



***SUSTAINABLE EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROGRAMMING  
AT AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL***



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## *Executive Summary*

Francis Xavier Warde School is a private Catholic school located in Chicago, Illinois. FXW currently enrolls approximately one thousand students and has grown steadily in enrollment over the past few years. The utilization of FXW's after-school programs have increased at a rate even faster than their enrollment. FXW offers a variety of after school programming including Extended Care, Co-Curricular programming and Athletics. Administrators have expressed concerns over the ability to provide adequate availability and quality programming for students given the increased participation. FXW seeks to assess the sustainability of their after-school programming based on their enrollment, facilities, finances and needs of their community. FXW would also like to explore what possible solutions may be available to minimally maintain their programming with the intention of better serving their community.

An understanding of this research led to an examination of the literature on the benefits of after-school programming as well as the successful implementation of programs in general. In the literature, successful implementation was frequently described by using The Interactive Systems Framework. This framework identifies three sub-systems where program implementation frequently fails: the Synthesis and Translation System (which distills information about innovations and translates it into user-friendly formats); the Support System (which provides training, technical assistance or other support to users in the field); and the Delivery System (which implements innovations in the world of practice; Wandersman, 2008). This framework provided a structure to examine the "success" of after-school programming at FXW.

The examination of the literature, the conceptual framework, and its application in the context of FXW led to three research questions focused on the after-school programming and the structures used to support these programs at the school:

- What are the goals of extra-curricular programming at Francis Xavier Warde school for the various stakeholders?
- Can Francis Xavier Warde School build sustainable extra-curricular programming that meets the needs of the stakeholders?
  - What resources are required to run the extra-curricular programs?
  - What are the limiting factors in running the extra-curricular programs?
- What are the benefits of extra-curricular programming at Francis Xavier Warde school for the various stakeholders?

This project began with an examination of the available after-school programming at Francis Xavier Warde School through school media. Historical data on participation in each program was obtained and compared for trends over the last three years. An annual survey was conducted by an outside consulting group and shared. Qualitative interviews were conducted with parents, instructors and program administrators at the school.

**Finding 1:** There were some differences between parents, instructors and administrators views of goals. FXW has effectively communicated goals around programming in the areas of extended care and co-curricular programs. The goals of athletics were not as successfully communicated.

**Finding 2:** The resources were needed to run the program effectively fit into four themes: the facilities, the instructors, the funding and time. Time was the most frequently listed resource needed by both instructors and administrators. Facilities and staff were discussed primarily in terms of being needed in quantity more than quality. Funding referred to the money needed to pay instructors and coaches, buy supplies and uniforms and purchase snacks.

**Finding 3:** The limiting factors included school facilities. School employees cited a lack of space as a challenge for offering larger classes or more diversity in classes. FXW currently uses classroom and common spaces for all programs. The Directors also rotate classrooms as “free” spaces so that teachers may prep in their classrooms. Some classrooms are utilized by only two or three individuals for tutoring. These underutilized spaces are in part why co-curricular activities are limited in the number of offerings and overall capacity.

**Finding 4:** The limiting factors included fees. Parents cited overlapping fees and varying price scales as reasons for not registering students. All three after-school programs charge fees per each registration, despite the fact that several programs have overlapping times. Parents listed the additional fees regardless of conflicting programs as a reason that limited their ability to sign up for programs.

**Finding 5:** The limiting factors included class logistics. Class logistics are closely tied together and include sub areas of registration system, scheduling and class capacity.

**Finding 6:** After-school programs have benefits including avoiding delinquency, improved social skills and higher academic achievement. These benefits are increased with high-quality programming.

The survey and interviews demonstrate that FXW’s after-school programming is effective. The quality was rated as moderate. The primary reasons given for any dissatisfaction are related to students ability to take classes for various reasons. Improving the school’s ability to increase participation through changes in scheduling, fee structures and available facilities would allow more students to participate and receive the benefits associated with high-quality after-school programming.

**Recommendation 1:** Create a more uniform structure of scheduling all after-school offerings.

Currently FXW allows great flexibility for teachers to schedule co-curricular programs in each of the two “semesters” they run extended care. The athletics programs are dictated by the state and generally run on a seasonal (fall, winter, spring) model. Changing the co-curricular and extended day programs to a similar model would improve families’ ability to make decisions on both program choices and childcare.

**Recommendation 2:** Create a more uniform structure of the fees associated with after-school offerings.

Currently FXW allows outside vendors of co-curriculars to dictate fees. Different sports also have different fees depending on the number of games and uniform needs. Families also pay fees

for programs even if they have conflicting dates. Moving co-curriculars to standard fees per week would improve equity in student choices.

**Recommendation 3:** Begin using a registration website that maintains a database of classes, participants and fees.

Currently FXW utilizes a google form for parent registration. The director creates spreadsheets and checks past documents by hand. These spreadsheets and the manual checking method are then used to develop class lists. Using a website to organize this data would improve the resource of time for the director and be a more efficient and equitable means for students' to sign up for all classes.

**Recommendation 4:** Revise the room usage after school so that teachers share spaces for common uses of prep work and tutoring respectively.

Currently space is underutilized; some classrooms have only a few students in them or none at all in order to accommodate teachers prep. Making the library space a common prep room for faculty after school would open up more classrooms for after school programming. This would also provide a climate conducive to collaboration between teachers. Students participating in the tutoring program share rooms. 2-3 teachers could work in one classroom. This would be a more efficient use of classroom spaces and open up space for after-school programming needs.

**Recommendation 5:** Continue tracking data on parental feedback.

Currently FXW utilizes an annual school survey from the Kensington group. While this survey is helpful, it is limited. A survey specific to after-school programming conducted every year, six months from the current school survey would be beneficial to monitor families' needs given the pace of increased participation in after-school programs. Survey results should be tracked over time to observe trends in family needs, as well as the school's ability to meet those needs.

## *Overview of Organization*

Francis Xavier Warde Catholic School (hereafter referred to as FXW) is a private Catholic school in Chicago, Illinois. FXW currently enrolls 993 students from Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The current tuition at FXW is approximately \$15,000 for K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Financial aid is available based on need and determined through an application process. The tuition for the pre-K programs ranges between \$11,000 and \$15,000. The school is broken into two campuses. The first is known as the OSP campus or Old St. Patrick's for the church to which it is attached. OSP is a PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade campus with over 500 students. The second is known as HNC or Holy Name Cathedral campus. The HNC campus serves 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades, with over 400 students currently enrolled. The two campuses are located two miles from each other in the central region of Chicago known as "the loop". Students are primarily transported to and from school by parents in cars though some walk or take public transportation. A bus is provided by the organization to transport FXW students between the campuses at designated times. This system allows parents to pick up and drop off their students at either location. This provides a convenience for parents who have children at both campuses, live closer to one of the locations or have work-related scheduling challenges. Allowing parents various pick up times after school is an important piece of the FXW schedule as families increasingly depend on dual incomes (Leonce, 2020).

FXW offers a variety of after school programming depending on the age of the student. The after-school options are split into three areas: Extended Care, Co-Curricular programming and Athletics. All programs have fees outside of the tuition costs at the school.

All grades may participate in an extended day care option. The fees associated with this program depend on how long after school the student attends. There are two choices for the families at registration. They register in August for extended day care service for 1 ¼ hours (until 4:45) or 2 ½ hours (until 6pm) for the entirety of the year. The school does allow for late registrations if families' needs change. The extended care program is overseen by a school administrator. However, the staff is primarily college age students with no FXW affiliation that are hired for the purpose of extended care only. This is the primary reason why families must sign up for the whole year, so the school can determine how large a staff is needed for the year when entering the hiring process.

FXW also offers various co-curricular classes ranging from art and drama in PreK to coding in 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade. There are gradually more options in each grade level with approximately a dozen choices for the oldest students. The fees associated with these programs vary depending on the number of classes and whether the instructors are school employees or outside vendors. The instructors in the co-curricular program are an approximate 50/50 mix of internal instructors (i.e. faculty members) and outside vendors. The faculty instructors may be along the lines of a science teacher delving into fun science projects outside the curriculum or one who explores passions or hobbies outside the curriculum they normally teach at school. The outside vendors are instructors hired by various child focused education programs from around the city. These range from chess instructors to yoga instructors and basketball coaches and are meant to be specialists in whatever field they represent.

Students may also participate on athletic teams beginning in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Athletic team fees vary depending on the needs of the sports. Sports that require more equipment, uniforms or officials have higher fees than those with fewer demands on resources. The choices for sports also increases from approximately four in the lower grades to eight in the higher grades depending on the year and interest. The school's main attraction is basketball with 27 different teams running this past year, according to the Athletic Director.

### *Definition of Problem*

In recent years FXW has experienced slow and steady growth in their enrollment, approximately 2% each year. While the growth in the total enrollment is healthy, they have a substantially more dramatic increase in the participation level of their after-school extra-curricular activities (see Figure 1). Student participation has risen substantially in each of the three after-school programs from two years ago. The increase in number of students participating in ascending order are: Athletics 15%, Co-Curriculars 18% and Extended Care 36%. The numbers are even more alarming when looking at the HNC campus, where the extended care program has increased 65% from its 2018 enrollment. Administrative concerns exist over the ability to provide adequate availability and quality programming for students. Administrators have also claimed to observe a rise in applicants with all parents/guardians working. This information was not released or supported with documentation, though it is consistent with nationwide trends in family dynamics (See Figures 2 and 3). The majority of children nationwide either live with two parents who both work, or a single parent that is working. These trends mean that in the majority of households nationwide it is less likely that childcare is available in the hours directly after school. The community that FXW serves, according to the Head of School and Director of Education, falls primarily consists of dual income families whose parents are working and unavailable to pick up their child directly after school. Therefore, in order for families to best serve their community and to attract prospective new families it is important for the school to provide adequate child care options. These concerns have prompted self-examination of the current programs. FXW seeks to assess the sustainability of their after-school programming based on their enrollment, facilities, finances and needs of their community. FXW would also like to explore what possible solutions may be available to minimally maintain their programming with the intention of better serving their community.

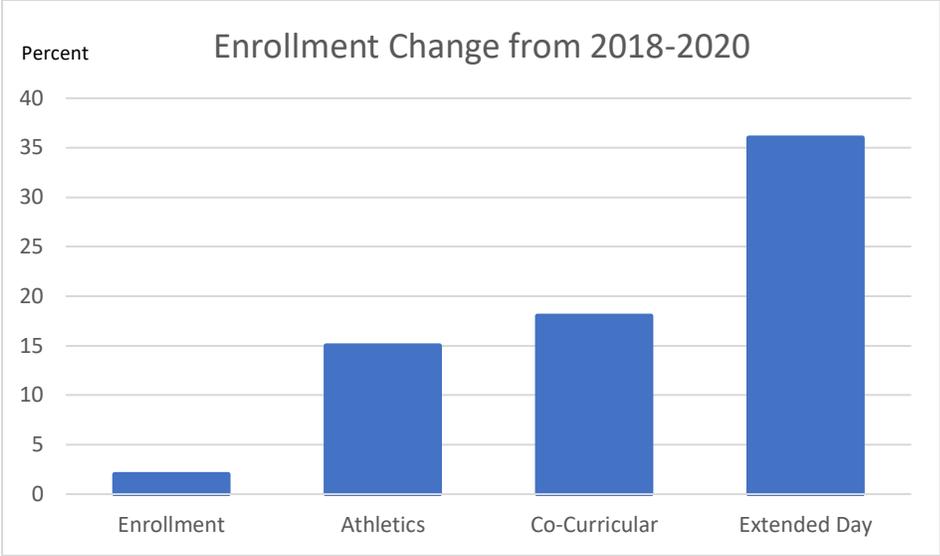


Figure 1. shows the percentage increase in total enrollment at FXW, as well as the increases in the three after school programs between 2018 and 2020.

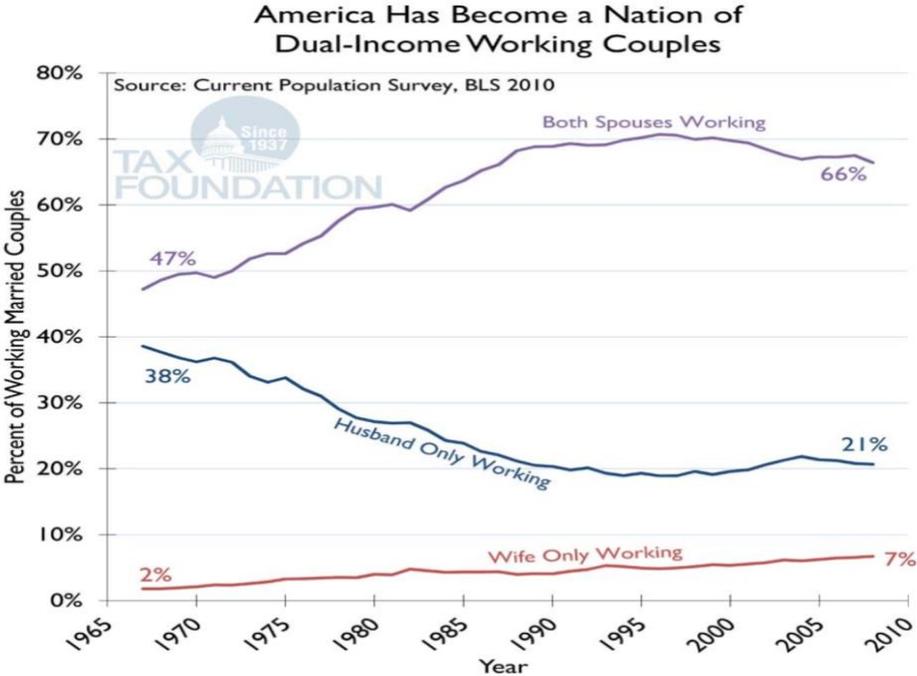
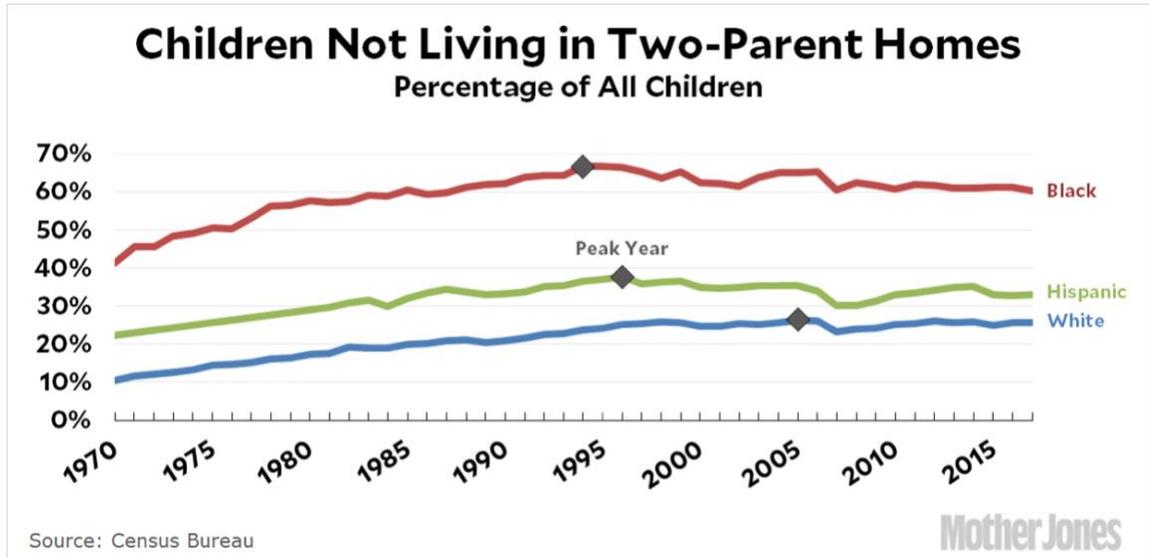


Figure 2. This graph shows the historical data over the last 50 years for the employment status of married couples in America. Approximately 2/3 of married couples are dual income families.



**Figure 3.** This graph shows the historical data over the last 50 years for the percentage of children in America not living in two-parent homes. The graph is broken down into three categories: white, black, and Hispanic.

## Literature Review

*Why should FXW be concerned about the quality and participation in their after-school programming?* In order to answer that question, I began researching peer-reviewed articles in educational journals. I quickly discovered that there was relevant literature about the societal impacts of after school programs, as well as the social effects on students. I broadened my research to cover the impact of after-school programming in general. Many of these studies discussed the value of children being supervised and keeping them safe in the hours after school. Capacity was one key issue to address given the initial concerns the administration discussed with me at the start of this project.

### Staying Safe

Studies show that being involved in after-school programming decreases students' chances of various negative outcomes such as juvenile delinquency and future incarceration (Mahatmya, 2011; Aizer & Doyle, 2015; Mahoney, 2007; Reisner, 2007). Juvenile delinquency rates have been shown to decrease when students are enrolled in after-school programming of any kind. Mahatmya (2011) demonstrated that the frequency of adolescents' delinquency decreased as the level of their after-school activities increased. Furthermore, Mahatmya's study indicated that continued involvement in after-school activities over a period of six years positively contributed to lowering delinquency in late adolescence. These findings support the argument for FXW to provide after-school programming. They also encourage the initiation of after-school programming beginning in the primary grades. Per Mahatmya's suggestion, after-school programming should start by the third grade at the latest. Juvenile delinquency rates have been shown to increase the likelihood of future incarceration (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). Therefore, after

school programming may have an extended effect of decreasing the chances of future incarceration in adulthood as well.

While delinquency is a possibility in any setting it is more likely in urban settings such as FXW, which is located in the heart of Chicago. Delinquency research has consistently suggested that urban rates are higher than rural rates of delinquency (Lilery, 1982). It could certainly be argued that research debating urban vs rural area delinquency rates could be skewed by racial disparities. Historically in the United States, black children are more likely than white children to grow up in single parent families, and more likely to live in impoverished, urban neighborhoods, which are well-known risk factors for juvenile delinquency (Felson, 2008). These points are valid and the historical evidence of disproportionate arrests and prosecution of black Americans (Davis, 2017; Harris, 2009), support skepticism surrounding urban vs rural comparisons. FXW expresses the value of diversity and inclusion on their website and the majority of administrators mentioned it during interviews. FXW's mission statement also includes a phrase that the school provides "education to students of all ethnic, religious, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in a child-centered urban environment." While the environment is clearly urban and that does pose more of a risk for delinquency, the majority of FXW's students are white. If Felson's point about race was applied, it could be argued that FXW's students may not be at as high of a risk. According to Lillery (1982) though, rural white students' involvement in delinquent activity was significantly less frequent and less serious than the delinquent activity of urban white students. Given the environment and the value FXW has placed on working towards a diverse student body, it is logical that they prioritize the importance of providing after-school opportunities for students of all backgrounds.

### *Social Skills*

Upon deeper examination into after school programs research, I discovered there are also other advantages that would interest any school in developing their programming. Extra-curricular programs have been shown to be beneficial to students on many levels (Darling, 2005; Shernoff, 2010; Grogan, 2014; Reisner, 2007; Darling et al., 2005). Students that participated in school-based extracurricular activities, particularly after-school programs demonstrated better psychosocial adjustment and social skills than those students that were not involved in these types of programs (Shernoff, 2010). Additional studies support that positive changes occurred with students' feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and academic school performance (Durlak, 2010). Any educational institution would be encouraged by this evidence to provide after-school programming for the obvious benefit to their students. In addition to their social skills, Durlak (2007) points out that after-school programs have a positive impact on youths' feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, attitudes toward school, social behaviors, school grades and achievement test scores. While Durlak's findings were primarily using middle school populations, FXW also serves elementary age students. Grogan(2014) suggests that student engagement in after-school activities are also related to increased academic and social skills in elementary school. Improved self-confidence and self-esteem are keys to success on many levels. Various studies have indicated that high self-esteem may actually be the strongest of several predictors of a person's overall life satisfaction (Deiner & Deiner, 1995).

### ***Academic Advantages***

Private schools like FXW in a major city like Chicago are also competing for students with other schools. Private schools realize their graduates are representatives of the school and can affect the schools' reputation and ability to recruit students in the future. This is not as much of a concern for public schools that are based on geography and populations. Families searching for private schools are looking for strong academic alternatives to the public-school system. FXW's mission statement mentions academic excellence in the first seven words of the statement. This emphasis on academics makes other findings pertinent as well. Studies have demonstrated that students had higher English grades if they participated in after-school programs for even just one academic year (Slavin, 1998). Similar to the social effects described earlier, this is even more advantageous if students participate in after-school programming for multiple years (Shernoff, 2010).

During interviews both instructors and administrators expressed concern over maintaining the quality of programming while expanding opportunities. This is a justified concern based on research that has emphasized the importance of programmatic quality as a critical variable that effects the willingness to participate and consistency of community attendance in a program (Shernoff, 2010). It may seem like common sense that quality programming of any sort would result in better outcomes. We cannot rely on assumptions however, when making important decisions about students, resources and communities. In a series of studies, Reisner (2007) and Vandell (2005), have consistently demonstrated benefits of after school programming on standardized tests. Many of their findings demonstrate benefits in the areas of standardized testing. Middle school students who regularly attended high-quality afterschool programs (alone or in combination with other activities) across two years demonstrated significant gains in standardized math test scores, compared to their peers who were routinely unsupervised during afterschool hours (Vandell et al., 2007). While standardized testing is certainly not the only measurement of academic success, it is still a highly regarded method and a strong quantitative measurement. Similar to the findings of Durlak (2008), in relation to the decreased risk of juvenile delinquency improving over a multi-year period of after-school programming, there is additional evidence that the strongest benefits for students are when children participate in various sets of supervised activities over several years (Reisner et al., 2007). This research strengthens the argument for FXW to keep as many students enrolled in high-quality programming as possible beginning in the primary grade levels.

### ***Successful Implementation***

Given the numerous research-backed benefits of after-school programming, FXW has conducted after-school programming for the past several years. In addition, with the research available on the continued positive effects of high-quality programming and the increasing participation levels at FXW, the school intends to utilize their resources as efficiently as possible to improve programming and best serve the community's needs. In order to offer a high-quality program, it became apparent that FXW needed to examine the factors that make a successful program.

During my research I examined factors that were consistent in successfully implementing programs around the world and in different constructs. I found that whether it was Russian politics(Struyk, 2007), teen pregnancy(Lesesne, 2008) or education(Meyers et. al, 2012) there were some consistent themes in implementation research. "The one point of agreement in

implementation literature is, the more resources the better” (Struyk, 2007, p. 68 ). Struyk made this statement as he sought to extend implementation research that had been done in the Western world using Russian political policies. Other than the abundance of resources Struyk refers to there are factors in various studies that are recurring. A study by Giacchino and Kakabadse (2003) on successful implementation grouped these into process-oriented factors and people-oriented factors. While this is certainly not the only way to divide successful attributes, this grouping of factors into different areas led me to more research on the systems in place during implementation. In their efforts to bridge the gap between research and practice in the area of teen pregnancy prevention, researchers found that community level prevention practices rely on several interacting systems that do not always communicate well with each other or support one another. Their inability to do so can actually pit them against each other (Lesesne, 2008). This is in line with the basic principles of the Interactive Systems Framework. The Interactive Systems Framework (which will be described further below) is intended to be used by different stakeholders to see prevention not only through the lens of their own needs and perspectives, but also as a way to better understand the needs of other stakeholders and systems (Wandersman, 2008)

There are many advantages to schools delivering high-quality after-school programming. The major advantages that have been thoroughly researched include safety, improved social skills, and higher levels of academic achievement. These are compelling reasons for FXW not only to offer after-school programming, but to improve upon the quality and availability for all of its students. In order to implement programs successfully there are systems that must work efficiently and interact effectively. A model that has been repeatedly shown to work well in a broad range of implementation projects is the Interactive Systems Framework.

## *Conceptual Frameworks*

According to the statistics for the last three years, FXW is not lacking in participation from their community in their auxiliary programs. However, the FXW administration has expressed through anecdotal examples that they are not confident in the sustainability of their co-curricular after-school programs and their summer camp. This lack of confidence appears to stem from concerns around resources and implementation as opposed to participation. Problems of implementation should become a priority for organizations to solve as science-based evidence becomes more readily available to practitioners and can help them overcome logistical hurdles (Mihalic, 2004).

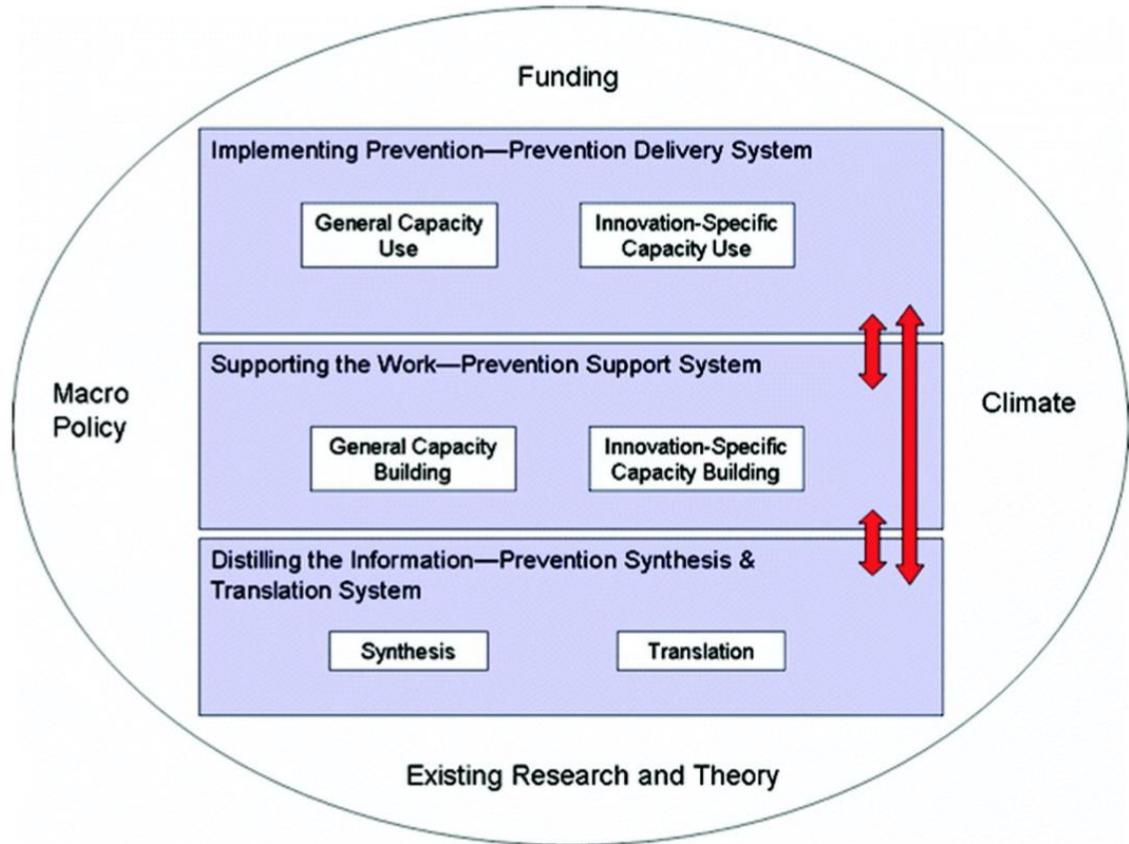
The Interactive Systems Framework (see Figure 4) identifies the areas where program implementation frequently fails. This framework utilizes three systems: the Prevention Synthesis and Translation System (which breaks down information about policies and procedures and presents them for everyday consumers); the Prevention Support System (which provides training or other support to those stakeholders implementing policies); and the Prevention Delivery System (which implements policy into practice; Wandersman, 2008). These are three main areas I intend to assess and provide recommendations for, in order to improve the implementation and sustainability of FXW’s current programming. This framework demonstrates there are three

systems critical to carry out the functions necessary for successful implementation (Synthesis and Translation System, Support System, Delivery System; Meyers, et al, 2012).

The Synthesis and Translation System involves creating user-friendly information in the form of innovation, user-guides or other methods from larger or more complicated masses of information. In relation to my project the Synthesis and Translation System would involve making sure relevant information exists in the form of parent registration systems, informative websites describing available classes, procedural descriptions for faculty regarding check in and check out of students, distribution of snacks and any other pertinent information. If this information already exists, I would be looking to improve the format and accessibility.

The Delivery System includes the individuals, forms of communication and people that make sure this information reaches those who need it. The delivery system at FXW requires understanding the needs of the families regarding time, affordability and offerings. This can be assessed through some of my methodology, such as interviews and surveys. The individuals involved in delivery of this information are the school administrators that communicate the goals of the program to the other faculty and parents, as well as the administrative leaders that run the program. These would include the Head of School, Director of Education, the Principals at each level as well as the Co-curricular Director.

The Support System is meant to facilitate the Delivery System's role with quality. This can be done through training, logistical processes, infrastructure and establishing relationships with key community partners (Meyers, et al., 2012). At FXW this requires looking at the school's resources for funding, facilities to conduct programs and available staff to execute a successful after-school program. It also involves establishing relationships with organizations in the area that offer unique programming. These systems will be important to the success of the implementation. An important organizational practice is the concept of reaching out to families for input and to participate in collaborative decision-making in order for them to take ownership and have successful implementation (Durlak, 2008).



**Figure 4. This is a diagram of the Interactive Systems Framework illustrating the three systems as well as the surrounding factors that contribute to the success or failure of a program.**

Each part of the Interactive Systems Framework connects to the other systems and can affect the ability to successfully implement a program. Outside forces that affect the interactive system in Figure 4 are the amount of funding, organizational climate, macro policy and existing research and theory. In order to best understand the relationship between the main areas of the system as well as the outside forces the following research questions and methodology of data collection will be utilized.

### *Research Questions*

The following questions will guide this capstone. The questions are specific to the concepts of efficient implementation and benefits of co-curricular programming. FXW views all of its program more as co-curricular, meaning they are working together with the school's daily curriculum and mission statement. However, in order to avoid confusion, I will use the term extra-curricular in my questions because one branch of the school's programming is specifically referred to as "Co-Curricular."

1. What are the goals of extra-curricular programming at Francis Xavier Warde school for the various stakeholders?

2. Can Francis Xavier Warde School build sustainable extra-curricular programming that meets the needs of the stakeholders?
  - a. What resources are required to run the extra-curricular program?
  - b. What are the limiting factors in running the extra-curricular program?
3. What are the benefits of extra-curricular programming at Francis Xavier Warde school for the various stakeholders?

## *Methodology*

Utilizing the framework described above I organized my data collection to target each of the three primary areas of the framework. I utilized school websites and parent interviews to gather information relevant to the Synthesis and Translation System, which focuses on the availability of information. In order to limit my bias on the available school media's program information I also utilized parent interviews. These interviews were coded for responses relevant to the availability of information. In order to obtain pertinent information in regards to the Synthesis and Translation system I asked all participants, "Where can parents find information on this program(s)?" In order to see how overall program objectives had been communicated I asked, "What are the goals of this program(s)?" and "How do students register for this program(s)?" Less direct questions that could be used to find out more about the Synthesis and Translation System, as well as the Delivery and Support System included, "What aspects of the program are strengths?" and "What aspects of the program need improvement?" These questions can be found in their entirety in Appendix A.

The second area of the Interactive Systems Framework, The Delivery System, focuses on the people involved in delivering a product or service that meets the needs of the families at FXW. In order to more completely understand the school's needs I examined historical data for school enrollment and student participation numbers for each of the three extra-curricular programs that the school had collected in recent years. I also performed interviews with administrators, employees and parents to obtain information regarding the logistics and goals of each program, as well as areas of concern, those needing improvement, and successful implementation. Given that the interviews were a small sample size for the population I also utilized a school-administered annual survey for parents to verify my interview findings were consistent with school-wide opinions of the program.

The last area of the Interactive Systems Framework focuses on the Support System. The Support System focuses on the facilities, staff and logistics needed to execute the program plans. Information on logistics were obtained primarily through interviews with program directors and their staff. My intention was to also use on-site observations to gather information on the facility usage and logistics. These observations were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and limited to the interviews and still photographs of the building interior.

### ***Existing Data***

When I began my relationship with FXW regarding their programmatic concerns, they had primarily considered anecdotal evidence in a casual examination of their after-school programming. In order to thoroughly examine the programs, I intended to review FXW's co-curricular classes, extended day and athletics registration history for the past 3-5 years. The school made the data from these areas available for the past three years. They were not opposed to the historical period I requested; however, they did not supply it, because data previous to 2018 was not recorded in their current system. I used the three years of data supplied to search for trends in participation, as well as shifts from one program to another. I also used the school's enrollment information and public financial aid information to examine their community's needs. The data was given to me in an excel spreadsheet that contained raw numbers of participants for each campus in each of the three programs for each of the three years. I compiled totals for each program across the entire school. I also used the participant numbers to calculate the change in number of participants for each campus and schoolwide. Knowing that FXW's enrollment has been increasing I needed to make sure that I could accurately compare the number of participants. Mere totals could be misleading since the elevated enrollment would be expected to contribute to the overall increase in participants. I calculated the percentage of students participating in each program over the course of each year. Once the percentage of students participating each year was determined I was able to calculate the change in percent participation each year eliminating enrollment increases as a factor for growth. To further strengthen my analysis, I calculated the change in percentage growth each year. This calculation allowed me to analyze how dramatically or how minute the changes in participation were relative to the prior year as well as to compare the growth between programs since the number of participants was not equal and the programs are not offered equally across grade levels.

### ***Interviews***

In order to find out more about the entire system from the perspective of the Interactive Systems Framework I needed to interview stakeholders involved in multiple areas of the implementation of after-school programming, as well as those who participate in the program. Given the complexities of involving children in the research process I elected to use parents as a proxy for student experiences. I interviewed ten stakeholders, that included the Lower School Director, Middle School Assistant Director, the Co-curricular Director, Extended Day Director, Athletic Director, a current co-curricular instructor, an extended day employee, two faculty members, and four current parents. There was some overlap as two parents were also school employees.

The instructors and extended day employees were names given to me by the school's Director of Education, my main contact with the organization, because they were people the Director of Education knew were still employed by the school, were likely to be responsive to an interview request and were likely in town during the period of time I was conducting interviews since it was summer. Three parents were also names given to me by the Director of Education and included one parent that was also a faculty member. One other parent I interviewed was an acquaintance I had connected with through personal contacts. All school employees were introduced to me via a group email from the Director of Education. I followed up individually with each potential interviewee and all potential participants agreed to participate.

These interviews took place between 6/1/20 and 9/15/20. All interviews took place over the phone and lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. The interview questions I asked are located in Appendix A. A few questions were omitted or contained follow ups depending on the stakeholder group. All interviewees gave permission for their responses to be used in this paper. In lieu of full transcription, I typed notes during and after each interview.

I interviewed the administrators of the programs because they have specific knowledge about how the programs run that others do not. All interviewees agreed to be contacted again for any follow up questions or clarifications. Given the reasonable number of interviewees, I coded in MS word. I developed codes based on my interview questions. These questions aligned with my research questions, as well as an initial read through of all notes.

After I determined my codes, I highlighted my interview notes for the themes. After finding the initial themes I recognized some sub-themes and I went back through my typed notes a second time to highlight sub-themes. Responses were coded for themes related to the Interactive Systems Framework and sub-themes related to research questions which can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1. lists the themes and sub-themes used for coding interview questions 11-16, which are located in the Appendix.**

<b>System Area</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Goals and Benefits</b>	<b>Safety</b>	
		<b>Well-Rounded</b>	
		<b>Experiences</b>	<b>New Opportunities, Passion/Interest</b>
		<b>Socialization</b>	
<b>Support</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Space, Availability</b>
		<b>Staff</b>	<b>Quality, Availability, Knowledge</b>
		<b>Funding</b>	
<b>Synthesis &amp; Transitions</b>	<b>Limiting Factors</b>	<b>Logistics</b>	<b>Registration, Schedule</b>
		<b>Funding</b>	

I also interviewed two directors of after school programs at nearby independent schools to find examples of the Interactive Systems Framework that were being successfully implemented to

guide my recommendations. The questions I asked these directors are in Appendix B. The directors of schools I interviewed are from Francis Parker School, Latin School of Chicago and Sacred Heart Academy. I chose these schools because they are private schools in the city of Chicago that include K-8 students and draw students from similar communities. Francis Parker and Latin School are within 1-2 miles of FXW's campus. Sacred Heart is located about 6 miles to the north but is also a K-8 Catholic school. All schools have directors that are in administrative positions or a combination of teacher and administrative positions.

### *Survey*

I had intended to send a 5-10 question survey to the parent body, as well as the faculty and staff at FXW, to evaluate what the needs and interests are for after-school programming. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school was administering many surveys and requested I remove this portion of my project so their parents would not be inundated and in hopes that their own survey response rate would be strong. I was given permission to view relevant results from an annual school survey which asked a few questions that pertained to after school programming. This survey was administered in January of 2020 by the Kensington Group. I was not given access to raw data, only the summarized results in two main areas. These areas were part of a category called "Overall Quality of Education". The sub categories were, "image/attitude" and "performance". The three after school programs were listed in the performance section. The image/attitude section allowed for comparison to other areas of the school and how parents typically rated the school overall. This survey is administered annually; however, I was only granted access to the most current year's data.

### *Observations*

My initial planned methodology included making two direct observations of the after-school programs in action, one on each campus. Observations were to be focused on how the students were organized and how the facilities were used. Additional observations were to be made with the intention of examining the diversity of course offerings. While some course offering information is available through the FXW website, the nature of the courses could be better understood through direct observation. These observations were also canceled due to the school shut down due to COVID-19. Since these observations were canceled, additional questions were asked in interviews of the Co-curricular Director, co-curricular instructors and extended day employees to better understand the processes and offerings.

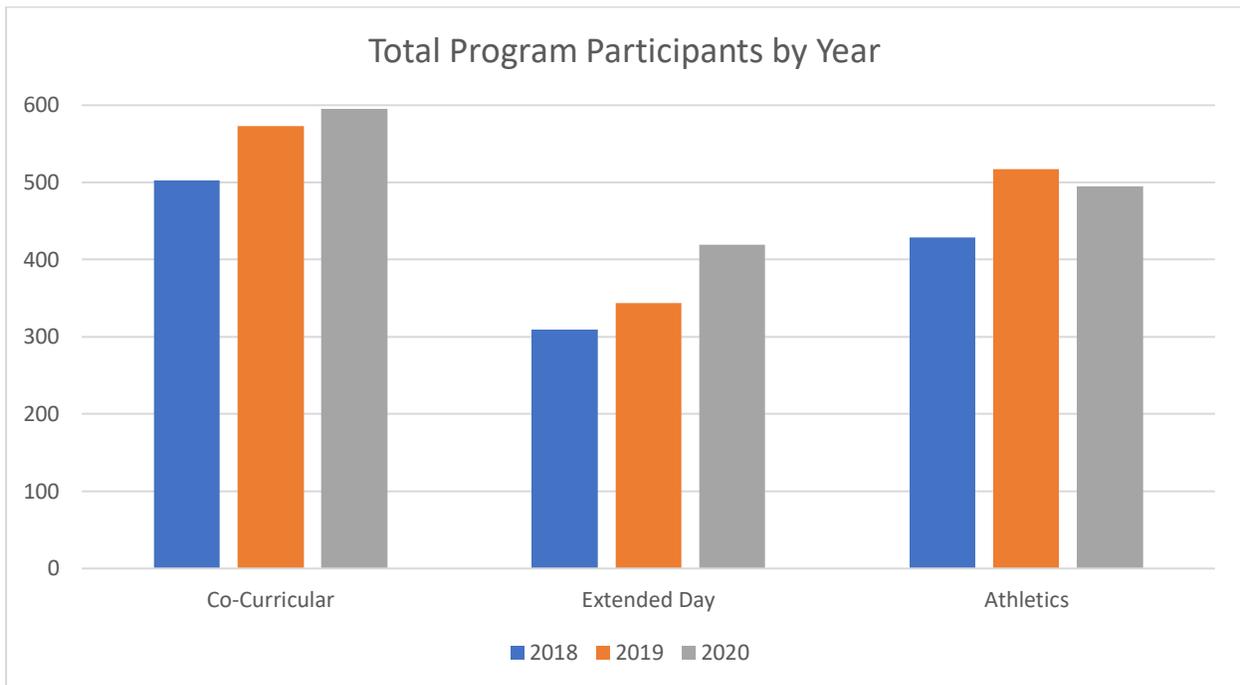
### *Social Media Platforms*

In order to understand the perspective of new families to the school regarding offerings and the methods of registration I decided to examine the school website and any other media FXW currently uses to advertise, inform parents and register students. These include flyers, email reminders and word of mouth. I was unable to examine placement of in school advertisements such as posters and flyers due to the restrictions placed on schools with COVID-19.

## Data

### Historical

When looking at the historical data for participation there were some significant trends. From 2018 to today, the overall school enrollment increased by twenty-four students, twelve students at each campus. This amounts to approximately a 2% increase in enrollment at OSP and 3% at HSN for a 2.5% overall increase at the school. When looking at the participation in each individual program there is substantially more growth. All three programs have grown in total number of participants K-8 from their levels in 2018.



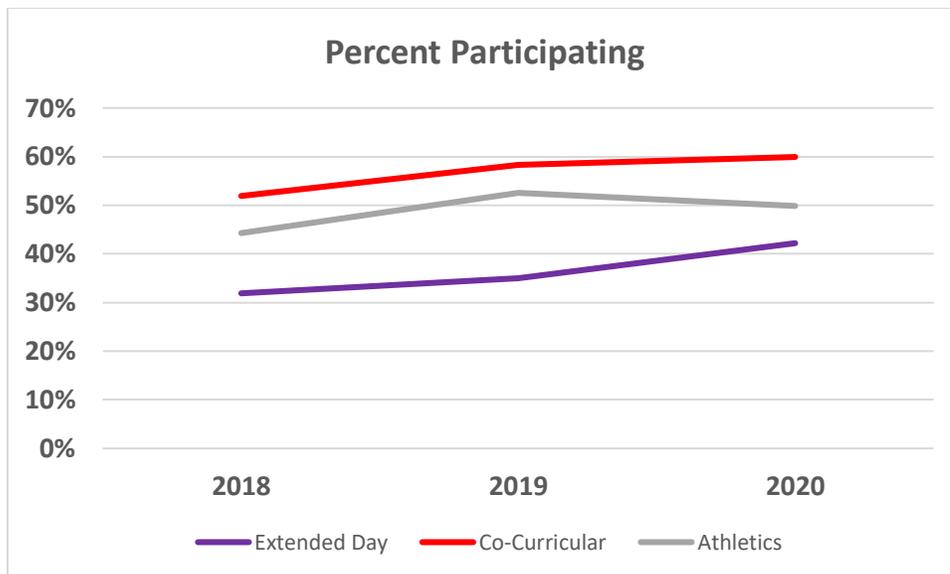
**Figure 5. This is a graph showing the increase in after-school participation over the last three years.**

In order to determine if these increases in total participants was merely due to enrollment increases, I examined the data of each program. While an increase in number alone would not indicate a clear trend, an examination of the percentage of students participating out of the total enrollment would indicate a trend. The percent participating for the programs over the last three years is shown in Figure 6.

In the extended day program, I found that OSP (K-3<sup>rd</sup>) increased the number of participants by 43 students from 2018. This was a 21% rise in total participants and 7% increase in schoolwide participation, from 39% to 46%. I found that HNC (4<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup>) increased the number of participants by 67 students from 2018. This was a 65% rise in total participants and a 14% increase in schoolwide participation from two years ago, from 24% to 38%.

In the co-curricular program, I found that OSP (K-3<sup>rd</sup>) increased the number of participants by 52 students from 2018. This was a 23% rise in total participants and an 11% increase in schoolwide participation, from 50% to 61%. I found that HNC (4<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup>) increased the number of participants by 30 students from 2018. This was a 13% rise in total participants and a 5% increase in schoolwide participation from two years ago, from 54% to 59%.

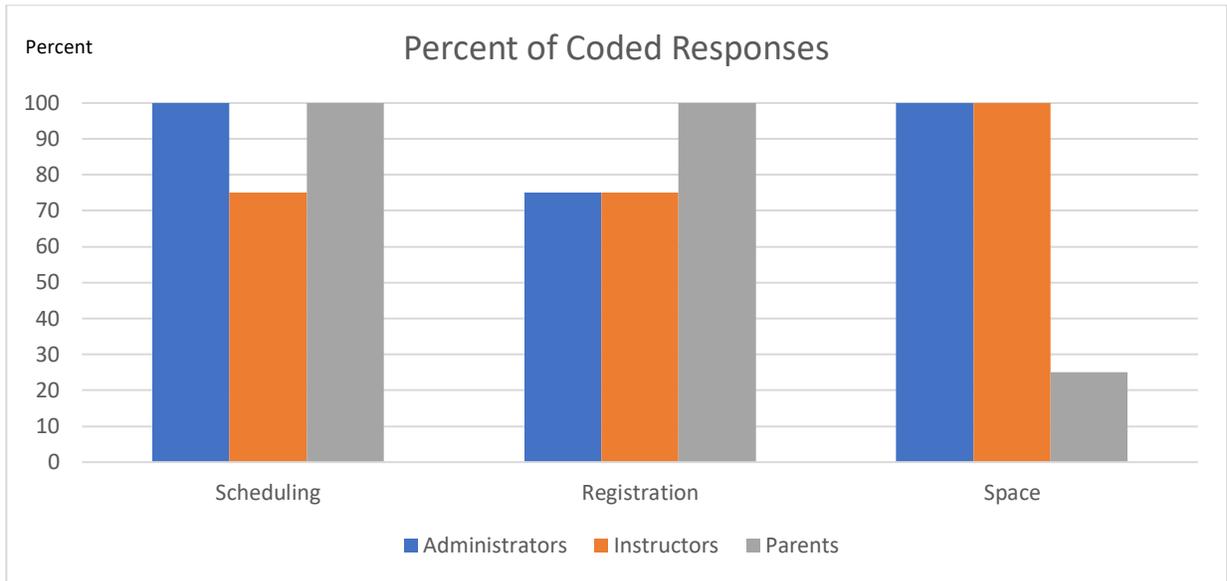
In the co-athletics program, I found that OSP (K-3<sup>rd</sup>) increased the number of participants by 21 students from 2018. This was a 16% rise in total participants and an 4% increase in schoolwide participation, from 24% to 28%. I found that HNC (4<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup>) increased the number of participants by 45 students from 2018. This was a 15% rise in total participants and an 8% increase in schoolwide participation from two years ago, from 69% to 77%. Therefore, in total the enrollment at FXW has increased by 2.5%, while the extra-curricular programming has increased by an average of 9%”



**Figure 6. This is a linear graph demonstrating the increase in percentage of participation in each program, each year, for the past three years.**

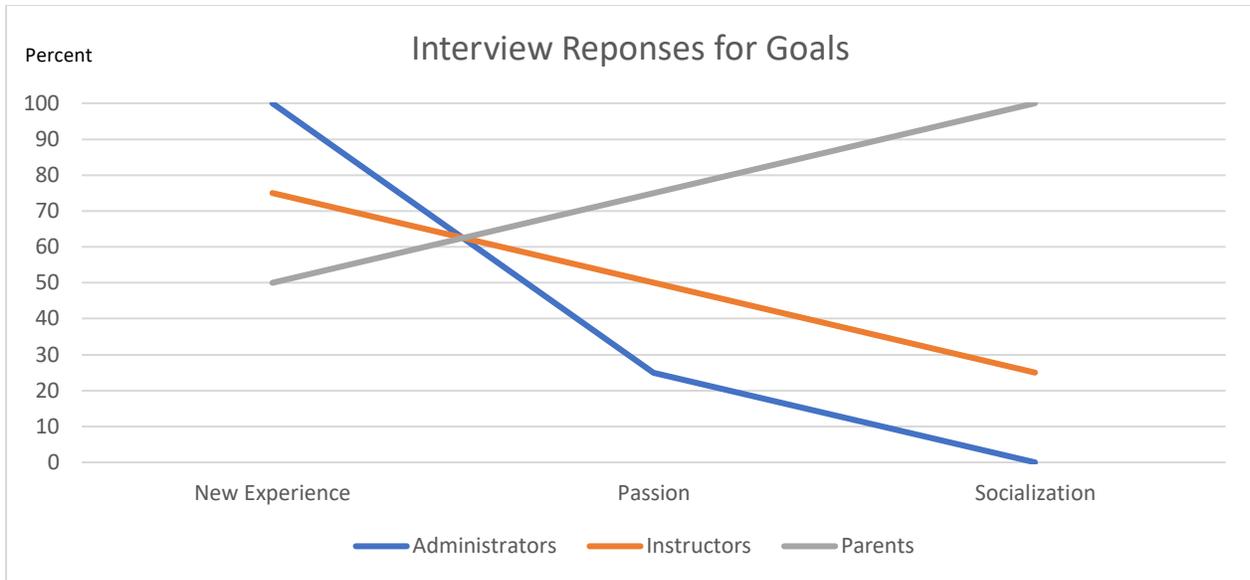
### Interviews

All three main areas of the Interactive Systems Framework were consistently addressed in response to the question “What areas of the program are most in need of improvement for the co-curricular program?” After responses were coded, they were compiled based on common themes and are displayed in Figure 7. All administrators and parents and 75% of instructors mentioned scheduling as an area for improvement. The scheduling of classes falls under the Delivery System area of the Interactive Systems Framework. All parents and 75% of instructors and administrators also mentioned the registration system in response to this question. The registration system is part of the Synthesis and Transition System. All administrators and instructors mentioned space as an area for improvement. It is evident that all three areas of this system are indeed “interactive” and are consistently mentioned in the same responses. Further analyses of these responses will be addressed in the key findings.



**Figure 7.** shows the percentage of those interviewed who mentioned the themes of scheduling, registration or space in response to question 16. What aspects of the program(s) need improvement? The response are broken down into three groups: administrators, instructors and parents.

The Delivery System of the Interactive Systems Framework was addressed with the question “What do you believe are the goals of the (extended day/co-curricular/athletics) program?” was coded for responses of safety, extended education, well-rounded, passions or interests based on the schools publicly stated objectives. All administrators interviews responses were flagged for extension of education theme. Of the administrators involved in the athletics and co-curricular programming, 75% gave responses that included well-rounded students as a goal, despite this. Not being listed in the program mission statements. This answer was not given by other stakeholders and is further discussed in findings and recommendations. In addition, common themes brought up in response to goals were experiences and socialization shown in Figure 8. The responses varied by stakeholder group. 100% of administrators answers contained themes of new experiences for students as a goal. The parent group differed with 100% of their answers including socialization and only 50% including new experiences. The instructor answers were in between the parent and administrator stakeholder groups for all three themes that were coded.

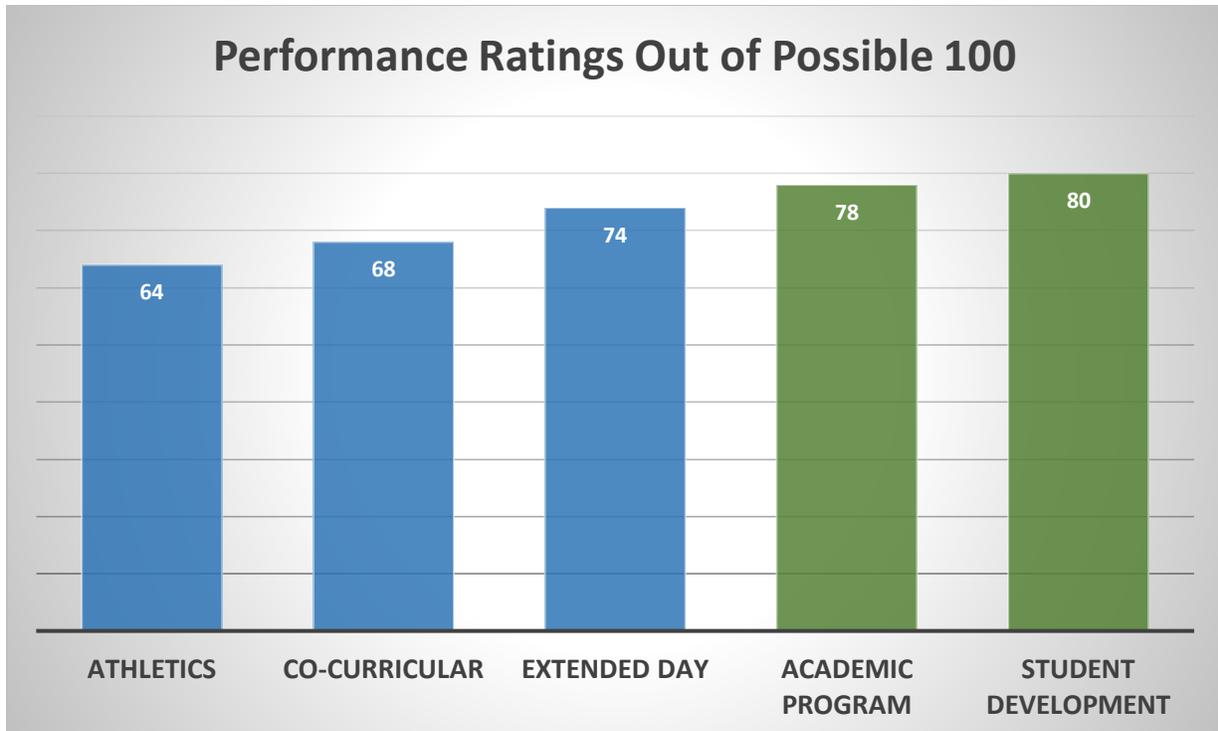


**Figure 8.** shows the percentage of those interviewed who mentioned the themes of new experience, Passions or Socialization in response to Question 13. What do you see as the goals of this program? The response are broken down into three groups: administrators, instructors and parents.

### Survey

I was able to obtain partial results of the school’s annual survey. The survey was administered by the Kensington group. It was sent to families in mid-January of 2020 and they were given approximately one month to respond with an email reminder to complete the survey after each week. The Director of Education shared the results to a few questions she felt relevant to my study. These questions were all under a category titled “Overall Quality of Education.” In particular the section most relevant to my study was titled performance and listed the percentage of parents that agreed or strongly agreed that the school was meeting expectation. The survey results listed these percentage ratings for various school programs according to the parent body. Figure 9 shows these ratings in the three after-school program areas. It also includes the ratings for the school’s performance in the areas of academic programming and student development. I included these areas because they are mentioned in the school mission.

Some other areas that were relevant to my project were questions regarding the school mission and equity. When parents were asked about the school mission 91% agreed or strongly agreed that it was known and endorsed by school employees. This is evidence of a strong Delivery System which is consistent with my interviews and discussed more in my findings. The survey also showed that 84% of parents responded positively to the question asking if the school provided equal opportunities for students. This was not broken down further into how it specifically applied to the academic program or after school programming. A score of 84% suggests the school is performing positively, though it was below average when compared to its peer schools. Equity in after-school programming is an area that will be addressed in findings and recommendations.



**Figure 9. shows the approval percentage from the annual survey administered by the Kensington Group of different school programs.**

### *Key Findings*

After examining the historical data, the parent survey responses and the coded interview responses and the school media, I determined several key findings in relation to Francis Xavier Warde's after-school programming. I will address each of these findings in relation to my initial research questions:

1. What are the goals of extra-curricular programming at Francis Xavier Warde school for the various stakeholders?
2. Can Francis Xavier Warde School build sustainable extra-curricular programming that meets the needs of the stakeholders?
  - a. What resources are required to run the extra-curricular programs?
  - b. What are the limiting factors in running the extra-curricular programs?
3. What are the benefits of extra-curricular programming at Francis Xavier Warde school for the various stakeholders?

#### **1. Program Goals**

According to the Interactive Systems Framework, defining and relaying the goals of the extra-curricular program fall under the Delivery System. Relaying the goals of the after-

school program to the instructors who run the co-curricular programs, the extended day staff and the coaches would fall under the administrators’ purview. FXW’s current organizational format would leave that responsibility to each of the individual program directors. Ideally, in order for a program to be successfully implemented, all stakeholders need to understand the goals of the system. It is not essential that all stakeholders agree on the goals for the program. However, understanding the intended results of each after school program allows for more efficient support and delivery which are important pieces of the Interactive Systems Framework.

Each area of after school programming on the school’s public website contains a statement explaining that programs objectives. These are shown in Table 2 below. The extended day and co-curricular statements are similar in many ways mentioning: safety, well-being, stimulation and working together. The athletics statement differs in these areas, but does mention well-rounded students, social and emotional development and meeting students’ needs.

**Table 2. This table contains the direct statements from the schools website about each programs' goals.**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Publicly Stated Objectives</b>
<b>Co-Curricular</b>	<i>FXW’s Co-Curricular Programs are designed to provide students with a safe and stimulating environment in which to learn, play, be active and join clubs. From athletics to fine arts, students compete and participate in activities that nurture and expand their personal interests. Our commitment to each child’s well-being is fulfilled when their mind, body and spirit work together .</i>
<b>Extended Care</b>	<i>FXW’s Extended Day Program is designed to provide students from preschool through 8th grade with a safe and stimulating environment in which to learn, play, join clubs and try new things. Our commitment to each child’s complete well-being is fulfilled when their mind, body and spirit work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect.</i>

## **Athletics**

*The mission of FXW's athletic program is to foster the growth of well-rounded, confident young adults in an age-appropriate manner. Our program emphasizes the importance of four key areas:*

*Social, Emotional, and Physical development through athletics*

*Meeting the individual needs of all students*

*Modeling a learning process that includes self-discipline, respect, success, and failure*

*Giving all students the opportunity to participate in athletics*

### ***Administrators***

The administrators I interviewed all closely mirrored the school's public site for the programs they oversee. As discussed in the results, when asked about goals, 100% of administrator interviews contained responses related to the extension of education, new experiences and safety themes for all three programs. An interesting finding here is that while the Athletic Director had similar statements in his interview to the other directors, the website statement for athletics did not actually include safety as an objective. This consistency in interview responses between programs is in slight contrast with the points of emphasis publicly. While the goals certainly do not portray athletics as an unsafe option it does not seem to be a top priority publicly. I will address this further when making my recommendations.

The administrators involved in the athletics and co-curricular programming (75% of administrators interviewed) gave responses to the question, "What are the goals of the program?" that included "well-rounded" as a description for students. When asked to elaborate, the directors' responses demonstrated that the directors of these programs anticipated that participation in their programs should benefit students by giving them experiences outside of those that are purely academic, which would be beneficial socially and emotionally throughout their lives. Only the extended day care director's responses did not mention well-rounded in answer to the question related to goals. The extended care director discussed having a variety of activities available for students in the extended day program, though it was stated that these were a means of keeping students stimulated or entertained during their long hours after school, it was not with the intention of increasing students' exposure to different interests. The responses coded for stimulation were limited to the extended care and co-curricular directors. The Athletic Director did not give any response related to stimulation, though this is consistent with the public goals for that program.

### ***Instructors***

The instructors' responses were similar in content and contained important pieces of the programmatic goals. The entirety of instructors responses (100%) echoed the portion of the school statements that included the objective of creating a safe place for children after school. Furthermore, unsolicited comments related to safety given by instructors suggested they believed the after-school programs were a necessity for working parents that needed their students cared for past the traditional 3:30 school dismissal time. The majority of instructors (75%) also responded that they believed a goal of their after-school program was students' opportunities to try new things. The remaining instructor did not emphasize new experiences but instead said it was a chance for students to "follow a passion." These responses overall are in line with the school's objective and the aforementioned research (Reisner, 2007) as a benefit of after school programming in general. Instructors also mentioned working together as a goal of all three programs, even though the instructors each had experience with only two of the three programs. These responses demonstrate that the Delivery System which is responsible for communicating pertinent information to its stakeholders, has been successful at FXW as is relevant to instructors in the areas of extended care and co-curricular programming. The goals of athletics, as they are publicly stated, were not mentioned by instructors. There only mention was as an interest or a way for students to try something new.

### ***Parents***

Parents had consistent responses that were similar to the instructors and administrators in regard to themes of safety in an after-school setting. Parents also noted passions and interests as a frequent response (75%) for a programmatic goal. While this was in line with 50% of the instructors, it is not actually listed as a goal. The objective of trying new things which is in FXW's public statements and shared as a response by 85% of instructors and administrators was only given by 50% of parents. Given the small sample size of interviewees this is not an alarming finding, but does demonstrate a slight discrepancy in the understanding of goals by the parent group as compared to school employees. An additional theme that emerged in 100% of parent responses and only 15% of school employees was socialization. These responses indicate that some goals of the program are being successfully communicated by administration while there are other goals presumed by parents that are not quite in agreement with school objectives. It should be noted that I did not include working together and socializing in the same category when coding responses (Table 1). The responses given related to these two descriptors seemed to be given in different contexts. Working together was usually paired with accomplishing a task or solving a problem while socializing was paired with friends or having fun. The goals of athletics, as they are publicly stated, were not mentioned by parents either. Athletics were mentioned by 50% of parents as a way for their child to exercise or burn off energy.

### ***Students***

Since students were not directly interviewed parents were also asked what students would say was the goal for the programs. According to their parents, 75% of students also valued the concept of passions/interest. All parents also stated that students would say socializing was a goal of the program. Given that these responses had direct correlation to the parent's responses an argument for parental bias can certainly be made, and I did not weigh them heavily when making recommendations.

### ***Goals Summary***

Analyzing how well the Delivery System is functioning in this area of after-school implementation involves assessing the effectiveness of the administrators ability to communicate the programmatic goals to various stakeholders. While overall these three groups of stakeholders have a similar understanding of programmatic goals of safety, they differ in other areas. The administrators have most effectively conveyed the goals of after-school programs to their instructors. They have also effectively communicated the majority of the goals to the parent body as well. However, they have had some minor discrepancies in the area of new experiences versus interests and passions during the synthesis and translation process. While the public website makes the goals available, there are other less formal means of communication with parents and their students which may be through intentional or unintentional messaging from instructors, other parents and students who have participated in the after-school programs in the past. One interviewee stated that their child, “wanted to go to after school programs because she heard it was where you could hang-out with all your friends.” While it is not unusual for students, parents, instructors and administrators to place different values on different objectives this is an area which I will elaborate on in my recommendations.

In addition to the interview responses, there was evidence of a strong Delivery System in the school survey. While the question was not solely related to after-school programming, when asked if the school mission was known, 91% of parents strongly agreed. When rating various aspects of the school’s overall performance, 87% of parents strongly agreed that the school supported academic achievement. As was mentioned earlier this is at the forefront of their mission statement and a key benefit of quality after-school programming.

## ***2. Stakeholder Needs***

### ***a. Resources***

When researching the resources needed to run the after-school programs at FXW, I primarily focused on the Support System of the Interactive Systems Framework. The Support System involves any training, facilities, equipment, and personnel, etc. necessary to implement the program according to the goals in the Delivery System with quality. As was discussed in the Literature Review the importance of high-quality programming is key to positive outcomes for students and their families, the largest groups of stakeholders.

Given the relationship of the various stakeholders, I observed the families to be the users of the after-school programs and all school employees (administrators and instructors) to be in various facilitator roles. As is consistent with Durlak (2008), families should be included for successful implementation. Though their needs should be heard, this does not mean they understand the resources necessary to reach those needs. Therefore, during interviews I only asked employees, facilitators of the programs, questions regarding necessary resources.

When asked what resources were needed to run the program effectively, responses fit into four themes: the facilities, the instructors, the funding and time. Coded responses showed 92% of the employees interviewed responded with themes of both facilities and staff, while 69% of the employees listed funding. All responses indicated time was an important resource for effective programming. The overall responses indicate these four areas are important resources for my research, even though funding was not given quite as frequently as a response. This may be due to employees' views on limiting factors, which will be discussed further in the next section.

### ***Facilities***

After discussion with administrators, I determined that the facilities available consisted of the various spaces that were acceptable by city codes for student use. According to the program directors and instructors in the extended care and co-curricular programs the usable spaces are primarily classrooms and common spaces including the gymnasium, cafeteria and library. The Athletic Director explained that some teams make use of classroom and common spaces as well, to conduct study hours. The majority of athletic teams utilize the gym spaces and some athletic teams make use of nearby athletic fields. Administrative office spaces, lobby areas and hallways are not currently considered as usable space for after school programming.

### ***Staff***

The staff needed for each program varies in structure. According to the Athletic Director, he is able to provide higher quality coaching by using instructors that are not employed at FXW and have strong backgrounds in each individual sport that they coach. He also prefers these coaches to teachers or parents because he believes there are less concerns with favoritism of students and effectiveness of practice quality and game strategy.

The co-curricular director needs a variety of teachers to cover a wide range of interests. She stated that she had a preference for internal instructors due to their familiarity with the schools: facilities, personnel, the students, and mission. While this was the stated preference the co-curricular director acknowledged the current staff is approximately 50% internal instructors. The director said this was due to the inability of internal instructors to provide the wide range of classes that students' desired.

The Extended Care Director stated that she needed extended care staff who were not the typical school staff. This was necessary because the staff arrives before the end of the school day and needs to be available until 6pm. In order to have consistent staff that knows the system, the director needs employees to be available all five days of the week. These hours are not appealing to full time teachers. Families must sign up for extended care for the entire semester 5 days a week. Since the students are able to attend every day the director must have a full staff (other than sick days) on a regular basis in case all families choose to send their students on any given day.

### ***Funding***

As previously mentioned, 69% of employees mentioned that funding for programs was a necessary resource. They did not express concern over the funding, just acknowledged

that stipends and supplies were necessary requirements to allow the after-school programs to operate. One director willingly stated that the after-school programs do not make a profit, but they carefully plan fees to cover the necessary costs. Two of the instructors also mentioned that the stipend they were paid was generous and is one reason they continue to participate in the program. The Athletic Director spoke the most about funding out of all the interviewees. He mentioned how important it was to charge fees for the sports in order to pay officials and hire buses for travel to contests.

### ***Time***

Of instructors and administrators interviewed, 92% listed time as a necessary resource to run the after-school program. All the instructors mentioned two areas where time was essential. The first being their availability during the actual time of classes, from 3:30-4:45pm, or possibly from 4:45-6:00pm. The second mention of time was related to the required time to plan their after-school classes outside of their typical school day. Of administrators' responses, 75% also mentioned the staff availability for the actual times the classes were in session as a resource, and in relation to limiting factors, which will be addressed further in the next section.

### ***b. Limiting Factors***

The responses to the interview question, "what are the limitations of this program were coded for answers that included facilities, fees, and class logistics. Class logistics are closely tied together and I included sub areas of registration system, scheduling and class availability. These factors involve both the Synthesis and Translation System and Delivery System, as well as contributing factors of funding and climate.

### ***Facilities***

The limitation identified by 83% of the administrators and employees and 66% of the parents was space. The offerings for after school programs are sometimes limited to a certain number of students or a number of class offerings per day due to space constraints. This may seem confusing at first and prompted me to ask, if all the students fit into the building during the day why shouldn't 46% of them be able to fit in the classrooms after school? When interviewing the problem became more apparent. Several of the programs do not have as many students in them as the typical class. Where class sizes are traditionally above twenty students per classroom, the co-curricular programs are often closer to ten. The extended care programs divides students by grade level after school, just as they are in school. However, during the day 66 first graders may be using 3 classrooms and 66 second graders are using the same. After school there may be 30 students (46%) from each grade on average. This would require 2 of the 3 classrooms to be used for each grade. So, 46% of the students are utilizing 66% of the space for that grade.

There are other restrictions on rooms after school that are not a part of these three programs. The school offers free tutoring to students who are in need of extra help. These tutoring sessions also need a space and require entire rooms to be taken up by just one or two students. Providing a space to work and plan for teachers after school is another limitation. Currently the Extended Day Director tries to rotate rooms so that the various

grade level teachers have afternoons that their rooms are unoccupied to allow them to prepare lessons, materials, etc. The extended care program director as well as an instructor stated it was important to provide various activities during the time after school to keep students stimulated. This helps to minimize discipline issues and creates an inviting, enjoyable experience for the students. In order to accomplish this objective, the staff often utilizes multiple spaces around the school for art, quiet reading, physical activities, etc. The staff rotates various grade levels of students through the various rooms throughout the afternoon. Due to the manner in which students are split among grade levels and by activities there are often multiple rooms that contain fewer students than the normal school day capacity at any given time.

### *Fees*

Using the Interactive Systems Framework one of the contributing outside factors to implementation success is funding. During all my interviews with administrators, funding was never brought up as a limiting factor or an area that needed improvement. One administrator told me “we don’t operate our program for a profit.” She made it clear that they make what they need to run the programs from the fees they charge and it is essentially a net zero.

However, 100% of parents mentioned fees as a limiting factor for their student to sign up for after school programs. Fees for co-curriculars and athletics are in addition to the fees the families already pay for extended care, even though these programs overlap during the after-school time periods. I was able to divide the parent concerns about these fees into two main groups. One concern was that if families signed their student up for extended care, the only option was for every day of the week. The co-curricular classes or sports directly overlap with the time students are signed up for extended care and have a separate fee. Parents concern here was that they were essentially paying for two programs and their children were only utilizing one program at a time. This limited the number of programs the families were willing to register for, since it was a financial burden to some and others felt they could not justify the additional money even if they could afford it.

The second way in which fees were mentioned as a limiting factor was that some classes have higher fees than others. These higher fees limited the types of classes that families were willing to sign up for each registration period. Some families mentioned that they would allow their student to sign up for either two of the cheaper classes or one really expensive class. Another parent mentioned never allowing their child to sign up for the classes that cost over three hundred dollars.

This contrast between the administrators’ views and parents’ concerns about fees is a breakdown in the Delivery system. The administrators are not aware of the true needs and concerns of the families in the community. This breakdown in communication, or simply an incorrect assumption on the part of the administrators is directly related to funding, which as an important contributing factor to successful implementation.

### ***Class Logistics-Registration System***

FXW's registration system would fall under the Synthesis and Translation System in the Interactive Framework System. During interviews with parents, administrators and instructors, the registration system for co-curricular programming was mentioned in 100% of the responses to the question of limitations and 80% of the responses to what aspects need improvement. There were two main areas of concern. The first I will address is the labor-intensive process of creating class lists. This was discussed in detail by both the co-curricular director and an instructor who has assisted with the process. The co-curricular director, along with the help of one of her instructors creates spreadsheets utilizing a Google form that parents fill out with students first and second choices of classes. According to her account she compares the students' first and second choices on the form with the spots available in each class. She also cross checks these lists to past registrations in an attempt to give students opportunities in various classes. This part of the process is described in a contradicting way by another instructor and relates to the second concern. I also found that all three directors of other successful programs at Latin School of Chicago, Francis Parker and Sacred Heart (other similar private schools) all utilized registration systems. The directors of these programs mentioned these systems as time-saving and that they allowed them to make class registration more equitable. One director stated that parent complaints about class registration decreased when they changed this system a few years ago.

### ***Class Logistics-Class Availability***

The second concern, mentioned by 100% of both instructors and parents, was the availability of space in classes for all students. Due to a lack of physical space or a lack of willingness from instructors to offer multiple classes, it can be extremely difficult to get into some classes. Fifty percent of the parents interviewed acknowledged that they change their students' choices on the registration form in an attempt to ensure they successfully register for a class, even though it may not truly be the class their student desires. According to one instructor, when class requests are over limits the director sometimes solicits input from instructors. The instructor also acknowledged she is apt to pick a student who previously took her class because they already know the format and have basic knowledge of material and it is easier to work with them over a new student. This is not an official policy, but a tendency that can lead to a near endless cycle of some students missing out on opportunities year after year.

Two parents explained that they swap their students first and second choice on the registration form because they want to make sure they at least get the second-choice class instead of being shut out completely. The parents noted a similar experience to the aforementioned process the instructor described that once their student missed out on a class first semester, it is likely that they miss it for the entire year.

### ***Class Logistics-Scheduling***

When answers were coded, all of the parents mentioned scheduling in response to question, "What aspects of the program need improvements?" Currently the instructors are allowed to determine the schedule of classes as long as it falls within the general semester long window. They may offer a co-curricular that is anywhere between 6-10

weeks long. They may also start the classes at different weeks and skip weeks that they may have a conflict. An example of a few potential class listings is shown in Table 3 below. This can lead to schedule overlaps of different classes. Parents consistently mentioned that the current scheduling practices made it challenging to manage their students’ schedules and led to students not being able to attend all the classes they signed up for, or they chose not to sign up for a class they were passionate about participating in due to the parents financial concerns of paying for two classes but only being able to attend one. Interviews with the directors of similar programs at Latin School, Francis Parker and Sacred Heart all mentioned having a more uniform schedule as a strength and that parents really appreciated that component.

**Table 3. Sample Schedule of Conflicts and Inconsistencies**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Meets on</b>	<b>Start date</b>	<b>Class Duration</b>	<b>No Class</b>
Choir	Thursday	9/17/20	9/17-11/19	10/22
Tech Lab	Thursday	10/1/20	10/1-11/19	10/22
Violin	Thursday	10/15/20	10/15-12/10	10/30, 11/26
Yoga	Friday	9/25	9/25-11/6	10/16
Chess	Friday	10/2	10/2-12/18	10/23, 11/27, 12/3

Instructors also listed scheduling as a strength of the program. They appreciated the flexible nature of the current schedule which allowed them to create schedules around other events in their personal and professional lives. This scheduling flexibility is one reason instructors enjoyed working in the program. This point of view is at odds with the parents and is an area that needs to be addressed in the recommendations. Instructors are a key piece of the Delivery System and a necessary resource for the program to run successfully. Maintaining their involvement directly impacts the ability to successfully implement the program.

### **3. Benefits**

There are several benefits to participating in an after-school program. These benefits include avoiding delinquency, improved social skills and higher academic achievement. Avoiding delinquency was achieved through participation in after school programs in general (Mahatmya, 2011). Just by offering a program FXW has likely achieved this benefit for its students. Ninety-one percent of parents, administrators and instructors mentioned safety as a benefit during interviews. The social skills and higher achievement were not directly measured in my research. However, according to the research I conducted these results are more likely with high-quality programs. Based on the school survey, nearly 75% of families thought the overall quality of the extended day program was “very good” or “excellent”. The approval numbers for the co-curricular programs and athletics dip (68% and 64%, respectively), though all fall into the “moderate agreement” range. These numbers suggest that the majority of FXW’s programming is of good quality, though there is clearly room for improvement. When these numbers are juxtaposed to the parental ratings on academic programming and student development as

shown in Figure 9, it becomes apparent that the quality of programming is viewed by parents as lower than the traditional classroom performance. This finding is relevant to the climate portion of the Interactive Systems Framework, which is an outside force on the system. While I do not have a quantitative measure to support students' actual performance academically and socially, these findings suggest that they may not be receiving the full benefits of high-quality programming.

## ***Recommendations for Organization***

My first recommendation is for FXW to create a more uniform structure of both the scheduling of after school offerings and their associated fees. While these two components can each be looked at on their own merit, they are closely tied together. Therefore, I have organized these recommendations as 1.a. and 1.b.

### ***1. Scheduling and Fees***

#### ***a. Scheduling***

The current co-curricular and extended care schedule is broken into two semesters with two separate registrations. During interviews I discovered that the scheduling of co-curricular activities is primarily driven by teacher availability. The variation in start dates, number of meetings and days off does not give families the consistency they need for child care and can create difficult decisions for both parents and students. The potential conflict for students was cited as a limitation or an area that needs improvement in all parent interviews, as well as by one instructor and the Co-Curricular Director. Students may potentially be registered for classes that have a few weeks of overlap and must miss one of the classes. This is both unfortunate for the student and a financial burden for families to pay for two classes on the same day, of which their student may only attend one. According to both parents and instructors that were interviewed, some families choose not to sign up for multiple classes due to these conflicts.

Athletics schedules involve multiple schools across the state. The dates that sports may be conducted are determined by the Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA). Therefore, FXW has little flexibility in regards to when the sports opportunities are offered. The IESA has three seasons, though the exact dates for each sport to start and stop have some variation. The IESA publishes a four-year calendar on their public site with the dates for all sports offered.

In order to align the three after-school programs and minimize the potential conflicts for families, I recommend that FXW change the extended care and co-curricular schedule to a trimester schedule. My recommendation is that this schedule mirrors, as much as possible the sports seasons of Fall, Winter and Spring. These dates would fall from approximately September 1<sup>st</sup> -November 30<sup>th</sup>, December 1<sup>st</sup>- March 15<sup>th</sup>, and March 15<sup>th</sup> - June 7<sup>th</sup>, depending on both the IESA calendar, religious holidays and school calendar. According to the Athletic Director the school's main sport is basketball, with 27 teams

between the boys and girls and elementary and middle school programs. Given this high volume of participation on these teams in particular, attention should be paid to the IESA dates of these sports, though in the interest of students who may not participate in basketball this should not be the only consideration.

Since the IESA calendars are already available, planning for the 2021-2022 extended day and co-curricular school year and beyond could begin immediately. This recommendation should allow families to better plan for their after-school needs, minimizing the number of late registrations for extended care, allowing the director to more accurately anticipate staffing needs and reduce time on billing, answering emails and registering families at off-peak times.

I also recommend that each co-curricular class have the same starting and ending dates. The trimester calendar would allow for between 8-10 weeks depending on the year and when natural breaks occur in the school calendar. Having the same starting and ending dates would eliminate conflicts due to partial overlaps of classes with varying start dates. While families may still need to make tough choices about classes running simultaneously; they would have three opportunities throughout the year for these classes instead of two, giving them more opportunities to try something new. Trying something new was a theme consistently provided by the directors and instructors related to programmatic goals as discussed previously. It was also cited as a factor for significant gains on standardized tests (Reisner, et al., 2007).

### ***b. Fees***

Currently the pricing of co-curriculars is not evenly structured. Classes with outside vendors set their own pricing which can be approximately 100 dollars more than classes with similar schedules and supplies that have internal instructors. This price structure forces families to make choices about which classes to take and influences if they sign up at all according to multiple parents during interviews. Having some more expensive classes limits students ability to register and means they are not truly for each child. In order for FXW to reach its goal of reaching *each* child I suggest a change in the pricing structure of the co-curricular activities.

During interviews, multiple parents mentioned the uneven price structure as a reason that their student did not participate in certain co-curricular activities. One parent explained that their student “never signed up for the technology lab program because of the cost” associated with that class. According to the Co-curricular Director and an instructor that was interviewed, these fees were due to the expensive robotics that were purchased for the program. This discrepancy in fees poses a hurdle to families in lower socio-economic classes. This is also at odds with FXW’s mission. Since the amount of exposure students have had to technology dramatically effects their likelihood of majoring in technology fields in college or entering technology related career paths (Barron, 2004; Smith 2002). Students who do not have those opportunities due to higher costs are clearly disadvantaged.

Having to pay additional fees to participate in co-curricular programming or athletics when already paying for the extended care program was mentioned by all parents as a factor that limited their students participation in programming. Fees are among the top three most common barriers to student participation in after school programs (Slavin & Olotakunbo, 1998).

In order to create a more uniform fee system the school can set up a standard pricing scale and create contracts with the outside vendors guaranteeing them 75% of the fees the school charges for the classes. The 25% that goes towards the school can help defer costs of materials for more expensive classes. For example, if the chess program has 25 students for 8 weeks of a class, FXW could charge each family 160 dollars. This would be a gross amount of \$4000. The chess company would net 120 dollars per student or 3000 dollars. The school would receive 1000 for use of their space. This money could be used to cover materials for the STEM class which has more expensive materials and allow students to participate in it for 160 dollars as well. The soccer class which has little cost would pay for itself and also part of another class. While FXW is not running their programs for profit, any surplus over the costs of instructors and snacks and consumable materials can be put back into the program to improve materials or to drive down overall fees making the programs more accessible to all students. Table 4 outlines this structure. The specific costs are examples and not the actual costs FXW incurs.

**Table 4. Sample Fee Structure showing standardizing class fees and how this would affect debts and surpluses of each class and as a co-curricular program.**

**Possible Fee Structure**

Class	number of students	price per class	number of classes	Total Fees	per student expenses	session expenses	Vendor take/Teacher Stipend	Surplus/ Deficit
Chess	25	\$ 20.00	8	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 60.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 3,000.00	(500.00)
Soccer	25	\$ 20.00	8	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 15.00	\$ 375.00	\$ 1,000.00	2,625.00
Choir	30	\$ 20.00	8	\$ 4,800.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 750.00	\$ 1,000.00	3,050.00
Art	15	\$ 20.00	7	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,575.00	(975.00)
Violin	10	\$ 20.00	8	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 65.00	\$ 650.00	\$ 1,200.00	(250.00)
Yoga	18	\$ 20.00	7	\$ 2,520.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 1,890.00	(270.00)
STEM Lab	16	\$ 20.00	8	\$ 2,560.00	\$ 70.00	\$ 1,120.00	\$ 1,000.00	440.00
<b>Average</b>	19.86	\$ 20.00	7.71	\$ 3,082.86	\$ 55.00	\$ 970.71	\$ 1,523.57	588.57
<b>Total</b>	139		54	\$ 21,580.00		\$ 6,795.00	\$ 10,665.00	4,120.00

**2. Registration System**

My second recommendation is to begin using a registration website that maintains a database of classes, participants and fees. As mentioned in my findings related to time and the registration system, there are many labor hours spent going through spreadsheets to create class lists. This affects both the Synthesis and Translation System as well as the resources aspect of the Support System. In order to improve the quality of

the program and efficiency of these two systems a website that specializes in this type of data collection and management would be appropriate. Using a registration system that tracks classes, creates waiting lists, sends automatic emails when spots open up, etc. would save time and create an equitable system of allowing all students access to all classes. As mentioned previously, FXW's mission discusses opportunities for *each* student. In the current model the director and instructors could potentially give preference to students based on prior experience or behavior. Allowing payment plans through these systems could also make classes more accessible to families who may not be able to pay several hundred dollars for their child's desired classes each semester. There are fees associated with this technology. However, given the structure used in recommendation number one, this money could be built into the total student cost, or purchased with surplus. Two out of the three after school program directors I interviewed utilized and recommended the Ultracamp.com website for this purpose. This is an example of a potential site and I recommend FXW looks at multiple registration/database sites to find the one that best suits the school's needs and any budget concerns.

### ***3. Facilities Use***

My third recommendation is to revise room usage for after school. As indicated by my findings, available space in the buildings was frequently listed as a limiting factor to the co-curricular and extended care programs. Athletics was also limited by space due primarily to the high quantity of basketball teams that needed access to the gym. I could not make a logical recommendation for the athletics teams that would be feasible without dramatic increases in their budget for either rental of facilities and transportation or building a new gym on nearby city lots. Therefore, my recommendations in this section focus solely on the extended care and co-curricular programs and the athletics teams use of classroom or common space for study hours only.

Limitations in facilities was given as a reason for limiting the class capacities, which in turn affected both the manner in which parents planned registration strategies to get their students into at least one co-curricular class and the number of classes for which they attempt to register. The extended care program did not describe the facilities in terms of limiting the capacity of the program. The director and instructors described the limits of facilities primarily affecting the ability to rotate students around the building and the choices for student activities. This is important to the extended care program in order to keep students engaged and reduce the incidence of negative behavior. Students need for locomotive movements and larger spaces have been linked to behavioral problems in schools (Mulhauser, 1972).

There are multiple potential solutions to the utilization of space. I recommend two specific changes that will increase the potential capacity for after-school programs. First, I suggest moving extended care students from the library to the cafeteria. Students in extended care could continue to make use of grade level classrooms and other common

spaces such as the cafeteria that allows for more movement. Teachers could create multiple stations in the cafeteria instead of moving to multiple classrooms. The library would become a common prep room for faculty. While this does eliminate the privacy for teachers and convenience of using their classroom, it would open up more classrooms for after school programming. An added bonus is that providing a common space for faculty to work can be conducive to collaboration between teachers. Teacher collaboration when planning has been shown to improve student achievement (Reeves, 2017). Second, have students participating in the tutoring program share rooms. Three to four teachers could work in one classroom. If needed, the purchase of foldable dividing walls could be used in classrooms to give privacy and an acoustic divide. This would be a more efficient use of classroom spaces and open up space for more students in both the co-curricular and extended care programs.

#### ***4. Continued Feedback***

My fourth recommendation is to continue tracking data on parental feedback. Consistently using evaluative tools are critical to the implementation of successful after-school programs (Slavin & Olotakunbo, 2002). The current Kensington survey is helpful, yet limited. Specific questions about the after-school programs' strengths and weaknesses (as I intended to administer and more along the lines of my interview questions) over time would provide valuable feedback to the after-school program directors on what the community's needs are and how successfully they are meeting those needs. This is directly related to the Delivery System.

As important as it is for the administrators to communicate goals, the flow of communication from families back to administration about how they are meeting program goals and community needs is key to successful implementation (Meyers et al, 2012). The discrepancy I found during interviews between families and administrators in regards to fees and funding demonstrate a need for specific feedback in this area. The contributing factors of climate and policy as part of the Interactive Systems Framework are also affected by this recommendation. The climate of the school can change based on the families' satisfaction with various programs. The school understands this and currently monitors this broadly with the annual survey. Monitoring the climate in specific relation to the after-school programs through feedback from families can help guide policies over time.

I also recommend that the school solicit feedback from students regarding all three programs. This feedback could be conducted at the end of each semester or trimester if the school adopts my suggested schedule. The feedback opportunity should be open to all students, not just those participating in the program. By opening up feedback to all it is possible for FXW to hear reasons why student's choose not to participate in the programs and gain insight on the various programs' reputations outside of the views of those who already participate.

## *Limitations of Study*

This study had limitations in regard to availability of interview subjects. I was not allowed to cast a wide net for parents and all but one of the interviewees were from names given to me by an administrator. This certainly could cast doubt on the types of answers I received, as these are likely people that either have subordinate positions to the Director of Education or were parents that were likely on good terms with administration. Given the high-level administrator I partnered with initially to begin the project, any employees I interviewed would have been a subordinate. Given the frank answers I received about program deficits and the fact that the feedback in my interviews aligns with survey data, I believe I received relevant feedback, though the possibility of bias certainly exists.

Several limitations to the study were created due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I had intended to make observations of the programs in action in March and April. Due to the Governor of Illinois' decree, all schools were shut down in mid-March and I was unable to complete any observations. While the school has returned to learn this fall, they are in a hybrid model and are not implementing all after-school programs. They are also limiting visitors, so I am unable to explore the space other than through minimal numbers of photographs.

## *Conclusion*

This project began with Francis Xavier Warde's school concern over rising enrollment in the school and increased participation in their after-school programs. They were concerned with their ability to sustain their current programming quality as it currently functioned. FXW's concern for the capacity and quality of their program aligned with the importance of after-school programming found in my research.

Research indicates that offering a high-quality after-school program is beneficial to students and their community. These programs keep students safer and improve their social and academic skills. These benefits align with Francis Xavier Warde School's mission. Providing a safe place for students to continue educational experiences, try new things, and strengthen academics are all positive goals and potential benefits of their after-school programs.

In order to ensure that as many students as possible are receiving these benefits, FXW required an examination of their current participation, practices and families' input regarding needs and quality. I conducted an investigation of FXW's current practices through historical data obtained of student participation, a parent survey that was administered by an outside consulting group and through a series of interviews of various stakeholder groups which included parents, administrators and instructors. I researched the components of successful implementation over a breadth of various programs from different fields and decided to use the Interactive Framework System to assess the school's ability to successfully sustain a high-quality program.

During my interviews with the after-school program stakeholders, I found that community members believed the main resources needed to achieve success were time, facilities, staff and funding. While FXW has access to all these resources, my interviews with community members uncovered perceived deficits in the areas of facilities and funding. I also discovered additional areas of need in the area of the Synthesis and Translation system, in particular these were the registration system and the various program's schedules.

In order for FXW to provide sustainable high-quality after school-programming, the school needs to focus on improving its use of facilities, efficiency and equitability of registration processes, the scheduling of extended care and co-curricular offerings and examine its fee structure. I believe Francis Xavier Warde School can maintain and perhaps improve the quality of its current programming through creative utilization of its space, standardized class schedules and fees and utilizing a database for registration purposes and consistently monitoring feedback from families, including students.

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## ***Appendix A***

### **Interview Questions for FXW Community**

1. What is your name?
2. What is your current relationship to FXW?
3. How long have you been a member of the FXW community?
4. Which after-school programs: athletics, or co-curricular, or extended care are you familiar with?
5. Have you been an employee, administrator or had a family member participate in this program(s)?
6. What age students are able to participate in that program(s)?
7. Can you describe how the daily logistics of that program(s) work from your perspective?
8. How do students sign up or register for the program(s)?
9. Where can parents find information on this program(s)?
10. What are the fees associated with this/these program(s)?
11. What resources are required to run this program(s)? (employees only)
12. What are limitations of this program(s)?
13. What do you see as the goals of the program(s)?
14. What are the benefits of the program(s) to students?
15. What aspects of the program(s) are strengths?
16. What aspects of the program(s) need improvements?

## ***Appendix B***

### **Interview Questions for Program Directors**

1. What is your name?
2. What is your current position?
3. How long have you been at that position?
4. What after-school programs does your school offer?
5. What age students are able to participate in this/these programs?
6. Can you describe the basic structure of this/these programs?
7. How do students sign up or register for this/these program(s)?
8. Where can parents find information on this/these program(s)?
9. What are the fees associated with this/these program(s)?
10. What resources are required to run this/these program(s)?
11. What are limitations of this/these program(s)?
12. What are the goals of this/these program(s)?
13. What are the benefits of this/these program(s)?
14. What aspects of this/these program(s) are strengths?
15. What aspects of this/these program(s) need improvement?