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# My Spark Denver: Update and No Cost Extension Request

Safety Committee- November 13, 2024  
Melissa Janiszewski, MSW  
Deputy Executive Director- Office of Children's Affairs

# Overview: My Spark Denver

## Current OST

\$3.3MM in ARPA  
\$2MM in base budget  
\$5.3MM Total  
Supporting free comprehensive  
programming

Serving Youth: Ages 5-  
17

## My Spark Pilot

\$2.5MM in ARPA  
\$1MM in base budget  
\$3.5MM Total  
Supporting fee-based programming

Serving Middle School  
Students: Ages 11-14

# Overview: My Spark Denver

My Spark is a stipend program that supports low-income students in accessing meaningful out of school learning and enrichment programs

## Program Overview:

- \$1,000 per student on restricted debit card
- Approved out-of-school learning or enrichment providers
- Partners - OCA, Mile High United Way (MHUW), My Spark LLC, Gary Community Ventures, Denver Public Schools

## Participants:

- There are 12,000 Denver Public School middle school students eligible for free-and-reduced. My Spark will be serving 4,000 students.



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Angie McPhaul and James Lukens  
Gary Community Ventures

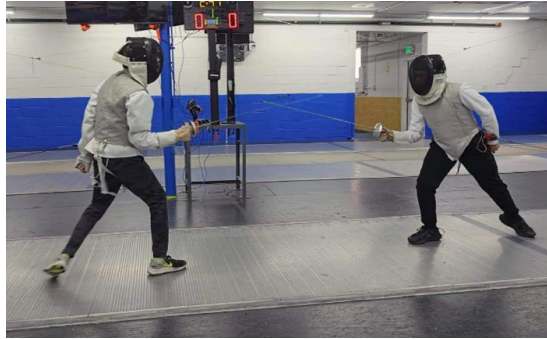
# The Need for My Spark

Afterschool and summer learning aren't nice to have - they are must have. But the reality is that low-income children too often miss out. This impacts:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Academic engagement
- Economic mobility
- Social capital
- Civic engagement



# My Spark Highlights



# My Spark Operational Data To Date

**Enrolled Students: Over 4,100** (exceeding goal). This is approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the FRL-eligible middle school population in Denver.

**Providers: Over 210** throughout the city, many being small businesses and small nonprofits (exceeding goal). Offerings are as diverse as student interests (from astronomy to baking to boxing and more!)

**Engagement: 74%** of families have used their cards, just shy of 80% goal by the end of the year.

# Participant Overview

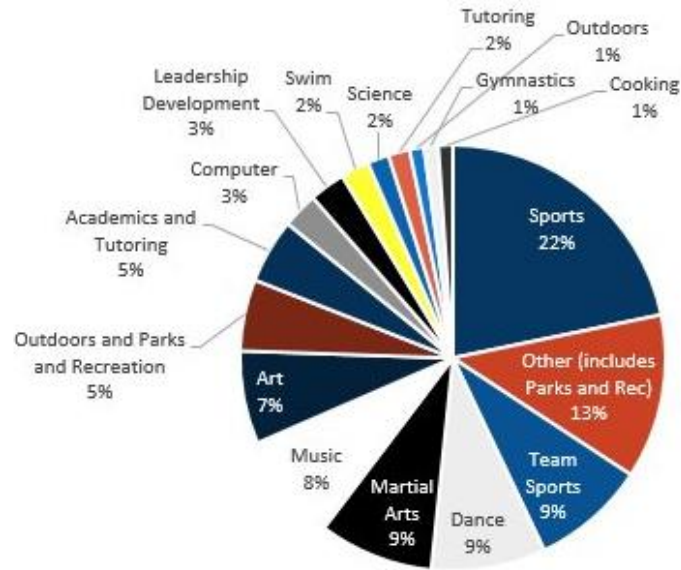
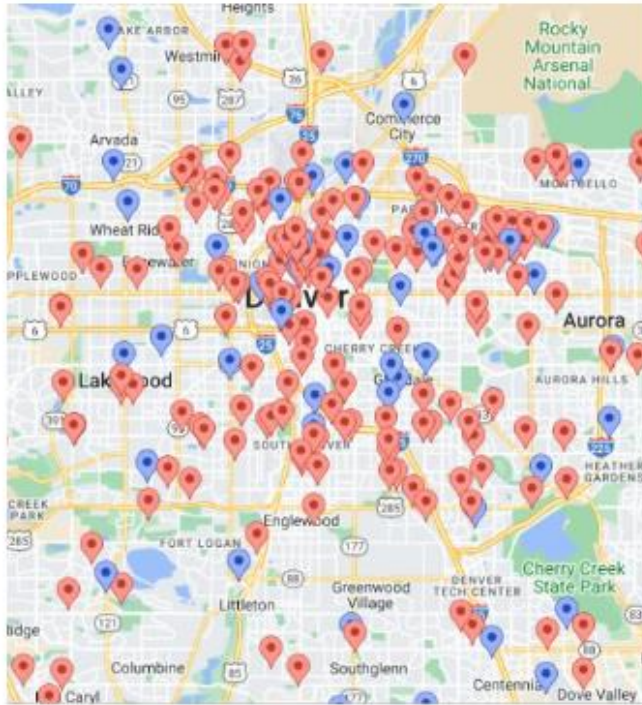
## Pilot year progress and demographic summary

- My Spark successfully enrolled 3,985 diverse families\*
- Of those families, 72% prefer English, 27% prefer Spanish and 2% prefer another language for communication purposes.
- 61% identify as Hispanic/Latino, 45% White, 29% Black or African American, 12% described themselves as “some other race”, 12% preferred not to disclose, 5% identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4% Asian and 2% Native Hawaiian.
- The highest concentrations of My Spark families are in the Southwest (15% in 80219), Northeast (14% 80239, and 13% in 80249) and Central Denver (5% in 80204 and 4% in 80205).

\*Note: This data is from September, 2024 and therefore is a bit dated from our updated operational data on slide 7.



# Provider Overview



Providers by Type (% of total), N=207

\*Note: This data is from September, 2024 and therefore is a bit dated.

# My Spark Impact Data

**Prosono** is our formal evaluation partner. They were selected from multiple applicants by a committee made up of members of the city, the community, and Gary.

Prosono has designed instruments to test for impact on students, families, and providers, which is all grounded in the research base on youth wellbeing, including afterschool and summer learning and enrichment.

We have **baseline and midline data**, and have complete data in January, upon the program's pilot year completion. The data presented here is from the midline data, so it is not yet complete.

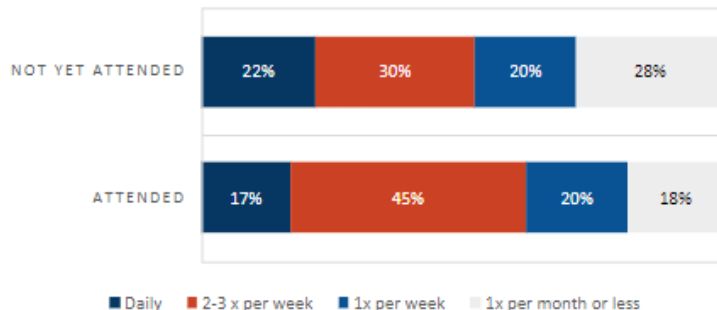
# Youth are more likely to be participating in things they are passionate about

Families reported their youth are participating more frequently in activities that they are passionate about, a key protective factor for youth wellbeing.

*"This program has been a great help to our family in helping to afford new experiences for my pre-teen, as well as getting back into programs she really enjoyed in the past. Thank you!"*

*"Very thankful for the opportunity to put my child in a fun program that I otherwise could not afford."*

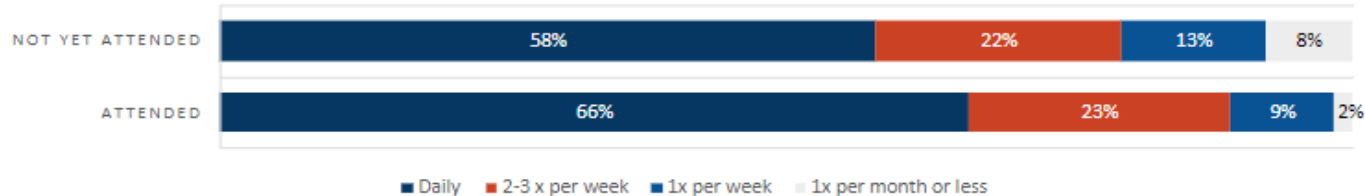
HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR CHILD... PARTICIPATE IN CLUBS OR ACTIVITIES THEY ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT? N=292



# Preliminary results point to more positive connections, more feelings of belonging.

We identified several indicators of youth feeling belonging and connected and are seeing early positive signals from those indicators including on positive interactions with adults, for example below.

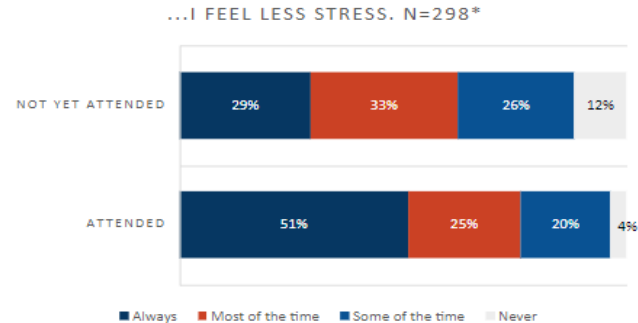
HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE POSITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH ADULTS? N=222



# Families attending programs report higher rates of empowerment and less stress.

Families who have attended My Spark programs report more ability to find and offer experiences to their child, indicating they feel more empowerment related to finding and paying for youth programming.

Families who have attended My Spark programs report feeling less stress than those who have not yet attended.



# Youth Identify Positive Outcomes

Better self-  
esteem

Happier

More  
connections  
with peers

Healthier

"Because of My Spark, I have better self-esteem, because [at the program I went to], they also taught us that our ideas matter and we can turn those ideas into better things."

-Youth Participant

"Going to [the program] has made me happier because it's my favorite sport. And I feel healthier because I work out a lot and obviously, I have to stretch and stuff. Also, I feel connected to peers because a lot of kids at my school play [the sport] and I feel more connected because I can do that now."

-Youth Participant

"I have better self-esteem because overcoming a challenge and sharing something with someone, especially with positive feedback and can give a lot of self-esteem. For example, like playing something and you're winning it, that's the challenge you overcome, which might not see much at first, but it does boost your self-esteem."

-Youth Participant

# Stories of Impact

My daughter is very quiet and shy, my spark will give her an opportunity to do more stuff outside school to make friends and socialize

I am interested because this is a way to keep my child active, learning new things, social skills and keep her away from technology.

I need help keeping my kids out of trouble and the wrong crowd. I can't afford a lot because we are homeless.

This program will allow my youth to continue and build peer relationships as well as build physical strength for health purposes. Plus my youth enjoys playing sports and other activities. This will also help build my youths leadership and sportsmanship skills.

Quiero que mi hija pueda aprender y sentirse feliz haciendo una actividad que le guste diferente a estar en casa en sus tiempos libres

Camila is a bright and beautiful little girl with so much in her and no way out. Camila is very timid and lives in her head so much. She loves soccer and volleyball , but it got a little pricey for me as a single mother. When she was in sports it was a whole new side of her that I have never seen. I want that to be her again.

# Appendix: Additional Data

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# Satisfaction Data

- When asked to rate satisfaction from 0-10, 95% of My Spark Families gave a rating of 5 or above, exceeding the target of 80% satisfaction. 95% of Youth respondents rate My Spark at 5 or above.

## What's the best thing about My Spark?

I can pay for programs that my child was already interested in or doing.	55%
I can find new programs that my child hasn't tried before.	26%
There are programs my child is interested in.	5%
Other - Write In	5%
There are programs near me.	4%
Programs are offered at a good time.	3%
The website is easy to use.	2%

## How can My Spark improve?

Increase programs that match my child's interest.	29%
Increase programs near to me.	26%
Make the website more navigable.	20%
Other - Write In	15%
Increase programs offered at a good time.	10%
Other: expand the program, cover necessary equipment, and increase the number affordable programs.	