

Executive Summary

Introduction

The primary purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) program as it exists under state administration. This report will explore how states are using the discretion afforded to them to implement their statewide programs, what services and activities are being provided by 21st CCLC grantees across the country, who is participating in grant-funded activities, and what progress is being made in achieving the performance indicators associated with the 21st CCLC program. It is important to point out that this report is meant to be a purely descriptive look at the 21st CCLC program. It is intended that the information presented here will provide a greater understanding of the nature of the state-administered 21st CCLC programs from a national perspective.

All of the information outlined in this report was obtained from the 21st CCLC Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS). Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, PPICS is a Web-based data-collection system designed to capture information regarding state-administered 21st CCLC programs.

State Competitions and Activities

This section summarizes the competitive request for proposal (RFP) process that states utilize to award grants to new 21st CCLC programs as well as state allocations of funding to support monitoring and evaluation efforts, technical assistance to grantees, and training.

Characteristics of Subgrant Competitions

In the 2004 calendar year, 51 states ran a total of 60 competitions that solicited proposals to operate a 21st CCLC (i.e., RFP competitions). States shaped subgrant competitions by specifying competitive priorities as part of these competitions and performance indicators that grantees receiving awards from a given competition would need to conform to in the operation of their programs. The vast majority of states adopted some type of performance indicator of academic achievement, measured via either achievement tests or classroom performance. Most states also adopted some measure of school behavior as a performance indicator.

The competitive priorities specified in the RFP competitions reflected the goals of the 21st CCLC program. States had the discretion to set both mandatory and optional funding priorities for the competitions administered during 2004. In PPICS, a mandatory priority was defined as a condition specified in the RFP that an applying entity must meet in order to be eligible for 21st CCLC funding, while an optional priority is a condition specified in the RFP that provides an applicant with a competitive edge in the subgrant competition (e.g., an additional 20 points is added to an applicant's final score if it proposes to offer programming to reduce obesity).

Most competitions specified either a joint application or a community-based organization partnership as a mandatory or optional priority. Moreover, three quarters of competitions made the provision of services in at least one core academic area a mandatory priority. With somewhat

less prevalence, competitions gave priority to applicants proposing to serve adult family members and to improve the academic achievement of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students.

Outcomes of Subgrant Competitions

According to the 59 complete Competition Overview records entered into PPICS associated with 2004, 3,469 organizations applied for subgrants, and 1,327 of these received awards, for a funding rate of 38 percent. Applicants requested a total of \$1,260,462,271 in first-year funds while \$460,186,892 actually was awarded to support the initial year of operation for new grantees funded in 2004, for a dollar-based funding rate of 37 percent.

Some additional points regarding the awarding of grants are as follows:

- School districts comprised 61 percent of applicants and 69 percent of actual grantees, while community-based organizations comprised 17 percent of applicants and 15 percent of grantees.
- The most frequent grant length associated with competitions held in 2004 was five years, indicating that the change in the policy regarding maximum grant length had a significant impact on ensuring the longevity of these programs.

State Activities

Most states allocated the full 2 percent allotment for administrative costs and the full 3 percent allotment for training, technical assistance, and evaluation services. All or nearly all states allocated funds to support applicant and grantee training along with the monitoring of programs and activities. The following points address specific training activities:

- At least 90 percent of all state education agencies (SEAs) allocated funding for training in fiscal management, reporting and evaluation requirements, enhancing academic content, and enhancing community involvement.
- Slightly more than 80 percent of SEAs reported offering training to promote program sustainability.

Grantee and Center Characteristics

From the first round of awards made during 2002 to the most recent awards made in calendar year 2004, SEAs awarded 2,729 grants that presently are funding 8,448 centers nationwide. This section provides additional detail about these grantees and centers, their length of time in existence, and the grade levels they intend to serve.

Organization Type

The passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act expanded funding eligibility to include public and private educational and youth-serving organizations in addition to schools. School districts are still the most represented organizational type among grantees, serving as the fiscal agent on 68 percent of all 21st CCLC grants. Community-based organizations (15 percent) and nationally affiliated nonprofit agencies (4 percent) collectively make up 19 percent of all grantees, with the remaining 13 percent representing a wide variety of other organization types. However, 90 percent of centers are located in schools, indicating that even centers funded by a grant obtained by a nonschool entity often are housed in schools.

Previous Funding and Operations

The transition from federal to state administration of the 21st CCLC grant program saw a marked increase in the number of grantees funded for the first time. Most centers (82 percent) had not been funded as part of a federal 21st CCLC discretionary grant prior to receiving funding from a state-administered 21st CCLC grant. About half of the centers that did not receive federal 21st CCLC funds had no program prior to receiving a state-administered grant. In other words, 44 percent of all centers did not provide any afterschool services prior to receiving a state-administered 21st CCLC grant.

Grades Served

21st CCLC programs are available to all grade levels (prekindergarten through Grade 12). Elementary school students are the group most frequently targeted for services by centers. About half of centers serve elementary school students exclusively, and at least two thirds of all centers serve some elementary students. About 36 percent of centers serve middle school students, but only 20 percent of these centers exclusively target this population. Finally, 15 percent of centers serve high school students, but only 5 percent of centers exclusively target these students.

Structural Features and Operations

Structural features of an afterschool program, such as staffing, hours of operation, financial resources, and community partnerships, can impact the quality of the programming and the opportunities to form positive relationships with peers and staff.

External Funding Sources

One challenge of sustaining a 21st CCLC is to supplement grant-funded efforts with funding from other sources. Overall, 72 percent of grantees had at least one funding source other than the 21st CCLC program; most typically, grantees reported having two other funding sources. Local school districts provided some funding to about one third of all 21st CCLC programs, with Title I funding (excluding Supplemental Educational Services) and other state sources providing some additional funding to 27 percent and 28 percent of grantees, respectively. The Supplemental Educational Services program served as an additional funding source for 9 percent of programs administered by 21st CCLC grantees.

Partnership Types and Partner Contributions

Partnerships provide grantees with connections to the community and additional resources that may not be available to the program otherwise. The typical grantee had six partners. Community-based organizations are the most represented organization type, composing more than 23 percent of all partners. Nationally affiliated nonprofit agencies are the next most frequent partner type (12 percent of partners) followed by for-profit entities (11 percent) and school districts (10 percent). About 28 percent of all partners were subcontractors (i.e., under contract with the grantee to provide grant-funded activities or services). The typical grantee has one subcontractor.

The most common partnership contribution is to provide programming for the 21st CCLC, followed by goods, volunteer staff, and paid staff. Subcontractors were more than twice as likely as nonsubcontractors to provide paid staff to the centers.

Center Times of Operation

One of the goals of the 21st CCLC program is to provide students with productive and engaging activities at times when they would otherwise be without adult supervision (e.g., before or after school, on the weekends, or during the summer). Nearly all centers at all school levels planned to provide programming after the school day. Compared with those serving only elementary or middle schools (or both), centers serving high schools or both middle and high schools are more likely to offer weekend hours. The percentage of centers offering services during the summer ranged from 60 percent to 70 percent across different categories of school level.

Centers reported their hours per day, days per week, and weeks per year of operation. About 67 percent of centers reported being open 11 hours or more per week. About 91 percent of centers reported being open four or more days per week, while 69 percent of centers reported being open 29 or more weeks during the 2003–04 school year.

Staffing

Centers were also asked to report the background and training of their staff when completing PPICS, and indicated what number of each type were paid staff and what number were volunteer staff. The typical center reported having 13 paid and 8 volunteer staff during the 2003–04 school year. School-day teachers are by far the highest proportion of afterschool staff. School-day teachers, youth development workers, and nonteaching school staff usually are paid for their afterschool time while parents and other community members are usually volunteers.

Prevalence and Intensity of Programming

Centers described the various activities and services offered in their programs as well as the intensity with which each was offered. It is important to point out that activity information collected in PPICS allowed respondents to classify a single activity both by category and subject area. For example, a center may have offered a rocketry club during the 2003–04 school year in which participants learn to build and launch rockets while also studying astronomy. In this case, this activity would be classifiable as an academic enrichment learning program (category) *and* as a science educational activity (subject area). A similar degree of flexibility was afforded to respondents when a single activity could be classified in more than one category. For example, an activity with both tutoring and mentoring components would be counted in both categories in PPICS.

Prevalence and Intensity of Categories of Service

Centers described their activities according to the category of service delivery, or activities targeting a particular participant population. Reflecting the central goals of the 21st CCLC program, the three most widely offered categories of activity were academic enrichment learning programs, academic assistance, and recreational activities (offered by 90 percent, 87 percent, and 85 percent of centers, respectively). Approximately 60 percent of centers offered programs involving drug prevention and promoting parent involvement in children’s literacy.

Centers described the intensity with which they offered different activities by indicating the typical amount of time per week they offered each type. Services addressing academic needs are among the most intensely offered. Academic remediation, enrichment, and tutoring are all typically offered at least six hours per week. Recreational services are also among the most intensely offered type of programming, with an average of slightly more than six hours of programming during a typical week. Mentoring; activities for LEP students; activities for students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled; and activities that promote leadership all were typically offered between four and five hours per week. Drug- and violence-prevention programs and those that promote parental involvement were not offered intensively, relative to other categories (typically fewer than three hours per week).

Prevalence and Intensity of Subject-Area Programming

Centers also categorized their programming based on subject areas or educational content. More than 90 percent of centers provided reading and mathematics education programs. This reflects the program's mandate to enhance academic achievement in core curricular areas. Although science education activities are provided by 69 percent of centers, this level is exceeded by activities involving arts and music (more than 80 percent) and about equal to those including culture and social studies. Relatively few centers offered entrepreneurial education programs (20 percent).

Reading and mathematics were the subjects of the most intensive programming, with an average of about six and a half hours per week of reading programming and about five and a half hours of mathematics programming per typical week. Programming in science, the other core academic subject, was offered less intensely (an average of nearly four hours per week). This may reflect a lack of qualified staff or a lesser emphasis on this subject. All other subjects were provided an average of three to four hours per week.

Attendance

Attendance, as an intermediate outcome indicator, reflects the breadth and depth of exposure to afterschool programming. Centers reported the total number of students who participated in the center's programming during the year as well as the number of regular attendees (i.e., those who participated in 30 days or more of activity). The typical center had 59 regular attendees and 105 total attendees.

One way of examining the reach of the 21st CCLC program is to examine the participation of students with different needs and backgrounds such as ethnicity, participation in special services, and gender. Several ethnic minorities are overrepresented as participants relative to their proportion of the general population. This reflects the program's focus on economically disadvantaged populations. More directly to this point, nearly two thirds of regular attendees qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, a figure that is in line with the goals of the program to target students from high poverty communities. About 17 percent of participants have limited English proficiency, and 8 percent have special needs or disabilities. Finally, the proportions of male and female participants are equivalent, indicating that the program has achieved gender equity.

The 21st CCLC program can be targeted toward students at all grade levels, although centers most typically gear their programs toward elementary students. The prevalence per grade level peaks in late elementary school, then drops off continuously through the middle school, Grades 6–8. This reflects the need for the young students to stay under regular adult supervision after school. As students reach the high school grades, there is a marked dropoff in attendance. This may reflect both the greater number of afterschool options for older students (including employment) and their lower need for adult supervision.

Student Achievement and Behavioral Outcomes

Centers reported on a number of indicators regarding their program's positive impact on student achievement and academic behaviors, such as changes in student grades, proficiency levels, and changes in teacher-rated student behavior. All of these findings are based on regular program attendees.

Change in Student Grades

Centers reported the number of regular attendees who improved by half a grade or more, stayed the same, or declined by half a grade in reading and language arts or mathematics across the span of the 2003–04 school year. About 45 percent of all participants improved their reading and language arts grades, whereas only about 17 percent declined. Similarly, about 41 percent of all participants improved their mathematics grades, whereas about 19 percent declined. A greater proportion of elementary students improved their mathematics and reading and language arts grades (43 percent and 47 percent, respectively) than middle school students (38 percent in mathematics and 41 percent in reading and language arts). Conversely, a lower proportion of elementary students decreased in mathematics and reading and language arts grades (18 percent and 15 percent, respectively) compared to middle school students (24 percent in mathematics and 22 percent in reading and language arts).

Proficiency Levels in Mathematics and Reading and Language Arts

Centers reported the level of proficiency in mathematics and reading and language arts for each of their regular attendees. Although these data do not indicate the level of student improvement, it does provide a baseline from which to compare improvements in future years. About 45 percent of attendees are at a basic proficiency level in reading, and about 43 percent are scoring at proficient. Similarly, about 49 percent of attendees are at a basic proficiency level in mathematics, and about 40 percent are scoring at proficient.

Cross-Year Change in Mathematics and Reading and Language Arts

Ten states reported on the extent to which regular attendees witnessed a change in proficiency levels in mathematics or reading and language arts on state assessments taken during the 2003–04 school year, compared with the 2002–03 school year. For both mathematics and reading and language arts assessments, 31 percent of students witnessed an improvement in the proficiency level at which they scored, whereas about 20 percent witnessed a decrease in their proficiency level. A slightly greater proportion of students in middle and high school programs witnessed an improvement in proficiency level (32 percent improving in reading and language arts and 35 percent improving in mathematics) than did students in elementary school programs (30 percent in reading and language arts and 29 percent in mathematics).

Change in Academic Behaviors

In order to assess the degree of behavioral change, teachers in 21 states completed a survey in which they rated the degree of improvement in academic behaviors exhibited by regular program participants across the 2003–04 school year. The categories of behavior with the highest percentage of student improvement were academic performance (71 percent of students exhibiting improvement), completing homework to the teacher’s satisfaction and class participation (69 percent each), and turning in homework on time (68 percent). For every category of behavior, teachers rated a majority of students as having improved. In no category of behavior did the percentage of students *declining* in behavior exceed 7 percent.

Teachers also rated the degree of student improvement in each behavioral category. For most categories, around 40 percent of respondents who said that students improved indicated that this improvement was “significant,” 30 percent indicated “moderate” improvement, and about 30 percent indicated “slight” improvement. However, regarding regular class attendance, nearly 50 percent of respondents who had indicated improvement described it as “significant.”