five-week program, with 7 of them teaching in both years. The first cohort had 3 teams of 4 teachers, and the second had 4 teams of 4 teachers.

Setting

This two-year study was conducted within the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), a large urban district in California with about 55,000 students. The SAILL summer program was implemented on the campus of one of the district's high schools in both years of the study (school years 2022–2023 and 2023–2024). Participation was open to students from any of the district schools as long as they met eligibility criteria (see Study Participants). In our largest analytic sample (n = 1,016), students came from 15 district schools.

Each year, there were approximately 15,500 students enrolled within the district in grades 9–13. Of these students, approximately 19% were English learners and 57% were socio-economically disadvantaged (source: SFUSD Public Data Dashboard). Among EL students within the district overall, an average of about 44% during the two years of the study were identified

as making progress toward English language proficiency. District-wide, over half of the students are identified as Hispanic or Latino, and about one-third are identified as Asian. Among ELs in the district, Spanish is the primary home language for about 23% and Cantonese for about 17%. A much smaller percentage of ELs have one of about 50 other non-English languages identified as the primary home language. Lastly, roughly 70-75% of newcomers in SFUSD are Spanish speaking, and many newcomers have had limited or interrupted formal education. Table 1 lists several student characteristics of the largest analytic sample in the study.

Comparison Condition

The comparison group in this study was a no intervention condition consisting of newcomer ELs who were eligible to participate in the SAILL program but opted out of doing so.

Table 1. Student Characteristics

Characteristic	Pretest
Grade	
9	62.4%
10	31.9%
11	5.7%
Race/ethnicity	
African American	0.5%
Asian	16.2%
Filipino	1.2%
Hispanic/Latino	77.2%
Pacific Islander	0.2%
White	3.1%
Two or More Races	0.3%
Decline to State	1.3%
Gender	
Female	41.1%
Male	58.9%

Note. Percentages are based on the analytic sample for the GPA outcome (N = 1,016).

Study Participants

SAILL Eligibility Criteria

During each spring preceding the implementation of the summer program, district staff affiliated with SAILL develop a recruitment roster listing all students who meet a set of eligibility

criteria for the program. Recruitment efforts, which are typically spearheaded by site-based school counselors, are conducted during the spring months across all district high schools. During the two years of this study, the specific criteria enacted during spring recruitment was that the student was classified as *English learner* or *pending classification* and the EL typology was *newcomer*, the student was in U.S. school system less than three years, in grade 8–12, and had current scores on the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) being at level 1 (emergent) or 2 (expanding) or score pending.

Study Eligibility

Student eligibility for the impact study included all SAILL-eligible students who were in grades 9–11 during spring recruitment for the summer program in 2022 or 2023 and had no prior participation in SAILL[2]. All of these first time SAILL enrollees were in the intervention condition, and the students who opted out of SAILL (and had no prior SAILL participation) were all included in the non-participant sample pool used for propensity score matching. Note that while the pre-registered study plan indicated students in grades 9–12 were eligible to participate in the summer program, no 12th graders participated in SAILL in either year of the study. Additionally, although the program ended up expanding its eligibility criteria in 2022 to students who were in the 8th grade during spring recruitment, participation across the two years of the study totaled only 18 students (5 in Y1, 13 in Y2), so the study did not include these students.

There were three analytic samples in the impact study, one for each outcome measure: fall semester GPA (SAILL n = 508, non-SAILL n = 508), fall semester on-track status (SAILL n = 227, non-SAILL n = 227), and spring semester English language proficiency (SAILL n = 234, non-SAILL n = 234).

Sample Alignment with Those Served by the Program

In summer 2020 (project year 1), the planned pilot phase of this EIR grant-funded project was cancelled by the school district due to the COVID pandemic. In late spring of the following year, a new hybrid program strategy was rapidly developed and implemented to provide two different program options for students, one conducted virtually and the other in-person. This special hybrid strategy was implemented because the district had been continuing to conduct remote instruction up until the final weeks of the 2020-21 schoolyear. Fortunately, in project year 3 (2022), regular SAILL programming recommenced, and this marked the start of the two-year impact study. While there was an additional SAILL cohort in 2024, data for that cohort was not available in time to be included in this impact study.

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[2] In alignment with the program logic model, the study analyzed impacts of students receiving one "dose" of the program; thus, students with past participation in SAILL were not included in the matching procedures or impact analyses.

The impact evaluation sample includes all students who had no prior SAILL participation, were in grades 9–11 during recruitment, and then enrolled in the summer intervention program in 2022 or 2023 (project years 3 and 4). The matched comparison group for each analytic sample was selected from the sample of students without past SAILL participation, who were in grades 9–11, but opted to not enroll in SAILL.

Design and Measures

Independence of the Impact Evaluation

All key aspects of the impact evaluation were conducted by the independent evaluation researchers, including the matching process, analyses, and reporting of study findings. All study outcomes were derived directly from the school district. The program developers and staff were not involved in the gathering of the outcome data for this study.

Pre-registration of the Study Design

The study design was pre-registered in the Registry of Efficacy and Effectiveness Studies (#8220) prior to implementation of the intervention. Three confirmatory research questions were originally identified in the pre-registered study design: 1) What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' academic achievement as measured by GPA at the end of the subsequent fall trimester compared to EL newcomers who opt-out of the summer program in grades 9–12?, 2) What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' college readiness as measured by their on-track graduation status at the end of the summer program and at the end of the subsequent school year compared to EL newcomers who opt out of the summer program in grades 9–12?, and 3) What is the effect of SAILL participation on EL newcomer students' English language proficiency (ELP) at the end of the subsequent school year compared to EL newcomers who opt-out of the summer program in grades 9–12?

Differences Between the Pre-Registered Plan and Final Research

The impact study addressed all three confirmatory questions, but analyzed outcomes of students who were in grade 9–11 (at the time of recruitment), not grade 12. As noted earlier, while students who were in the 12th grade just prior to the summer program were recruited for SAILL, no 12th graders participated in SAILL in either year of the study. In some prior years, a small number of 12th graders (rising 13th graders) participated in the program to attain credits still required for graduation. In addition, the study estimated program effects on the Fall on-track status, but did not also examine effects on the end-of-year on-track status.

The pre-specified plans described the inclusion of blocks for cohort; however, our actual analysis had blocks that accounted for the separate matching that occurred within each grade

level by cohort. So, instead of just two blocks (cohort 2022, cohort 2023), we had six matching blocks (grade 9 cohort 2022, grade 10 cohort 2022, etc.).

Lastly, the pre-registered analyses for the educational progress outcome had intended to analyze a more detailed on-track metric (for greater measurement sensitivity); however, the final analyses were conducted on the simpler, dichotomous measure (on-track or not on-track) because the definition of the detailed status metric had changed in the second year of the impact study. A logistic regression approach was used to estimate effects for the on-track outcome.

Design

The impact study design was a quasi-experiment with propensity score matching. All students eligible to participate in SAILL self-select whether or not to enroll in the program. For each analytic sample, the matched comparison group was drawn from the pool of students who opted out of enrolling in SAILL and had not previously participated in SAILL.

Matching was performed using logistic regression on the intervention group indicator to estimate propensity scores for students eligible to participate in SAILL based on a set of matching variables. Specifically, we used the propensity score matching procedure in SPSS Statistics 28, which relies upon the Python extension FUZZY. Comparison group students were matched to treatment group students in the same cohort and grade level using 1:1 matching without replacement. Multiple iterations were used to obtain balanced samples for each outcome, including adjustments to the match tolerance. Observations with missing data for a matching variable were excluded. In the final analytic samples, the pretest score of the outcome measure, baseline GPA, and gender were included as the matching variables.

Measures

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement was measured by students' overall grade point average (GPA) acquired directly from the school district. This standard educational outcome is calculated uniformly by the district. The district calculates GPA based on grades earned in all college preparatory (A-G) classes. Specifically, GPA is calculated by multiplying the grade points by the number of attempted credits in the course, summing the grade points (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0), and dividing by the total credits attempted. GPA scores at the end of the fall trimester following SAILL were the primary outcome. Baseline GPA levels relied on GPAs from the end of the school year prior to SAILL.

Educational Progress

Progress in high school was measured with students' on-track status, a metric uniformly assessed within the district to monitor credit earning towards graduation. Similar measures are

used by other school districts (Allensworth & Easton, 2007). On-track status is assessed at the end of each trimester and it is based on both credits earned from required course subjects and total credits earned. The on-track measure used in this study was a binary scale with 1 = on-track, 0 = not on-track.

Proficiency in the English Language

Student proficiency in English was measured with scores from the Summative English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ep/summativeelpac.asp). The Summative ELPAC is required annually in California for students with English learner status to assess progress in developing proficiency in English. The administration window for the Summative ELPAC is February–May.

Sample Sizes

In Table 2, we provide the analytic samples sizes for each outcome at pretest and posttest.

Table 2. Analytic Sample Sizes for Each Outcome at Pretest and Posttest

Outcome Measure	Comparison Group		Treatment Group	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
GPA	508	508	508	508
On track status	227	227	227	227
ELPAC	234	234	234	234

Data Analysis and Findings

Baseline Equivalence

In conjunction with using propensity score matching for developing matched comparison groups for each outcome contrast (consisting of students who opted out of the program), we assessed baseline equivalence of the SAILL and non-SAILL students in each analytic outcome sample. The process for arriving at a final analytic sample for each outcome involved multiple attempts to attain baseline equivalence sufficiently below 0.25. The analytic samples did not include any students who had missing outcome or baseline data. The unit of analysis was student. Baseline equivalence was assessed for the same measure (pretest) of each outcome as well as the other predictors used in our models for testing intervention impacts (described in the following subsection). For each analytic sample, the baseline mean difference between the intervention and comparison group was calculated using a model-based approach that adjusts for blocking by grade within cohort, reflecting the structure of the design (Litwok et al., 2023).

These baseline models were a modified version of the impact models, with the pretest as the dependent variable. The treatment indicator was retained and all other covariates were omitted. Standardized baseline mean difference was derived from dividing the estimate of the intervention-comparison mean difference by the pooled standard deviations (weighted by sample size).

Regarding baseline equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups for academic achievement levels, measured by prior GPA, the standardized mean difference was below 0.25 (see Table 3). The impact analyses included the baseline measure as a covariate to increase precision of estimates. There were similar levels of educational progress between SAILL and non-SAILL students as measured by percentage of students who were on-track towards high school graduation, with a standardized mean difference below 0.25 (see Table 4). Lastly, the intervention and comparison groups had similar baseline levels of English language proficiency, measured by prior ELPAC scores, with a standardized effect size less than 0.25 (see Table 5).

Table 3. Baseline Academic Achievement (Design Adjusted Means and Standard Deviations)

Baseline Measure	Comparison Group			Treatment Group			Impact Estimate	g
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*		
GPA baseline	508	2.84	1.01	508	2.91	1.01	0.070	0.07
Female	508	0.31	0.70	508	0.37	0.70	0.063	0.09

Note. Difference in group means was estimated by adjusting for matching blocks.

Table 4. Baseline Educational Progress (Design Adjusted Means and Standard Deviations)

Baseline Measure	Comparison Group			Treatment Group			Impact Estimate	g
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*		
On track baseline	227	0.26	0.62	227	0.32	0.62	0.062	0.10
GPA baseline	227	2.90	1.07	227	3.05	1.07	0.147	0.14
Female	227	0.36	0.66	227	0.38	0.66	0.022	0.03

Note. Difference in group means was estimated by adjusting for matching blocks.

Table 5. Baseline English Language Proficiency (Design Adjusted Means and Standard Deviations)

Baseline Measure	Comparison Group			Treatment Group			Impact Estimate	g
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*		

ELPAC baseline z-scores	234	0.01	1.21	234	0.09	1.21	--	- 0.08
GPA baseline	234	3.05	0.89	234	3.00	0.89	- 0.044	- 0.05
Female	234	0.40	0.61	234	0.40	0.61	0.004	- .01

Note. Difference in group means was estimated by adjusting for matching blocks.

Program Effects

Analytic Approach

Program effects were analyzed using student level data. No missing outcome data, baseline data, or other covariate data were imputed. The basic model used to estimate intervention effects was:

$$Y_i = B_0 + B_1(T_i) + B_2(Y_{pre,i}) + \Sigma B_3(X_{mi}) + \Sigma B_4 (Block_j) + \varepsilon_i$$

Where:

$Y_i =$ the outcome for student i

$B_0 =$ the intercept is the unadjusted mean outcome score for students in the comparison group in the reference matching block

$B_1 =$ is the treatment effect in the omitted matching block

$T_i =$ 1 if student i enrolls in SAILL and 0 otherwise

$B_2 =$ the pretest effect

$Y_{pre,i} =$ the pretest score for student i

$B_3 =$ the student covariate effects

$X_{mi} =$ the mth of M other student-level covariates (other baseline achievement and characteristics) for student i

$Block_q =$ block dummy, 1 if student i is in the jth propensity matching block (j=2,3…6) and 0 otherwise

$\varepsilon_i =$ the residual for the ith learner.

For the continuous outcome variables (GPA and ELPAC scores), we used multiple linear regression. The models included categorical and continuous predictors, including the block variable for the students' matching group. The covariates are the same variables used in the propensity scores estimation model, which were included to increase the robustness of the impact estimation. For the GPA outcome, the predictors were the treatment indicator, baseline GPA, gender (female = 1, male = 0), and matching block (grade by cohort). For the ELPAC outcome, the predictors were treatment indicator, baseline ELPAC, baseline GPA, gender, and block.

We evaluated the normality assumption by examining the normal probability plot of regression standardized residual, confirming no significant deviation from normal was observed. Scatterplots were used to assess homoscedasticity of errors. For the multicollinearity assumption, we confirmed the absence of multicollinearity by examining the VIF values (all were below 2).

To estimate program effects on the dichotomous on-track indicator, we used multiple logistic regression adjusting for prior on-track status, prior GPA, female, and the blocking variable. We used the Box-Tidwell test to check the assumption of normality between GPA and the logit transformation of the on-track outcome. The computed interaction term (GPA*ln(GPA)) was non-significant, thus indicating the linearity assumption was not violated. Given the multiple predictors, we also tested for multicollinearity. The VIF values for each predictor in the model were below 2, indicating each predictor included in the model explained some unique variance.

Findings

Impact on Academic Achievement

The estimated program effects on academic achievement are shown in Table 6. Accounting for prior GPA and other covariates used in the selection of the matched comparison group, there was a statistically significant positive effect on student achievement as measured by Fall GPA in the semester following the summer program, with an effect size of 0.28 standard deviations. Relative to the reported causal effects of other field-based interventions on broad measures of achievement, such as GPA, the size of this effect could be considered large (Kraft, 2020).

Impact on Educational Progress

The observed percentage of students who were academically on-track in the fall after the summer program was higher in the treatment group (55%) than in the comparison group (37%; see Table 6). The multiple logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(8) = 217.936$, $p < .001$, and it explained approximately 51% of the variance in on-track status (based on Nagelkerke R^2). Accounting for the other predictors (prior on-track status, GPA, gender, and matching block), the odds of being on-track for students in the program were 2.37 times greater than the odds of being on-track for students not in the program (95% CI 1.45, 3.88; $p < .001$). The estimated coefficient for SAILL was 0.86 ($SE = 0.25$), and the standardized effect size, which was calculated using Cox Index, was 0.43. On average, SAILL students were 137% more likely to be academically on-track during the fall semester than their peers.

Table 6. Estimated Impact of SAILL on Achievement, Educational Progress, and English Language Proficiency

Measure	Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	M_{adj}	*Impact estimate*	*SE*	*Effect size[a]*	*p*
GPA	T	508	2.94	0.89	2.92	0.238	0.036	0.28	< .001

	C	508	2.62	1.07	2.69				
On-track	T	227	0.55	0.50		0.86	0.25	0.43	< .001
	C	227	0.37	0.49					
ELPAC z-scores	T	234	0.022	1.04	0.062	0.058	0.059	0.03	0.376
	C	234	0.032	0.94	0.004				

[a] Hedges g for GPA and ELPAC, Cox index for on-track.

Impact on English Language Proficiency

As shown in Table 6, both SAILL and non-SAILL students had similar performances in ELPAC scores in the spring following the summer program. Accounting for prior proficiency levels and academic achievement, there was no statistically significant effect on English language proficiency.

Discussion

In this quasi-experimental study, we investigated the impact of SAILL, an innovative learning program offering summer academic courses with integrated language and literacy supports for newcomer multilingual learners in high school. Specifically, we examined the causal effects of the five-week program on helping to attain higher academic achievement, educational progress, and English language proficiency compared to similar peers engaged in other or no summer programs.

Findings from our impact analyses provided support for two of the three tested hypotheses. First, as hypothesized, there was a positive and statistically significant effect of SAILL participation on student academic achievement in the fall after the program as evidenced by end-of-term GPA scores (RQ1). Similarly, students participating in SAILL demonstrated significantly greater educational progress during the following semester by attaining a higher average number of credits towards high school graduation compared to peers who chose not to participate in the program (RQ2). Lastly, our analysis did not find evidence of SAILL having a statistically significant effect on student proficiency in English, which was measured by Summative ELPAC scores the following spring (RQ3).

To offer some context for our study findings, the 20 days of SAILL instruction equates to only 11% of the regular school year. Arguably, this is a modest amount of time for an intervention to have significant impacts on key educational indicators. When viewed in this light, perhaps the observed medium to large sized effects on student achievement and progress are even more

impressive. This relatively modest dosage of programming might also help to explain why gains in average levels of English language proficiency among the newcomer students were not observed in this study. Promising evidence has been reported in support of the beneficial impacts associated with two or more summers of voluntary summer programming (Augustine et al., 2016; Johnson, 2019b). An increased duration of support could be further explored in future research.

Fidelity of Implementation Study

Fidelity Measurement

Our primary framework for studying implementation was to evaluate adherence to the program model; that is, we wanted to determine the extent to which the program was implemented as planned. As introduced in our description of the intervention earlier in this report, the program model was viewed as having three primary components: Professional development for teachers, structures for teacher collaboration, and the summer academy itself (see Logic Model in Appendix A). The first two components, professional development and collaboration structures for teachers, are the support components viewed as necessary to enact the direct component, the summer program for students.

The professional development component involves a mixture of afterschool sessions and daylong sessions distributed across the spring to help the educators prepare to implement the summer program. Through these sessions, the teaching teams collaborate with one another as they get familiar with program structures and learn about the curriculum and adapt lessons and student materials.

In addition, collaboration structures are embedded into the daily schedule of the program to continue supporting the educators in implementation SAILL and provide ongoing opportunity for professional learning. For example, each of the interdisciplinary teams of teachers have regular meetings as they discuss and plan for their cohort of students whom they all teach. There are also other types of meetings such as weekly meetings that are discipline specific. Teachers have common observation rubrics that they use periodically to observe one another and discuss as teams as they reflect on their practice and student progress.

The five-week SAILL program places an emphasis on collaborative, heterogeneous student groupings to foster discussion and peer-assisted learning. A variety of integrated ELD strategies (e.g., academic discourse routines, sentence frames) are used across classes to provide common language supports for students. Project-based learning is based on interdisciplinary themes to facilitate integration across the core content areas, and the projects develop throughout the program, culminating in students showcasing their learning and ideas to each other and community members. In collaboration with the teacher teams, wellness and counseling staff provide wrap around supports for student physical and emotional wellbeing.

Implementation of each component was delineated by multiple indicators and a system of scoring and thresholds for adequate implementation (see Table 7). This system for measuring implementation fidelity was collaboratively developed by REA researchers and SAILL leadership.

Program staff diligently worked to centralize record keeping of PD attendance and teacher collaboration activities to support both the implementation study as well as real-time efforts to monitor program implementation for course corrections. The team provided REA researchers with access to attendance logs, meeting agendas, and other records to use in scoring levels of implementation for each component indicator.

Table 7. Scoring Methods for Determining Adequate Implementation of Program Components

Indicator	Unit of measurement	Indicator Scoring at Unit Level	Indicator Scoring at School Level	Indicator Scoring at Sample Level
Key Component 1. Teacher Professional Development				
(1) Introductory PD sessions	Teacher	1 = Teacher attended 4 hrs or more of afterschool PD sessions 0 = Teacher attended < 4 hrs of afterschool PD	NA	NA
(2) Core SAILL PD sessions	Teacher	1 = Teacher attended 75% or more of the daylong PD sessions 0 = Teacher attended under 75% of the daylong PD sessions	NA	NA
(3) Computer science integration PD sessions	Teacher (CS)	1 = Teacher attended 75% or more of the CS PD sessions 0 = Teacher attended under 75% of the CS PD sessions	NA	NA
(4) SAILL curriculum	Teacher	1 = Teacher has access to SAILL lessons and materials 0 = Teacher does not have access to SAILL lessons and materials	NA	NA
Key Component 1 Total Score Professional Development		**Sum of indicator scores: 0–4**	NA	Sum of teacher-level indicator scores (Range = 0-4) **Adequate = 75% or more with a score of 4**
Key Component 2. Teacher Collaboration Structures				
Daily collaborative planning	Teacher	1 = Teacher participates in daily collaborative planning 75% or more of days	NA	NA

Table 7. Scoring Methods for Determining Adequate Implementation of Program Components

Indicator	Unit of measurement	Indicator Scoring at Unit Level	Indicator Scoring at School Level	Indicator Scoring at Sample Level
		0 = Teacher participates in daily collaborative planning less than 75% of days		
Professional learning community for computer science integration	Teacher	1 = Teacher accesses the online CS PLC and curriculum 0 = Teacher does not access the online CS PLC and curriculum	NA	NA
Key Component 2 Total Score Teacher Coaching		**Sum of indicator scores: 0–2** **Adequate implementation = 2**		Percentage of teachers with a score of 2 **Adequate sample score = 75%**
Key Component 3. SAILL program				
(1) 5-week SAILL program	Student	1 = 100 hrs or more of instruction are provided 0 = less than 100 hrs of instruction are provided	NA	NA
(2) Integrated ELD in ELA, math, science classes required for graduation	Student	1 = there are multiple examples of integrated ELD in the ELA, math, and science classes 0 = not all core classes have multiple examples of integrated ELD	NA	NA
(3) Computer science integrated with core content	Student	1 = 3 or more weeks of SAILL program includes CS integration 0 = fewer than 3 weeks have CS integration	NA	NA
(4) Collaborative, interdisciplinary project-based learning	Student	1 = 3 or more weeks of SAILL program includes collaborative PBL projects spanning 2 or more classes 0 = fewer than 3 weeks includes collaborative PBL projects spanning 2 or more classes	NA	NA

Table 7. Scoring Methods for Determining Adequate Implementation of Program Components

Indicator	Unit of measurement	Indicator Scoring at Unit Level	Indicator Scoring at School Level	Indicator Scoring at Sample Level
(5) Wellness support	Student	1 = 80% of participants are included in intake and handoff process 0 = fewer than 80% receive both services		
(6) Academic counseling	Student	1 = 80% of participants receive academic counseling and communication w/ caregivers 0 = fewer than 80% receive both services	NA	NA
Key Component 3 Total Score Project App for Students		**Sum of indicator scores: 0–6**	**NA**	**Adequate implementation at program level = 5**

Fidelity Findings

A table of results from the fidelity scoring is provided in Appendix B. Here, we briefly summarize the findings by year of implementation.

Year 1

In the first year of the impact study, fidelity to the program model was met for all three overarching components, as delineated below.

✓ *Teacher PD:*

80% of teachers (10 of 12) met the teacher-level threshold for implemented with fidelity. The sample level threshold was 75% of teachers.

✓ *Teacher collaboration structures:*

100% of teachers were assessed to have met teacher-level fidelity for the two indicators. The sample level threshold was again 75% of teachers.

✓ *SAILL program:*

Adequate implementation was achieved for 5 of the 6 indicators. In both years, the threshold for adequate implementation of computer science was deemed unmet, because it was implemented as a standalone subject in each year rather than being *integrated* within the other content classes. In the second year (2023), the computer science course focused more on data science than software design, and it used data sets

linked to the interdisciplinary themes that were integrated across courses. The 2023 computer science course involved mathematical thinking and it included common focal routines that were used across the content courses.

Year 2

During the second year, program fidelity was met again for all three components.

✓ *Teacher PD:*

94% of teachers (15 of 16) had a score of 4, which exceeded the 75% threshold.

✓ *Teacher collaboration structures:*

100% of teachers attained a threshold score of 2, thus indicating adequate teacher participation in daily collaborative planning and access to computer science curriculum and a professional learning community.

✓ *SAILL program:*

The summer academy was implemented with fidelity, meeting the threshold for 5 of the 6 indicators. As noted above, the planned integration of computer science across the content areas was not achieved, but was provided to all the students as a standalone class.

In summary, fidelity thresholds were met in both years for all three major components of the program model. In other words, the program was implemented as intended. Meeting fidelity of program implementation during the impact study strengthens the validity of the research.

Teacher and Staff Perceptions

This section synthesizes educator perspectives on the impact of the SAILL program on EL newcomer students' academic achievement, progress toward high school graduation, and English language development. Findings are drawn from multiple data sources collected as part of the final evaluation, including in-depth interviews with teachers and program leaders, teacher surveys, and direct observations conducted during summer programming. Together, these data provide a view of how SAILL shaped student learning and engagement. Teacher accounts highlight both the immediate outcomes of student participation and the broader developmental gains observed in areas such as confidence, collaboration, and academic discourse.

EL Newcomer Students' Academic Achievement

Teachers consistently described SAILL as a transformative academic space where newcomer students—many of whom entered the program with periods of interrupted formal education—were able to access grade-level content and demonstrate cognitive growth. The program's emphasis on interdisciplinary, project-based learning allowed students to engage with real-

world problems in STEM and Humanities while building foundational skills in reading, writing, and analytical reasoning.

Key instructional strategies, such as the use of scaffolded texts, multimodal learning activities, and peer assisted collaborative learning, supported student participants in demonstrating academic achievement. The culminating projects, designed for public and peer presentation, offered students the chance to showcase their learning in meaningful, authentic contexts. Teachers consistently reported increased student engagement when lessons were situated in students' experiences, such as units addressing pressing health topics, or local social or environmental issues. These themes provided fertile ground for sustained inquiry, language interactions, and skill development.

In addition, embedded academic discourse routines, such as, "Because-But-So," "Stronger and Clearer Each Time," and "Give One, Get One," were implemented consistently across classrooms. These routines, coupled with clear and comprehensible language objectives, created a coherent structure for students to practice evidence-based reasoning, argumentation, and peer interaction, increasing both the rigor and accessibility of academic conversations. Teachers observed that students were able to explain their reasoning, challenge each other respectfully, and revise their thinking, which supported their language development and academic growth.

Teachers also highlighted that student progress was not limited to content mastery but included improvements in organization, collaboration, and executive functioning skills. For example, the planning and sequencing required for final projects helped students strengthen their ability to manage time, prioritize tasks, and synthesize information.

In sum, the program's integrated, learner-centered instructional design helped enable SAILL participants to engage deeply with academic content and build transferrable academic habits. Students developed the social and linguistic confidence and skillset to participate more fully in the academic demands of the regular school year after their experience at SAILL.

EL Newcomer Students' Educational Progress Toward High School Graduation

Teachers widely recognized SAILL as a pivotal intervention for keeping ELs on track toward high school graduation. In addition to providing core academic credits, the program acted as a gateway into the structures, expectations, and cultural norms of high school, especially for students who recently arrived or returning to schooling after extended interruptions.

Teachers described SAILL as a kind of "primer" that introduced students to essential elements of high school life, including interacting with school staff, navigating schedules, managing assignments, understanding grading practices, engaging in collaborative learning routines, and advocating for themselves. These foundational skills were seen as critical for students who had missed early exposure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, language barriers, or interrupted formal education in their countries of origin. SAILL helped them figure out how school works, so they do not feel as lost when the school year starts.

Educators also emphasized the motivational power of credit accrual. Students were aware that passing their summer courses advanced them toward graduation, and this tangible goal spurred increased engagement, attendance, and academic effort. Teachers observed that students often showed up focused and determined because they knew the credits were real and impactful.

Multiple teachers perceived SAILL as a turning point for students who had been disengaged or hesitant during the school year. After participating in SAILL, many returned in the fall with greater academic momentum and increased confidence navigating classrooms and the school system. Counselors and teachers observed that some students who had previously struggled were more ready to learn.

In some cases, teachers linked summer participation to improved school-year performance and a greater likelihood of staying on track for graduation. Students who participated in SAILL not only earned credits but also developed transferable academic and social competencies, such as self-advocacy, time management, and participation in group work, which that contributed to greater persistence during the school year.

Additionally, the opt-in nature of SAILL appeared to foster intrinsic motivation. Many students chose to enroll because they wanted to earn credits, improve their English, or prepare for high school transitions. They were not placed in summer school for punitive reasons. This positive framing of summer learning helped shift students' mindsets and enhanced their sense of agency.

Teachers perceived SAILL not just as a summer academic experience, but as a strategic bridge that supported students' ongoing educational progress and positioned them for greater success on the path toward high school graduation.

EL Newcomer Students' English Language Proficiency

SAILL teachers consistently noted meaningful gains in students' English language proficiency, especially in speaking and listening. The program's use of structured discourse routines and heterogeneous grouping strategies offered daily opportunities for oral language development in low-anxiety, high-engagement settings.

Educators observed that students often used more English during the five-week program than they typically did in an entire academic year. This was attributed to the consistency and intentionality of classroom routines and the use of discourse scaffolds within a supportive and interactive learning environment that fostered a sense of motivation and safety. Teachers described the importance of systematic language instruction to guide language use, rich vocabulary, and structure and routines to be able to speak and write in English for multiple purposes.

Students were observed initiating conversations, engaging in peer collaboration, and increasing their confidence in speaking and writing. Teachers described how students began self-advocating, asking clarifying questions, and initiating dialogue with teachers and peers, all markers of growing linguistic autonomy. Additionally, teachers shared that writing output

increased as students developed comfort with new academic genres and vocabulary. Scaffolded supports, such as sentence frames, visual supports, think aloud protocols, and collaborative activities, enabled students to produce more sophisticated writing over time.

Even in virtual settings, SAILL maintained a commitment to multimodal language use. Many students were fearful to share their writing. Teachers adapted instruction by incorporating chat functions, digital collaboration tools (e.g., Nearpod), and asynchronous writing opportunities. These tools helped ensure students who were shy or anxious had access to alternative participation pathways.

Overall, teachers viewed English language development during SAILL as accelerated, relational, and integrally tied to content learning. The program's commitment to responsive scaffolding, cultural relevance, and structured participation helped demystify academic language and empower students to see themselves as capable, confident communicators.

Research Observations

Program observations conducted across multiple years of SAILL programming provided strong evidence of a coherent, student-centered instructional model that fostered meaningful engagement, scaffolded academic learning, and language development in a welcoming environment. Researchers noted that classrooms were consistently organized around collaborative, inquiry-driven projects that integrated English language development with content learning in ELD, STEM and humanities. These interdisciplinary projects promoted not only conceptual understanding but also authentic language use across modalities (reading, writing, speaking, listening).

Observers highlighted the prevalence of structured discourse routines and collaborative group roles as key elements that scaffolded students' participation in academic conversations and helped normalize linguistic risk-taking. Teachers regularly employed visual aids, sentence frames, and small-group facilitation to support ELs at varied proficiency levels, creating inclusive learning environments characterized by high expectations and relational support.

In addition to clear and consistent instructional design, researchers documented the cultivation of peer community and emotional safety. Classrooms exhibited a culture of mutual respect, with students supporting each other's language production and contributing multiple perspectives during whole-group discussions. Heterogeneous groupings reinforced cross-cultural relationship building, promoting a sense of belonging critical for newcomer student engagement.

Importantly, researchers observed that many educators took on multiple roles, such as instructional designers, cultural mediators, and professional learners. Reflection protocols, peer coaching, and embedded co-planning time enabled educators to refine their practice in real time, contributing to a dynamic and collaborative professional learning community. These educator-facing structures were as central to SAILL's success as the student-facing components.

Across classrooms, researchers noted variability in implementation but widespread fidelity to core principles: Culturally responsive pedagogy, interdisciplinary integration, collaborative routines and scaffolding for academic discourse. Taken together, these observations confirmed that SAILL was not only an effective instructional intervention, but also a model of teacher professional learning in practice—one that made multilingual learners visible, valued, and capable.

Conclusions

During this multi-year evaluation, SAILL demonstrated its capacity to improve academic outcomes for newcomer ELs across the school district, while simultaneously offering a robust, embedded professional development model for educators. Across multiple sources of data— including teacher and leader interviews, surveys, classroom observations, and student outcome data—clear themes emerged about both the effectiveness of SAILL's approach.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence from the evaluation strongly supports the conclusion that SAILL positively influenced the academic achievement of newcomer ELs, especially in the semester following program participation. Impact analyses showed a positive and statistically significant effect of SAILL participation on student academic achievement as evidenced by GPA scores at the end of the fall semester. The impact study results underscore that even a relatively brief five-week summer program can meaningfully support academic performance.

Students participating in SAILL also demonstrated significantly greater educational progress during the following semester by attaining a higher average number of credits towards high school graduation compared to peers who chose not to participate in the program. SAILL participants' on-track status and course completion rates point to both high levels of engagement and academic success in content areas typically considered challenging for EL newcomers.

Program observations and teacher interviews consistently documented that students developed academic competencies and confidence through SAILL's project-based, discourse-rich curriculum. Educators reported improved student use of academic language, argumentation structures, and evidence-based reasoning. These practices enabled students to practice academic language, access rigorous content, and complete interdisciplinary final projects.

It is worth noting that SAILL's instructional dosage was limited to 25 days, and outcomes must be interpreted in this light. That such gains in GPA and credit attainment occurred within this time frame suggests that newcomer ELs, when supported with integrated, student-centered instruction, can thrive academically even under condensed timelines.

Observation and interview data demonstrate that SAILL's interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum deeply engaged students through real-world problem solving, culturally relevant themes, and multimodal expression. Teachers reported that students made significant cognitive and linguistic gains when instruction was intentionally designed to embed language scaffolds

into core content, support academic discourse through consistent classroom routines, and center topics drawn from students' lived experiences.

While the findings in this study are encouraging, there are limitations to consider. Although there were no measured effects on the state English language proficiency assessment, teachers reported linguistic growth among their students. The program enabled students with interrupted formal education to engage with grade-level content in supportive, scaffolded environments, an impact rarely seen in traditional summer school formats. The short duration of summer programming may limit the extent of gains that can be made, and the opt-in nature of SAILL means the most disengaged or marginalized students may not always be reached. Future research might explore cumulative gains across multiple years of participation. In addition, work towards adapting the model in other school districts will require careful fidelity planning, especially in systems that are not yet configured to support integrated ELD or distributed leadership.

In summary, newcomer ELs who participated in SAILL made meaningful academic gains, both in GPA and on-track graduation status. SAILL functioned not merely as a summer bridge program, but as an accelerator of academic engagement and a re-entry point for students with interrupted or non-traditional educational experiences. The evaluation results support the program's approach to integrated content-language instruction and suggest substantial potential for summer models that center the linguistic, academic, and social needs of multilingual learners.
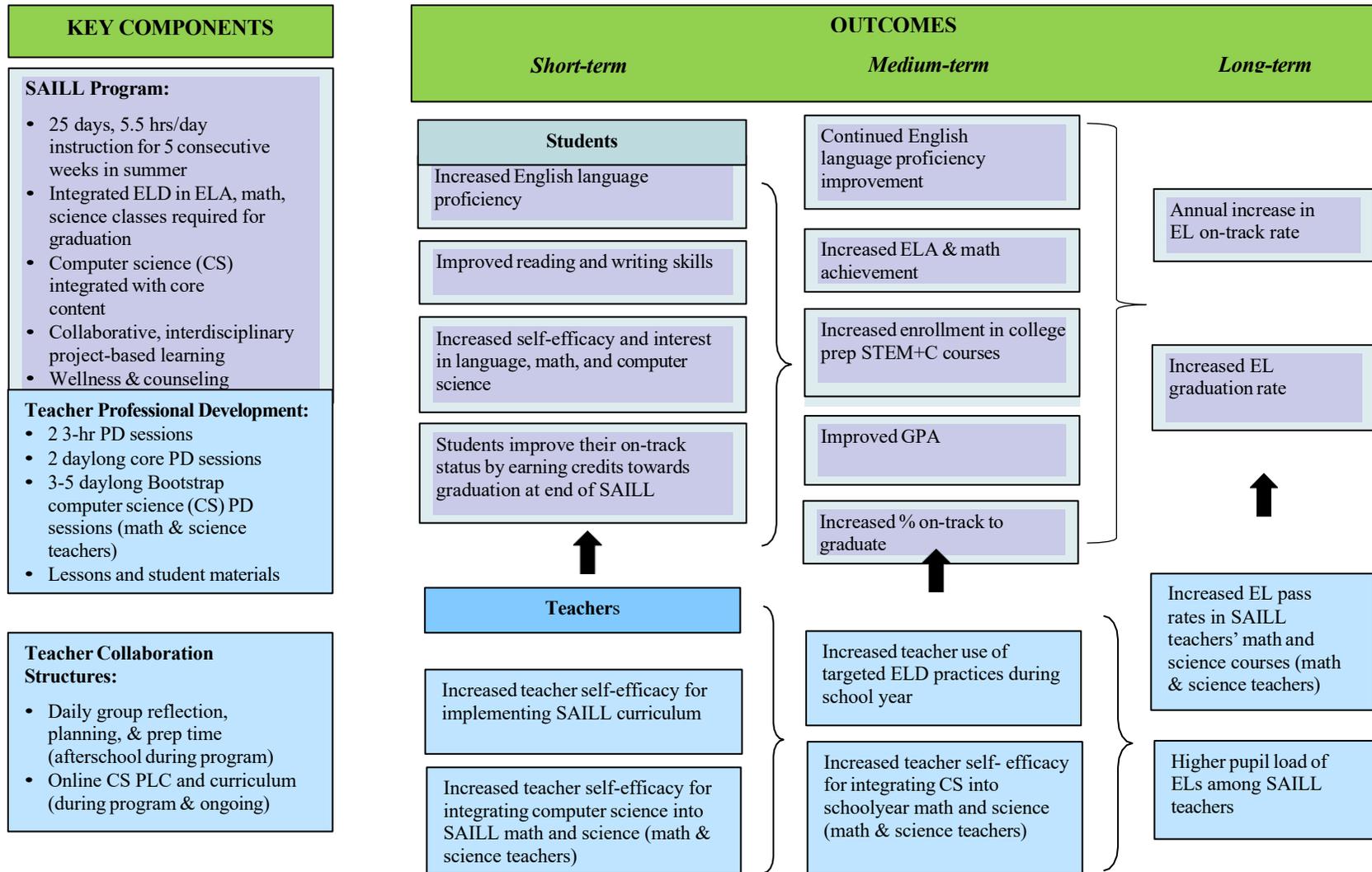
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Appendix

Appendix A. Logic Model for the Summer Academy for Integrated Language Learning (SAILL) (EIR Early-Phase Project, 2019–2024)

KEY COMPONENTS

SAILL Program:
- 25 days, 5.5 hrs/day instruction for 5 consecutive weeks in summer
- Integrated ELD in ELA, math, science classes required for graduation
- Computer science (CS) integrated with core content
- Collaborative, interdisciplinary project-based learning
- Wellness & counseling

Teacher Professional Development:
- 2 3-hr PD sessions
- 2 daylong core PD sessions
- 3-5 daylong Bootstrap computer science (CS) PD sessions (math & science teachers)
- Lessons and student materials

Teacher Collaboration Structures:
- Daily group reflection, planning, & prep time (afterschool during program)
- Online CS PLC and curriculum (during program & ongoing)

OUTCOMES

Short-term   *Medium-term*   *Long-term*

Students

Short-term:
- Increased English language proficiency
- Improved reading and writing skills
- Increased self-efficacy and interest in language, math, and computer science
- Students improve their on-track status by earning credits towards graduation at end of SAILL

Medium-term:
- Continued English language proficiency improvement
- Increased ELA & math achievement
- Increased enrollment in college prep STEM+C courses
- Improved GPA
- Increased % on-track to graduate

Long-term:
- Annual increase in EL on-track rate
- Increased EL graduation rate

Teachers

Short-term:
- Increased teacher self-efficacy for implementing SAILL curriculum
- Increased teacher self-efficacy for integrating computer science into SAILL math and science (math & science teachers)

Medium-term:
- Increased teacher use of targeted ELD practices during school year
- Increased teacher self- efficacy for integrating CS into schoolyear math and science (math & science teachers)

Long-term:
- Increased EL pass rates in SAILL teachers' math and science courses (math & science teachers)
- Higher pupil load of ELs among SAILL teachers

Appendix B. Fidelity of Implementation by Component and Year

Key Components, Number of Indicators, Units, and Threshold				Year 1 Results (2022-23 School Year)			Year 2 Results (2023-24 School Year)		
Key Component	Total # of Measurable Indicators	Unit of Implementation	Sample-Level Threshold for Fidelity of Implementation	Number of Units in Which Component was Implemented	Number of Units in Which Fidelity of Component was Measured	Achieved Fidelity Score and Whether Program Met Sample-Level Threshold	Number of Units in Which Component was Implemented	Number of Units in Which Fidelity of Component was Measured	Achieved Fidelity Score and Whether Program Met Sample-Level Threshold
1. Teacher professional development (PD)	4	Teacher	**Sample-level component score is 75% or more of teachers with score of 4 (score of 1 for each indicator)**	12 teachers	12 teachers	Score is 83% of teachers *Program fidelity = Yes*	16 teachers	16 teachers	Score is 94% of teachers *Program fidelity = Yes*
2. Teacher collaboration structures	2	Teacher	**75% or more of teachers w/ score of 2**	12 teachers	12 teachers	Score is 100% *Program fidelity = Yes*	16 teachers	16 teachers	Score is 100% *Program fidelity = Yes*
3. SAILL program	6	Program	**Adequate implementation at program level is score of 5 (score of 1 for 5 of 6 indicators)**	1 program	1 program	Score is 5 *Program fidelity = Yes*	1 program	1 program	Score is 5 *Program fidelity = Yes*