21st Century Community Learning Centers Implementation Study Report

Executive Summary

November 2011

PREPARED FOR THE

Tennessee Department of Education

BY

EMILY R. MCCUTCHEON, MSW, MBA
GAIL MYERS, MSW

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Executive Summary

Introduction and Overview

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative is a federally funded program that offers activities for K–12 students in high poverty areas. The activities are designed to improve students' academic performance and to offer enrichment opportunities in a safe environment outside of the regular school day. As originally authorized by Congress in 1996, the 21st CCLC program was designed to create "community learning centers," opening up schools for broader use by their communities and using school resources more efficiently. When the program was reauthorized as part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the new legislation emphasized serving students who were academically at risk. The stated purposes of the program as reauthorized are threefold:

1. Provide opportunities for academic enrichment to help students (particularly those attending low-performing schools) to meet state and local student academic achievement standards.
2. Offer students a wide variety of additional services, programs, and activities intended to reinforce and complement their regular academic program.
3. Offer families of students served an opportunity for literacy and related educational development.

Under NCLB, the program was structured as a formula grant to the states, with local grants awarded competitively by states to local entities. The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) specified that local educational agencies (LEAs), community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based groups (FBOs), and other public or private organizations could apply for funding. The grants were to be awarded primarily to programs that would serve K–12 students attending schools with a high concentration of low-income families (40% or more of the students are from low-income families) and schools that had been identified in need of improvement (schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress [AYP] for 2 consecutive years by state measures). Approved activities for children and their parents include:

- Remedial education
- Academic enrichment
- Math and science activities
- Arts and music activities
- Proficiency classes for those with limited ability with English
- Tutoring and mentoring programs
- Assistance to students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled
- Recreational activities
- Technology programs and telecommunications
- Expanded library hours
- Parent involvement and family literacy activities
- Drug and violence prevention
- Counseling programs
- Character education
- Entrepreneurial education

Eighty-two (82) grantees served K–12 students in 293 centers[1] that operated across the state in program year 2010 (school year 2009–2010).[2] Sixty (73.2%) of the grantees were LEAs, and 22 (26.8%) were CBOs/FBOs. Approximately half of the grantees (43) were in their first year of funding in the *current* award cycle; 22 grantees were in their second year of funding in the current award cycle; and the remaining 17 grantees were in their third year.

Evaluation in Tennessee

The TDOE partnered with The University of Tennessee College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (UT SWORPS) to conduct a comprehensive statewide evaluation of 21st CCLC programs beginning in the spring of 2009. The evaluation encompasses both implementation and outcome studies and is being completed in several phases. Each phase contains the following activities:

Phase 1

UT SWORPS staff met with TDOE administrators to gather information regarding areas of interest, to gain an overview of operations, and to determine availability of secondary data. A focus group and conference call were held to gain input from selected grantees about the evaluation and availability of information. UT SWORPS staff drafted a preliminary evaluation plan (see Appendix A), including research questions to guide the study, the objectives of which were:

1. To determine whether grantees are making progress toward the primary program goals to plan, implement, or expand extended learning opportunities that will improve the academic performance of underachieving students in mathematics and language arts.
2. To investigate whether 21st CCLC programs are benefiting the students' social, cultural, emotional, and safety needs.
3. To identify the distinctive features of programs exhibiting exemplary outcomes.

Phase 2

UT SWORPS evaluators conducted a Feasibility Study to refine the evaluation plan and determine the practicality of conducting a comprehensive evaluation. UT SWORPS evaluators reviewed literature on afterschool programs and information available from the Profiles and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS). UT SWORPS evaluators also conducted four site visits to established programs identified by agency administrators. The visits included interviews with the grantee directors, site coordinator, and program staff and observations of program activities to gain a better understanding of the activities offered by each program and to refine the data collection instruments. Findings from the Feasibility Study were reported in July 2010.

[1] All references describing grantee and center population in the state for program year 2010 are based on information provided by TDOE administrators. The same information source is utilized later in this report to provide sample estimates and inform recommendations.
[2] Fifteen grantees served adult family members also.

Phase 3

UT SWORPS evaluators began an implementation study to determine how the 293 21st CCLC programs located across the state operate and to identify successes, challenges, and promising practices. The plan for this study phase includes visits to a random sampling of 36 sites to achieve an 80% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 10%. In addition to the four sites visited during Phase 2, UT SWORPS evaluators visited 16 sites in spring 2011 and will visit the remaining 16 sites during the 2011–2012 school year. Findings from the Implementation Study will be detailed in an interim report (the current report) and final report (summer 2012). The findings from the Implementation Study will be supplemented with results from online surveys of site coordinators and feeder school principals collected at the population level which will provide a snapshot of all programs operating across the state. The report is planned for early winter 2012.

Phase 4

UT SWORPS evaluators will also conduct an Outcome Study to examine intermediate and long-term outcomes for students. UT SWORPS evaluators will track student outcomes through the use of the web-based student tracking system created by the UT SWORPS Information Technology Team. The start date for this phase is 2011, and the projected report date is spring 2013.

During the 20 site visits conducted during the first half of the Implementation Study, UT SWORPS evaluators conducted interviews with grantee directors, site coordinators, and feeder school principals. Focus groups were conducted with program staff and a full day of program activities were observed. The overarching goal of the Implementation Study is to answer the research questions related to implementation identified during Phase 1 and refined during Phase 2. Those questions are:

1. How do centers recruit students for the program?
2. What approaches are used by centers to engage and retain student participants? Which are most effective?
3. To what extent do centers attract and retain qualified instructors? What guidance and training do staff members receive?
4. To what extent do centers offer high-quality services in core academic areas (math and reading)?
5. To what extent do centers offer enrichment and support activities beyond core academic areas (e.g., nutrition, health, art, music, technology, etc.)?
6. What approaches do centers use to establish strong community partnerships? Which are most effective?
7. What approaches do centers use to establish effective working relationships with school personnel and students' families? What are some of the most promising practices in this area of operations?
8. How satisfied are students and parents with center operations?

9. How do programs plan for long-term sustainability?

Additionally, UT SWORPS evaluators began answering several research questions related to Impact. Those questions addressed in the current report are:

1. Do programs help students show improvement in school attendance, study habits, homework completion, etc.?
2. Do programs improve academic outcomes such as grades, test scores, etc.?
3. Do programs enhance students' social/emotional development and sense of safety?
6. What are some distinctive features of programs exhibiting exemplary outcomes (e.g., program structure, activities, community/school/family partnerships)?

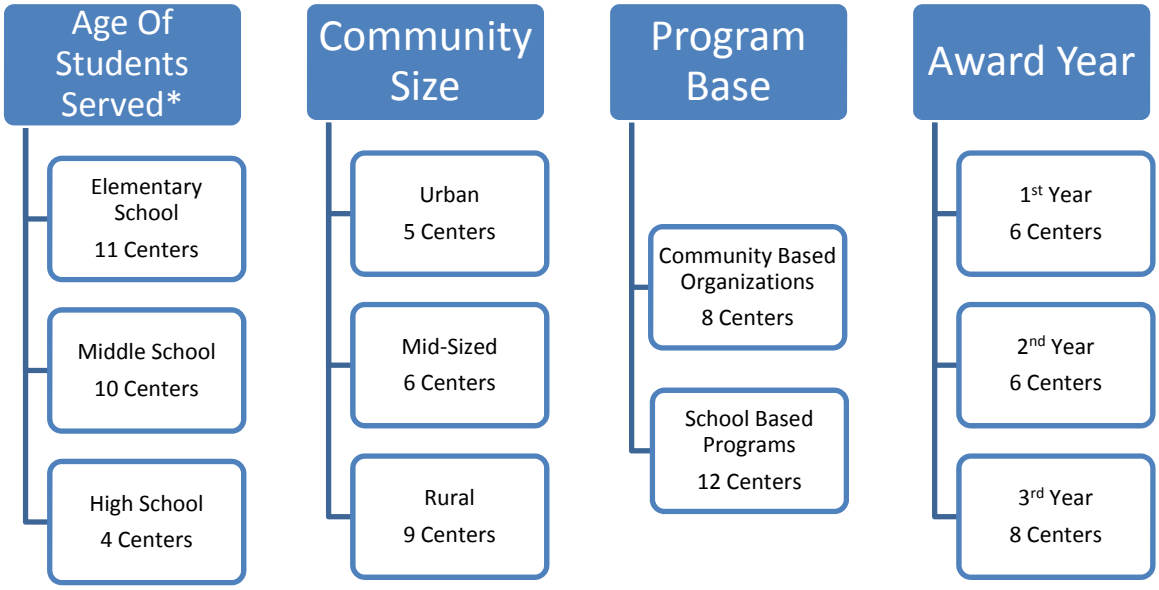
While the answers to these program impact-related questions will be addressed more fully in the Outcomes Study report, the qualitative/anecdotal information gathered during the site visits provides a starting point for assessing program outcomes.

Findings

Center Profiles

The 20 sites[3] that evaluators have visited to date were selected to be representative of the larger population of 293 centers across Tennessee. Eight of the sites were operated by community-based organizations (CBOs), and 12 were run by the school systems in which they operate (see Figure 1 below). All of the centers operated by school systems were housed in a feeder school. Two of the centers operated by CBOs were housed in a building that is off-site from the feeder school(s). Five of the centers visited were located in urban settings, and nine were designated rural. The six remaining centers were designated as mid-sized. At the time they were selected, six of the centers were in the first year of their current grant cycle, and another six were in their second year. The eight remaining centers were in their third award year. Several of the centers served more than one school level (i.e., elementary school and middle school students attended the center).

[3] As mentioned previously, four sites were visited in spring 2010 as part of the Pilot/Feasibility Study phase of the evaluation, and 16 were visited in spring 2011 as part of the Implementation Study phase.



*5 centers serve more than one age group

Figure 1. Sites Visited by UT SWORPS Evaluators

Community Needs

There were three general themes cited by grantee directors and site coordinators when asked what community need prompted the establishment of the center: faltering academics, lack of supervision, and isolated communities. The creation of the high school programs was driven by the academic concerns. While middle school programs also noted academic needs of the community as an impetus for applying for the grants, they addressed more of the enrichment needs associated with children growing up in isolated communities as well. One rural grantee director noted that the "isolation [of the community] created a group of kids without life experiences, with a very low vocabulary…You see those children fall behind in academics because of their limited experiences. They wouldn't know what a 'taxi' is so they fall behind in reading." In the elementary school, all of these themes appear, but the additional community need for supervision was more evident: "Most of the parents work out of the community, and if it were not for the [21st CCLC] afterschool program, the kids would be home alone" (site coordinator in a rural community). Programs that were utilized for child care made efforts to ensure that all of the children attending the program received the same academic benefits, regardless of the reason they were present.

Goals

The goals of the sites visited matched the community needs they were created to address. In the high schools, where credit recovery and catching up academically were the identified needs, the goals were narrowly focused. As a site coordinator from a rural CBO program said, "The bare bones is that we want to keep students on track to graduate." The middle school programs focused on academics, but also brought in enrichment and character development. A grantee director in a mid-sized area summarized

the goals as increasing student confidence because "so many of them can do it, but they think they can't. They don't believe it, but when you make a believer out of them and they realize they can do this, well [they think] 'maybe I can try something else.'" There was a sense among many of the 21st CCLC staff members that if the students could experience a success in the afterschool program, no matter how small, they would build the confidence to try more things. The more they tried, the more they would realize they could achieve, and thus success would become routine. Centers that worked with elementary students also bridged the twin goals of enrichment and academics. However, these programs defined "enrichment" differently than their middle school counterparts. Specifically, while enrichment for the middle schoolers meant more confidence boosting and character development, for the elementary schoolers it meant exposure to new experiences and learning decision making skills.

Relationship with Feeder Schools

The attitude of the site coordinators and their view of their role in relation to the teachers and the school principal was the most significant factor noted in creating a positive relationship between the feeder school and the 21st CCLC program. As one principal from a rural middle school noted, "The afterschool program should support what the school does and the school should support the afterschool program." When site coordinators and grantee directors see their role as supporting the work of the regular day teachers, the school staff appear to embrace the partnership and work collaboratively with the afterschool program. There were only two centers that hinted at cooler relationships with feeder schools and in both of these, either the site coordinator or school principal was new to their role. In one instance, a new principal was feeling out the program, and in the other, a new site coordinator was learning the school's procedures.

Sustainability

This is an area where few of the grantees have a clear plan. While most acknowledge that the end of the 21st CCLC grant is something they need to prepare for, they feel that they have few options for alternative funding, and what funds are available would not be sufficient to maintain their current level of programming. Only three of the centers said they currently utilize a mix of funding streams which would help offset the impact if they lost the 21st CCLC grant funding. Five grantees mentioned other grants they were applying for by name but noted that in the current economic environment, funding was becoming scarce. Several grantee directors noted that private donations were down as well. The consensus among the grantee directors was that few other funding options are available.

Inputs

Facilities and Resources

All but two centers visited operated on the grounds of one of their feeder schools. UT SWORPS evaluators felt that all programs visited used areas that were safe and free of health hazards. Most of the sites allowed students free access to resources and materials. For example, they had books that were readily available to students, made computers available for students to use during activities, and

allowed students to select from a variety of educational games during enrichment activities. For three sites, two in rural communities and one in a mid-sized county, the UT SWORPS evaluators were concerned that the program space or furniture and equipment was inadequate to accommodate the program's activities. This was mainly due to programs operating in a room that was too small or noisy to accommodate the afterschool activities.

Staffing

Three fourths of the programs visited utilized regular school day teachers as lead tutors in their program, and all of the programs run by school systems utilized regular school day teachers. Additionally, three of the CBOs used regular school day teachers, and four used tutors with other backgrounds. One CBO had a mix of regular school day teachers and instructors with other backgrounds. Several of the programs had assistants who either supported the teachers as they provided academic tutoring or ran enrichment activities separate from the academic tutoring. In general, the site coordinator or the grantee director was responsible for hiring the staff for the program. Most site coordinators discussed looking for characteristics such as "experience," "good rapport with the students," and "energetic" when hiring teachers. While none of the sites reported much trouble with turnover, several mentioned difficulty finding enough teachers who met their criteria, and even more mentioned not having anyone they could call in as substitutes should an afterschool teacher need a day off. This was especially true for programs in rural areas. Most centers reported that their maximum student to teacher ratio was 15:1. Some centers went as high as 20:1, but many employed assistants to keep the ratio under 10:1 or 12:1.

Across the board, the centers that employed regular school day teachers in their afterschool programs did not require the teachers to attend any additional training beyond the in-service hours they are obliged to complete each year for licensure. The assistants and other professional staff members were much more likely to be required to attend trainings through the grantee. Training topics included first aid and CPR, warning signs of child abuse and neglect, detecting bullying, and discipline strategies.

Participants

The profile of the students who attended these programs varied by the grade levels the program served. At the four high school programs visited, the principals described the communities as economically disadvantaged. The other dominant characteristic of the high school program population discussed was a lack of parental education. One principal remarked that the parents of the afterschool program's participants are "not highly educated [so there is] no one pushing them [the students] to achieve in education."

Staff at the centers that serve middle schoolers discussed the participants' home situations, economic status, and academic level as well when asked to describe the target population. Regardless of the size of the community in which the program was located (rural, urban, mid-sized), staff noted that most of their participants came from single parent households or lived with a relative or other adult.

> "Probably as high as 65-70% of the kids at this school are not living with their biological parents. They live with grandparents or step-parents who've adopted them, or with an aunt and uncle. We also have a high transient population….We have one girl who is living with someone who couldn't tell us what their names are." (site coordinator at a rural school-based program)

Staff members who worked with middle schoolers in urban settings said that the participants came from low income households. One teacher in a focus group reported that the average family income in the community served by the center was $5,000 per year. Programs working with elementary schoolers reported many of the same participant characteristics as the middle school programs—many single parent households and a mix of academic levels among parents.

Community Collaborations

Partnering with other community service agencies, businesses, schools, and individuals appeared to be one area in which the CBOs had less difficulty than the school-based programs. This is likely due to the fact that these CBOs are "known entities" within the community and generally offer more services than just the 21st CCLC afterschool program. Larger organizations may also have grant writers and CEOs who spend time in the community raising funds and recruiting community partners.

For the school-based programs, the onus for creating the partnerships falls to the grantee director or site coordinator to market the afterschool program and initiate relationships in the community. While this requires more effort on the part of the program leadership, the results have been quite positive: "I've never asked anyone to be a partner who has turned me down" (grantee director in a rural school-based program). When approaching prospective partners, a grantee director in a mid-sized community felt that the best results came from being as specific as possible. "It helps to have a plan [for the class the partner will lead] laid out and a description of the job responsibilities" and to determine whether there is anyone at the organization who can provide what they are asking for. Both CBOs and school-based programs reported experiencing difficulties in partnering with other agencies due to the recent economic downturn. Partnerships are disappearing because either agencies have closed their doors, or they have had to limit outreach efforts due to funding constraints.

Activities

Recruiting and Enrolling Participants

Recruitment in the high school programs is unique in that "you basically recruit every day," one rural site coordinator said. These high school programs are goal oriented, helping students recover a credit, make up an assignment, or earn time for time. If a student needs the services offered by the program, they will attend until they reach their goal and, then, if the program has been successful and helped them "catch up," they will not return. Therefore, the recruitment efforts for the high schools center around getting the word out that the service is available for students who need it. These programs put the afterschool program in the daily announcements, had the teachers talk about it in their classes, and made use of the computerized call-out systems to alert parents of the program.

By their nature, school-based programs and programs run by CBOs frequently utilized different strategies to target and recruit students. School-based programs were most often staffed entirely by school personnel—frequently teachers from the school in which the programs operate. They have access to student TCAP scores and other assessments, which most programs relied on to identify students demonstrating an academic need.

The second phase of the recruitment process is getting the parents to sign up their children for the program. For the high school programs, again, this mainly consisted of making the parents aware that the program was offered. Most middle and elementary school programs sent a letter home to the parents explaining why their child was "invited" to join the program and giving specifics about the program's operations. Several then followed up with personal phone calls to the parents of targeted students.

The CBOs run more of a risk of a separation between the feeder schools and the afterschool programs. If the afterschool program wants assistance from the feeder school in identifying and targeting students, CBOs may have an additional hurdle to overcome because they must first focus on relationship building with the school. Two of the CBO programs that UT SWORPS evaluators visited had the benefit of the site coordinator maintaining an office in the feeder school. While both of these site coordinators also discussed the importance of relationship-building with the school staff, these were also the only CBO programs that received referrals directly from school guidance counselors as part of the counselors' standard intervention when a student is failing a course. While steps have to be taken to maintain the relationship between the feeder school staff and the afterschool program, site coordinators being housed in the school during the day seems to facilitate collaboration.

Some programs focused on raising awareness of the program among the parents while others focused on enticing the students to join. It appeared that the latter strategy was more successful in driving enrollment.

When asked what groups of students the program had difficulty enrolling, staff at two of the high schools noted that they have a difficult time recruiting freshmen and sophomores. Because these high school programs focused on credit recovery for students who failed classes, students in 9th and 10th grades "feel there is enough time to make up" the credits before the end of their senior year. Conversely, for the middle school programs, the hardest population to recruit was at the other end of the age range—the 8th graders. In some cases, the student says they do not want to attend the program and the "parents feel they are old enough to stay home alone" and, thus, do not make them attend. In other cases, the parents want the older child home because they are the babysitter for a younger sibling.

Retaining and Engaging Participants

The number one reason UT SWORPS evaluators heard that explained why students either do not enroll or drop out of the program was transportation. Families that rely on the school bus do not have the resources to pick up their child from school every day. Even when programs provide transportation, it is not a cure-all. The programs that offer transportation in rural communities noted that the children could

be riding the bus for an hour or longer in the evening simply because of the distances the buses had to travel between the children's homes. High school students working on credit recovery can spend 30 minutes or 2 hours a day working on their lessons. The system is designed to be flexible, but it is this flexibility that makes providing transportation for these programs infeasible. The other barriers to retaining students that UT SWORPS evaluators heard were nice weather, sports programs, and the social stigma associated with the afterschool program. Nice weather, especially in the spring, distracted students from the afterschool programs at a time when the programs were really focusing on TCAP preparation. Sports practices run concurrently with the afterschool program, but some centers were able to work out tutoring schedules with the coaches to help students remain academically eligible for extracurricular activities. Finally, two programs mentioned that some students felt like the afterschool program was only for economically disadvantaged youth and, thus, did not want to attend due to this associated stigma.

Programs also offered incentives to the students to keep them from dropping out. Three programs that UT SWORPS evaluators visited used end-of-year field trips as rewards for attendance. One site coordinator reported throwing a pizza party for the student who attended 30 days. Another program had an awards ceremony where the students were given gift cards for their attendance. Programs also tried to keep students engaged through the activities they offer. One center that only had academic activities for the elementary and middle school students they serve reported structuring those activities so that they interested the children but were not too challenging and did not need to be finished at home.

Keeping the students interested in the activities is another challenge the programs face. The concern for the academic activities is to reinforce the material from the regular school day while keeping the lesson "fresh." Several teachers reported that while they were initially concerned about merely repeating the lesson taught during the day again after school, the smaller class sizes in the afterschool program naturally change the way the lesson is presented. Students also reportedly enjoyed hands-on activities and anything where they utilized technology. One of the potential challenges of engaging students that programs serving wider age ranges faced is ensuring that the activity is an appropriate match for the students' age and ability levels.

Academic Activities

The high school programs' "activity" was tutoring with teachers or peer mentors or credit recovery using a computer program. Some high school teachers mentioned offering planned academic enrichment activities to students, such as a forensics lab, but these were infrequent and seemed to be targeted to higher achieving students. In the elementary and middle school programs, the focus was more toward helping underachieving or borderline students score "proficient" on their TCAPs and master the State Performance Indicators (SPIs). Math, reading, and language arts were cited by most of the programs as their academic foci. Some also incorporated science, but this was the exception. In terms of the specific academic activities offered, UT SWORPS evaluators witnessed a wide range of offerings.

Enrichment and Recreation Activities

Enrichment activity offerings were varied and often quite inventive. Several programs mentioned field trips to places such as aquariums, Dixie Stampede in Pigeon Forge, sporting events, and trips to nearby metropolitan areas, like Nashville, Memphis, and Atlanta. Two programs that UT SWORPS evaluators visited were staging plays that would be performed for the entire school or center. Many of the programs mentioned trying to teach the participants about healthy eating, exercise, and the problems associated with obesity, an important and laudable goal as Tennessee has the third highest obesity rate in the nation, with 32.3% of residents identified as obese.[4] However, at only two programs visited did evaluators observe any programming that specifically targeted healthy lifestyle choices. Programs also reported offering activities ranging from Tae Kwon Do to piano lessons to geocaching.

Links with Regular School Day

The majority of the programs visited reported relying on informal channels to share information between the afterschool staff and regular school day teachers who were not associated with the afterschool program. The school-based programs have a clear advantage in this area because they are on-site, and at least some of the tutors in the school-based afterschool programs are regular day teachers as well. Some programs created assignment sheets or work folders for the regular day teachers to complete, indicating what work the student had to finish in the afterschool program. Some teachers utilized these systems heavily, but others seemed to feel that it was “one more thing” added to their already overflowing plates.

Often, CBOs face a hurdle in communicating with the regular day teachers that school-based programs do not. CBOs tend to rely more on the site coordinators to communicate with the regular day teachers. The relationships between the CBOs and the schools appeared to evidence more of a range of levels of collaboration. Two programs that operated on school grounds and that provided the site coordinator with an office in the school itself demonstrated the same level of collaboration as the school-based sites discussed above. Once the program moved off-site and utilized tutors who are not also regular day teachers, the barriers to communication began to emerge. A site coordinator for a CBO in an urban setting reported that the feeder school had an open door policy for afterschool staff. However, this site coordinator also reported that they relied on students in the same classes to inform the program staff if they had homework. Another site coordinator reported having to “go through their [student’s] backpacks” to see if they had homework.

Parent Interaction

The programs that reported the most avenues for and investment in parental involvement were the larger CBOs in urban areas. Teachers at school-based programs often reported speaking to parents as part of their regular day teacher duties, and they did not identify much need to communicate with parents while wearing their ‘afterschool teacher’ hats. CBO programs don’t have this natural avenue for

[4] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2009). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data.* Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

communication and, thus, there was more investment of time and resources to establish these communication channels. Regardless of the type of program, all of the high school centers reported difficulty with engaging parents. The programs dealing with the younger students reported more interaction with the parents. This was mainly a function of logistics because the most frequent avenue for communication cited was informal conversations held when parents arrived for pick up at the end of the day.

Outputs

Number of Days/Hours of Operation

The centers that UT SWORPS evaluators visited operated from 1.25 to 3 hours each day they were open. Three centers (two elementary school programs and one high school program) offered tutoring before school in addition to their afterschool programming. Two of these programs reported offering before school tutoring to accommodate teacher and student schedules, and one offered before school tutoring to provide additional student slots in the program.

Eleven of the centers visited operated 4 days per week. Four centers operated 5 days a week, and they often reported turning Friday into "fun-day," when students were not required to complete their homework and could instead spend the entire session in enrichment or recreational activities. Only one center visited operated on the weekend. Eight of the centers visited reported also operating summer programs for the students. These ranged from 1-week "camp-like" programs to 6-week intensive academic programs.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance policies regarding the number of days per week that a student must attend were rare. More common were policies that dropped students from the program if they missed a certain number of days, either consecutively or over the course of the year. These ranged anywhere from four to 10 absences. Most of the site coordinators with whom UT SWORPS evaluators met, however, saw these absences as more of a warning sign which prompted a conversation with the student or parents to try to get the child back into the program.

Typical Day Activities

The structure of the academic activities offered differed by age group. While the elementary and middle school students usually progressed through different sessions that focused on academics or enrichment, high school students went to the room of the teacher from whom they needed extra help or worked on their credit recovery computer program. High school teachers did not plan sessions for the students but offered assistance on homework or provided more in-depth explanations of a topic with which a student was struggling. For credit or content recovery, students worked through their lessons independently until they mastered the material. For the younger students, the structure that was most often witnessed was first completing homework and then participating in a planned academic activity. The majority of

centers visited broke up the afterschool sessions into multiple activity blocks. They spent 45 minutes to an hour on one activity and then switched to another.

Parent and Student Satisfaction

While no quantitative data regarding satisfaction are available for this report, UT SWORPS evaluators gathered some qualitative data indicating the level of support that programs receive. Eleven of the 20 sites visited reported having a waiting list either at the time of the visit or at some point during the year. The fact that there is more interest than space available is indirect evidence that parents see value in the program. At one high school program, parents collected on the day of the site visit to meet with the evaluators and detail the benefits their children have received by participating in the program.

In terms of gauging student satisfaction, UT SWORPS evaluators relied on the program observations and feedback from the program staff. In only two of the dozens of activities observed did UT SWORPS evaluators note students who were not engaged in the activity and were visibly bored. More often, students were excited about the activity or at least worked diligently to complete it.

Intermediate Outcomes

Academic/Cognitive

The majority of academic improvements discussed were general impressions that the program staff had about student achievement or anecdotal information about specific success stories.[5] Some sites reported using assessments with pre and posttests, but those had not been completed and analyzed at the time of the site visits. One site coordinator referenced scores on the assessments given during the previous school year, stating that 85% of the participants demonstrated growth. A site coordinator in a rural school reported that at least 75% of the program participants showed improvement based on their in-class tests and report cards. Another site coordinator indicated using student report cards to track progress: “The improvement is phenomenal for some, but a good bit of them will progress, at least three fourths of them. Not in all subjects across the board, but in some of them.” Additionally, teachers often noted that students in the afterschool programs were more likely to turn in their homework than before they began participating.

Social/Emotional

Several of the non-academic skills and benefits that students received from participating in the afterschool program were those that are directly related to the enrichment activities the center offers. Students learned Tae Kwon Do and karate, and some students learned how to play a piano. However, program staff also listed several outcomes for students beyond developing a skill set. A program assistant pointed out that “Karate teaches them obedience, listening. The instructor is teaching them

[5] As mentioned previously, intermediate and long-term outcome measures will be addressed in future phases of the evaluation plan through use of the web-based application and through teacher, parent, and student surveys. This section only focuses on the qualitative reports of student outcomes provided to UT SWORPS evaluators during the interviews and focus groups.

stuff and they don't even realize it: respect, follow[ing] directions. They are all life lessons." Several programs also stressed the importance of building a child's confidence. As an assistant tutor remarked, "They can do anything if that confidence level is up."

Innovative Practices

UT SWORPS evaluators noted several innovative or unique practices that the centers employed to address common problems faced by many 21st CCLC programs. UT SWORPS evaluators will track these practices in future phases of the evaluation to determine what role they play in creating positive outcomes for students.

- In an effort to overcome burnout, a few of the centers created flexible schedules for the teachers involved in the afterschool program. Centers hired enough staff so that teachers could work only 1 or 2 days a week in the program. These were most frequently middle and high school programs where the teachers specialized in a subject area and provided tutoring in that subject in the afterschool program as well. The one concern for centers was the increased number of teachers needed to fully staff the program; however, all of the teachers from these programs expressed satisfaction with the way the program operated.
- In order to build community partnerships, one site director at a CBO in a rural community attended every community meeting or advisory panel discussion that even remotely pertained to the afterschool program. She became more aware of what agencies and programs were operating in the community and was able to meet with their leaders and discuss tie-ins and collaborations with the afterschool program. "The networking really helps because all the other agencies have goals and objectives also." She has been able to gets services such as presentations by community leaders, and can meet some of the community agencies' needs by having students in her afterschool program complete service learning projects.
- One school-based program that UT SWORPS evaluators visited employed a part-time site coordinator who was not a staff member at the feeder school. To overcome this potential barrier between the program and the school, the site coordinator attended the school's summer staff meeting to introduce herself and explain the program. She also put flyers in the teachers' mailboxes using a distinctive color of paper. Finally, she relied heavily on other afterschool program staff who were employees of the feeder school to market the program among regular day teachers.
- To get parents to sign up their children for the afterschool program, one center makes a formal presentation to the parents at a school event early in the academic year. They introduce the program and explain the manner in which students are targeted. The grantee director at this middle school program said, "We use the data to recruit… We share with parents that out of the 100 [students] invited [to participate in the program] only 40% of those who turn down the offer for help will graduate from high school… It's a compelling story."

- Transportation was a barrier to enrollment for many programs. The staff at one feeder for a high school program worked to create an informal network of carpoolers. After the staff identified the students who needed credit recovery, they got them together in a small group where they matched the students who lacked transportation with classmates who lived nearby and could provide rides home.
- One high school program had parents of students who enrolled in the credit recovery program sign a contract stating they would ensure that their child attended the program and that the parents would follow through with the student at home. There was a strong sense in the program that the only way the extra help could be effective was for the parents to be involved and committed.
- One urban program utilized a rewards system that not only encouraged the participants to meet certain behavioral and educational standards, but also enticed the children to attend the program and remain engaged throughout the school year. Students earned points for academic achievements like turning in their homework, raising their grades, and making honor roll. They also were rewarded for behavioral improvements or character development, such as being assertive, helping clean the classroom, or encouraging a peer. Students also lost points for being suspended from school, receiving D's or F's on their report cards, arguing, or not following directions. The points were tracked on a bulletin board in the afterschool classroom. At the end of the year, students traded in points for tangible items like shoes or iPods or even earned field trips.
- To target Tennessee's childhood obesity epidemic, one program offered activities that specifically targeted health and fitness. The school coach is an afterschool staff member. All of the students rotated through the recreational activities he lead, which were often something like dodge ball or kickball. However, before the students could play the sport, they had to participate in mandatory exercises. During the observation, students ran various types of drills across the gym, including sprints, crab walk, ladders, etc. According to the coach, while the overall goals of the recreational activity are to get the students to "learn to work together, get along and follow rules," it is also true that some of the children were above a healthy weight and this is the only exercise they got. Therefore, an implicit goal of the activities "is to help them slim down."
- The concern for the students' food security led one urban CBO to go one step further in its efforts to ensure the health and well-being of its students. At the end of the day, students were sent home with a "goodie bag" filled with healthy snacks such as granola bars, oranges, and juice. The bag also contained a treat such as a candy bar.
- In an effort to ensure that the afterschool program was aligned with the regular day school's instruction, one program created pacing guides for use in the afterschool program that mirrored the pacing guides used by the school. The afterschool guides lagged about 2 weeks behind the regular day school's guides. Doing this allowed the afterschool program to

continue to reinforce the foundations learned while the regular day teacher built upon it in subsequent lessons.

- Site coordinators at two urban CBOs worked to overcome the barrier created by operating a program off-site from the feeder school by making the effort to be a visible presence in those schools. They personally visited a feeder school every day to meet with teachers, principals, or other school staff. Some of this contact was an informal "check-in" with a participant's regular day teacher to see how the student was doing and in what areas the students were still struggling. These site coordinators, however, also went to parent-teacher conferences to advocate for the student and teach the parent how to advocate for the student, so that the parent can continue to do so after the student has left the program.
- A site coordinator in an urban area utilized the automated call-out technology to keep abreast of student assignments and upcoming tests. The feeder schools for this center alerted parents to tests and some larger assignments via the automated call-out system. The site coordinator was added to that notification list, so he received the same phone calls that the parents did. He found this to be an extremely helpful method to stay aware of students' needs.
- One site coordinator at an urban CBO program detailed the systematic approach that the umbrella organization took to gain parental involvement. The CBO had a parental involvement coordinator who worked with all of the programs that were run through the agency managing parent activities. Any parent who enrolled their child in the program had to sign an agreement stating they would be involved in the program, were committed to attending two parent meetings per year, and would volunteer for 6 hours in the program annually. The agency also offered activities for the parents, such as parent nights, a parent advisory group, and workshops for adults. Finally, the staff at the afterschool program promoted parent involvement within the feeder schools and parents checking the child's homework by modeling that behavior in their interactions with the family.
- Two of the programs that worked with elementary schools structured their day so that the recreational activity was the first activity of the day. They felt that this allowed the students time to expend some energy which then helped them focus on their homework or other activities. "They can breathe a minute and then go on with their academics." One middle school program pulled out the younger students for a special mini-session where they practiced focusing and calming techniques, such as walking across a balance beam and completing a "connect the dots" worksheet. The site coordinator reported to UT SWORPS evaluators that, due to the success they felt this strategy had with the younger students in the afterschool program, the school planned on employing it before TCAP testing to help mentally prepare the students to take the tests.

Conclusion

The beauty of the 21st CCLC grants was their recognition that different communities had different needs, and the people best suited to understand and address those needs were members of those

communities. Therefore, grantees receiving 21st CCLC funding were able to design their own afterschool programs that addressed the needs of their communities. Programs differ in size and scope. They offer different services and target different goals. One thing they all have in common is a desire to help the children they serve to succeed and a willingness to do whatever they can to reach that goal.