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# **New Jersey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Year 3 Evaluation Report Descriptive Data for 2014–15**

**Matthew Vinson  
Samantha Sniegowski**

November 2016

## **Funding Statement**

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*Matthew Vinson*

*Samantha Sniegowski*



1000 Thomas Jefferson Street NW  
Washington, DC 20007-3835  
202.403.5000 | TTY 877.334.3499

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## Executive Summary

Information summarized in this report is based on data collected and analyzed by American Institutes for Research (AIR) as part of a statewide evaluation of the New Jersey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programs, including data from 50 subgrantees and 116 centers.<sup>1</sup> Results represent findings based on activities delivered during the 2014–15 school year. The purpose of this executive summary is to (1) set the context for the activities carried out during Year 3 of the evaluation contract (i.e., 2015–16), (2) outline applicable evaluation questions and methods, and (3) summarize key findings. The executive summary concludes with a brief description of conclusions and next steps.

Note that this report is strictly a descriptive and progress report. That is, nothing in this report should be understood as an assessment of 21st CCLC program impact in New Jersey but should instead be interpreted as a presentation of 21st CCLC characteristics. An impact report was carried out last year (covering 2013–14 data) and will be conducted again next year. The information collected and analyzed in relation to the 2014–15 school year was meant to answer two primary evaluation questions related to the implementation of the New Jersey 21st CCLC program:

1. What were the primary characteristics of programs funded by 21st CCLC and the students served?
2. How did centers perform on the leading indicators defined for the program, and how is this level of performance relevant to thinking about what additional supports, training, and professional development the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) should potentially invest in?

These questions are in keeping with the descriptive nature of this report.

### 2015–16 Context

The broader evaluation context is one of transition. Not only does this report fall at the end of Year 3 in a five-year contract, but during 2014–15 and 2015–16 a great deal of previous data collection was reassessed and revised, with AIR working closely with NJDOE and the Evaluation Advisory Group to refine and streamline data components to better support quality improvement, monitoring, and impact assessment. These efforts include:

- Revision of 21st CCLC program leading indicators, cutting back from 22 to 12
- Removal of the Evaluation Tracking and Reporting System (ETRS) end-year data collection (entirely)
- Revision of the ETRS midyear data collection, dividing collection into two time points and reducing question burden
- Introduction of a new self-assessment module within ETRS
- Introduction of a new action-research module within ETRS
- Introduction of the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey

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<sup>1</sup> There were 124 centers originally included as active during 2014–15, but eight of these did not have data for the time period. This may be due to programs operating less than a full year (e.g., ending grants).

These changes are all being implemented at the time of this writing and generally will serve not only to enhance data quality and data use but also to *reduce* the data reporting burden on the 21st CCLC grantees themselves, given that self-assessment and action research are already required efforts. These changes are, therefore, anticipated to greatly improve the overall data collection associated with the evaluation and further enhance the use of evaluation results at both state and grantee levels. It is in part because of these changes, however, that this report is more of a descriptive and progress report. As stated, impact analyses will again be conducted next year.

## Data Sources

To address the aforementioned evaluation questions, data were collected from the following sources:

- **Program Activity and Review System (PARS21).** PARS21 is a Web-based data collection system developed and maintained by NJDOE that collects directly from grantees a broad array of program characteristic, student demographic, attendance, and outcome data throughout the program year.
- **Staff Survey.** The purpose of the online staff survey was to obtain information from staff members working directly with youth in programs funded by 21st CCLC about the extent to which they engage in practices suggested by the afterschool research literature as likely to be supportive of both positive academic and youth development outcomes.
- **New Jersey 21st CCLC Evaluation Template and Reporting System.** The 21st CCLC Evaluation Template and Reporting System (ETRS) is a Web-based data collection application designed to obtain center-level information about the characteristics and performance of afterschool programs funded by 21st CCLC, based on information garnered from local evaluation efforts. The system is designed to collect information midyear through a given school year. (Note that the end-year data collection, referenced in previous evaluation reports, was dropped for 2014–15 and after and was not collected. The removal of the end-year report was part of the overall re-envisioning process, with removal making room for new, more relevant data collection efforts such as the youth survey.)
- **Youth Survey.** During 2015–16, a youth survey was piloted at a limited number of sites. The youth survey, the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey, is a survey developed by Youth Development Executives of King County in Washington State and AIR. The survey has been tested, revised, and validated by AIR.

## Analysis

Descriptive analysis of PARS21 data on grantee, center, and student characteristics along with cluster analysis techniques were used to provide an overall description of New Jersey 21st CCLC programs operating in the 2014–15 school year. Both descriptive analysis and Rasch analysis of PARS21, ETRS, and staff survey responses were used to assess the extent to which centers implemented research-supported best practices aligned with the previously described leading indicator system. Rasch analysis was also used to assess the extent to which youth survey scales were operating as intended. More information on Rasch analysis can be found in Chapter 2 of this report.

## Summary of Key Findings

A summary of key evaluation findings is provided below.

### Primary Characteristics of Programs Funded by 21st CCLC and the Students Served

#### *Grantee Characteristics*

- A majority of grantees (46 percent) were in their first year of program operation.
- Grantees were split between the categories of school-based (44 percent) and non-school-based (56 percent) grantees.

#### *Center Characteristics*

- Centers were grouped into staffing clusters based on staffing configuration. A plurality of centers, 28 percent, were identified as employing mostly school-day teachers; the next highest group of centers employed mostly nonacademic teachers (25 percent). The third highest group of centers, 23 percent, employed mostly program staff (not otherwise classified by type).
- The average student-to-staff ratio was 11–12 students for each program staff member.
- Centers mainly served children in elementary and middle schools exclusively (82 percent of centers).
- Approximately 15 percent of all centers chose career awareness as their theme, while another 15 percent chose civic engagement. Another nine percent chose STEM as their center theme, while four percent chose Visual or Performing Arts.

#### *Student Characteristics*

- A total of 15,049 students attended 21st CCLC programming for at least one day.
- Two thirds of the students (66.6 percent) attended 30 days or more, and slightly more than one third (35.9 percent) participated for 90 days or more.
- The typical student attended an average of 29 hours of reading activities and 26 hours of mathematics activities (average of total hours across the reporting period).
- Thirty percent of students attended 21st CCLC programming for two consecutive years or more.
- The most common activity profiles were associated with youth who spent the majority of their time participating in tutoring/homework help and youth development activities (45 percent) or academic enrichment (29 percent).
- A majority of 21st CCLC participants were Hispanic/Latino (44 percent) or Black (32 percent). Most attendees (74 percent) qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.

### Leading Indicator Results

A primary goal of the statewide evaluation was to provide 21st CCLC grantees with data to inform program improvement efforts regarding their implementation of research-supported best

practices. Building from the quality framework, AIR and NJDOE worked collaboratively to define a series of leading indicators predicated on data collected as part of the statewide evaluation. The leading indicators were meant to enhance existing information/data available to 21st CCLC grantees regarding how they fared in the adoption of program strategies and approaches associated with high-quality afterschool programming. Specifically, the leading indicator system was designed to do the following:

- Summarize data collected as part of the statewide evaluation in terms of how well the grantee and its respective centers<sup>2</sup> are adopting research-supported best practices.
- Allow grantees to compare their level of performance on leading indicators with similar programs and statewide averages.
- Facilitate internal discussions about areas of program design and delivery that may warrant additional attention from a program improvement perspective.

For this report, the leading indicators are presented for the first time in the new, revised format, which reduces the number of indicators to 12 and reorganizes them around General Program Indicators and Activity-Related Indicators. The reduction in number was largely driven by the obsolescence or redundancy of some of the indicators, while the restructuring hopefully makes it easier for grantees to readily understand the indicators and use them for program improvement.

### *General Program Indicators*

General program indicators are those that relate to program practices at the general or program level but that may have a strong effect on participant experience. Programs characterized by a supportive and collaborative climate permit staff to engage in self-reflective practice to improve overall program quality, and, as noted by Smith (2007); Glisson (2007); and Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, and Mielke (2005), an organizational climate that supports staff in reflecting on and continually improving program quality is a key aspect of effective youth-development programs. Further, research suggests that youth achievement outcome improvement can be supported by simply paying attention to *how* programming is delivered (Birmingham et al., 2005; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). These indicators therefore provide information on program internal communication, links to the school day, collaboration with school partners, and staff commitment to quality at the point of service.

- The average statewide scale score for internal communication fell within the *once a month* response category (scale response options included *never*, *a couple of times per year*, *about once a month*, and *nearly every week*), suggesting that the assessed collaborative efforts were frequently implemented during the 2014–15 programming period (Leading Indicator 1).
- Centers tended to have at least some access to school-based data on youth academic functioning and needs (Leading Indicator 2).

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, the term *center* is used to refer to the physical location where 21st CCLC programming is delivered. Each grantee operates at least one center, although it is more common for a given grantee to operate multiple centers. Most, but not all, centers are located in public schools. The term *site* also is commonly used to refer to an individual center.

- In terms of program staff collaborating with school personnel to adopt practices that are supportive of academic skill building, including linkages to the school day and using data on youth academic achievement to inform programming, the statewide average was 69.2, which indicates that staff *agree* that linkages exist and *occasionally* or *often* use data on youth academic achievement (Leading Indicator 3).
- In terms of activities provided at the point of service meant to support youth development, statewide averages on the *Staff Capacity to Create Interactive and Engaging Environment* scale (the source for Leading Indicator 4) suggest that staff adoption of such practices is more common than not.

### *Activity-Related Indicators*

In order for 21st CCLC programming to have an impact, activities must be offered that are intentionally designed relative to the desired outcomes, and youth must participate in those activities. Activity-related indicators provide data on both activity provision and activity participation, with indicators addressing mathematics and language arts, social and emotional development, and parent or guardian involvement. Overall, these indicators showed:

- A statewide average of about 20 percent of activity sessions had either a mathematics or a language arts focus (Leading Indicator 5).
- Statewide, approximately half of all regular attendees participated in mathematics or language arts activities for at least half their activity time (Leading Indicator 7).
- Frequent intentionality in the design of activity sessions in terms of the skills and knowledge they were trying to impart to participating youth (Leading Indicator 6).
- Statewide, an average of approximately 70 percent of activity sessions offered infused components that were meant to support youth development-related behaviors and SEL (Leading Indicator 8).
- An average of about 78 percent of regular attendees participated for at least 20 percent of their time in activities meant to support youth development-related behaviors and social and emotional learning (SEL) (Leading Indicator 9).
- The *Practices Supportive of Positive Youth Development* and *Opportunities for Youth Ownership* scales of the staff survey (the sources for Leading Indicator 10) suggest, as in previous years, that staff adoption of such practices is more common than not.
- In terms of engaging in practices to support and cultivate parent involvement and engagement (Leading Indicator 11), most sites were found to do so just *sometimes* (73 percent of sites fell within this range of the scale) as opposed to *never* (4 percent of sites) or *frequently* (20 percent).
- Only a very small percentage of programs (8 percent) were able to engage parents or other adult family members in activities for at least 15 percent of the youth served in the program during the 2014–15 school year, with adult family members of only 3.2 percent of all program participants attending at least one 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC activity (Leading Indicator 12). Overall, only 40 centers (37 percent) reported activities of this sort.

## Youth Survey Results

During spring 2016, AIR conducted a pilot test of the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey. This survey was developed by Youth Development Executives of King County (Washington State) and AIR, with AIR testing and revising the instrument during the past several years. The pilot survey included the following scales:

1. Youth leadership and autonomy
2. Relationships with adults
3. Relationships with other youth
4. Perceived program experience
5. Academic identity
6. Mindsets
7. Self-management
8. Interpersonal skills

Scales 1–3 relate to program experience, Scale 4 is a retrospective scale, and Scales 5–8 are youth functional areas (which can be assessed as direct program outcomes when used in a pre-administration to post-administration format).

A total of 834 youth surveys were collected from 22 centers representing seven grantees. AIR analyzed the resultant data using Rasch analysis and found that the survey scales were working as intended. Some scales did show evidence of a “ceiling effect,” however, which occurs when respondents “max out” a scale by clustering at the top response classification level. For example, respondents might tend to answer “strongly agree” to all or most of the items on a given agreement scale. Although it may seem that this would be a desired result (in the sense that it indicates participants are responding positively to the survey items), this is not necessarily so; it means that the scale is not necessarily capturing the full range of ability, perception, or belief, a notable problem from a program improvement perspective because it becomes less clear which construct areas deserve the most attention. It also creates difficulties if observed in data collected as part of a preadministration survey, notably for youth functioning, because any effect of the program becomes more difficult to detect.<sup>3</sup>

That said, these ceiling effects (of varying strengths) were observed as part of the pilot. This alone may partly explain the data because it is at least possible that the youth attending the sites

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<sup>3</sup> As an example that might help clarify the problem described, imagine the same type of issue but in a pre-post *math* test. The pre- and post-administration versions would be identical, as here. If the questions on the test are below student ability even at the start of the term, however, no difference will be observed between pre- and post-administration versions since all test takers will perform at the top level on the pre—that is, students will do very well on both pre- and post-tests. This means that the test will yield little information about how math ability differs from student to student, simply because students “maxed out” on the pre. The analogy is not perfect—the survey in question dealt with student beliefs and not academic skill per se, which are different types of measurement—but this should help clarify the issues at stake.

included in the pilot are attending higher functioning programs (since pilot grantees had an opportunity to volunteer, which may be correlated with better designed programming overall). That is, there may be a type of selection effect in play. However, this explanation is only theoretical and may not be true: at this point in time, the scale ceiling effects simply bear watching. That is, it is likely premature to try to change the scales (typically by adding one or two “harder” items that help differentiate among respondents a bit better). If ceiling effects are observed during 2016–17, then addition of harder items, or modification of existing items to make them harder, will perhaps be warranted. For now, the results support proceeding with a full rollout of the survey to all of New Jersey’s 21st CCLC grantees.

## **Conclusions and Next Steps**

Overall, the 21st CCLC program in New Jersey seems to be serving the population intended and is offering activities in keeping with New Jersey’s 21st CCLC goals. Some of the specific statistics, notably for the leading indicator values, have moved up or down or adjusted slightly, but this is not uncommon given the change in grantee cohorts. However, given the introduction of a sizeable new cohort, it may make sense to investigate more year-to-year changes in subsequent reports, with more emphasis placed on over-time changes. This would not only make it easier to perform year-to-year comparisons but also would enable NJDOE to see how the movement of this large cohort from their first year to year two affects the data. Of course, the introduction of another large cohort of new grantees could change this assessment (should NJDOE make many new awards), but such an approach would provide a new view into cohort and year-to-year development dynamics.

In any event, barring the introduction of a second large group of new grant awards, the grantees that were new in 2014–15 will all be second-year grantees for the purpose of the 2015–16 impact analysis. The stage consequently seems well set for new impact analyses in 2017 and 2018, especially with the introduction of a well-functioning youth survey (which will hopefully provide an array of outcome measures more sensitive than, for example, assessment test scores). The immediate next steps for the evaluation work, then, is simply launching the preadministration of the youth survey, completing the overall data-collection redesign, and providing training to grantees to ensure overall data quality. With this foundation, the evaluation team will be well positioned to carry out a robust impact analysis in each of the next two years.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

For approximately a decade, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) operating across the state of New Jersey have provided youth in high-poverty communities the opportunity to participate in academic enrichment programs and other youth development and support activities designed to enhance their academic well-being. The primary purpose of this report, one in a series of evaluation reports, is to provide a descriptive picture of the 21st CCLC program across New Jersey. The information contained in this report is the result of data collected and analyzed as part of a statewide evaluation of New Jersey's 21st CCLC program, currently being conducted by American Institutes for Research (AIR). For the most part, the results outlined in this report are associated with 21st CCLC-funded activities and services delivered during the course of the 2014–15 school year, the exception being presentation of youth survey pilot data collected during early 2016.

It should be noted that the broader evaluation context is one of transition. Not only does this report fall at the end of Year 3 in a five-year contract, but during 2014–15 and 2015–16 a great deal of previous data collection was reassessed and revised, with AIR working closely with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and the Evaluation Advisory Group to refine and streamline data components to better support quality improvement, monitoring, and impact assessment. These efforts include:

- Revision of 21st CCLC program leading indicators, cutting back from 22 to 12
- Removal of the Evaluation Tracking and Reporting System (ETRS) end-year data collection (entirely)
- Revision of the ETRS mid-year data collection, dividing collection into two time points and reducing question burden
- Introduction of a new self-assessment module within ETRS
- Introduction of a new action-research module within ETRS
- Introduction of the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey

These changes are all being implemented at the time of this writing and generally will serve not only to enhance data quality and data use but also to *reduce* the data reporting burden on the 21st CCLC grantees themselves, given that self-assessment and action research are already required efforts. These changes are, therefore, anticipated to greatly improve the overall data collection associated with the evaluation and to further enhance use of evaluation results at both state and grantee levels.

Given the above, however, this report is strictly a descriptive and progress report. As a consequence, nothing in this report should be understood as an assessment of 21st CCLC program impact in New Jersey but should instead be interpreted as a presentation of 21st CCLC characteristics. An impact report was carried out last year (covering 2013–14 data) and will be conducted again next year. As such, the information collected and analyzed in relation to the 2014–15 school year was meant to answer only two primary evaluation questions related to the implementation of the New Jersey 21st CCLC program:

1. What were the primary characteristics of programs funded by 21st CCLC and the students served?
2. How did centers perform on the leading indicators defined for the program, and how is this level of performance relevant to thinking about what additional supports, training, and professional development NJDOE should potentially invest in?

These questions are in keeping with the descriptive nature of this report. In addition, a secondary question of concern for this report relates to the youth survey pilot: Did the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey construct scales perform as intended? This question is addressed toward the end of the report based on analysis of the collected pilot survey data.

This report has been organized around a series of chapters using a similar format to those presented in evaluation reports provided by AIR in previous years. In Chapter 2, a summary of the evaluation questions and an explanation of why these questions are important to the field is provided. In addition, a description of the analytic methods used to support the evaluation is given in Chapter 2, including a description of data sources. An overview of grantee, site,<sup>4</sup> and youth characteristics is provided in Chapter 3, with a particular emphasis on characteristics that have been shown to be related to improving youth academic achievement and attaining desired program outcomes. Chapter 4 presents summary data for the 2014–15 leading indicators using the newly adopted 12-indicator format. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the recently piloted Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey, along with a summary presentation of scale analysis results from the spring 2016 survey pilot. Chapter 6 concludes with next steps.

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<sup>4</sup> In this report, the terms *site* and *program* are used to refer to the physical location where 21st CCLC–funded services and activities take place. Sites are characterized by defined hours of operation, have dedicated staffs, and usually have positions akin to site coordinators. Each 21st CCLC grantee in New Jersey has at least one site; many grantees have more than one site.

## Chapter 2. Evaluation Questions and Methods

The information collected and analyzed in relation to the 2014–15 school year was meant to answer two primary evaluation questions related to implementation of the New Jersey 21st CCLC program:

1. What were the primary characteristics of programs funded by 21st CCLC and the students served?
2. How did centers perform on the leading indicators defined for the program, and how is this level of performance relevant to thinking about what additional supports, training, and professional development NJDOE should potentially invest in?

As stated in Chapter 1, these questions are simple descriptive questions and are in keeping with the nature of this year as a transition year with respect to data collection.

As also stated in Chapter 1, however, a secondary question could be added to this: Did the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey scales work as intended? This very specific question relates strictly to the survey pilot AIR conducted among seven New Jersey 21st CCLC grantees during spring 2016 and is an important question for future impact analysis work. However, this question relates more to the function of a new data collection instrument than it does to the 21st CCLC program itself in New Jersey.

Given the nature of the questions, this report is consequently fairly simple and straightforward in scope, keeping primarily to basic presentation of program characteristics along with survey response data.

### Methods, Data Sources, and Analysis

Data collected and analyzed to carry out the 2014–15 evaluation effort were obtained from four primary sources, which included administrative data systems and surveys. Each source and how it contributed to the project is outlined in greater detail in the following section.

#### Program Activity and Review System (PARS21)

PARS21 is a Web-based data collection system developed and maintained by NJDOE that collects directly from grantees a broad array of program characteristic, student demographic, attendance, and outcome data throughout the program year. Data extracted from PARS21 were used to construct variables summarizing the activity and staffing models employed by sites, program maturity and organization type, and levels of program attendance in relation to the 2014–15 school year. Data extracted from PARS21 used to carry out analyses summarized in this report were obtained during fall 2015 and spring 2016.

#### Staff Survey

The purpose of the online staff survey was to obtain information from staff members working directly with youth in programs funded by 21st CCLC about the extent to which they engage in practices suggested by the afterschool research literature as likely to be supportive of both positive

academic and youth development outcomes. Scales appearing on the survey included the following:

- Collective staff efficacy in creating interactive and engaging settings for youth
- Intentionality in activity and session design
- Practices supportive of academic skill building, including linkages to the school day and using data about student academic achievement to inform programming
- Practices supportive of positive youth development
- Opportunities for youth ownership
- Staff collaboration and communication to support continuous program improvement
- Practices supportive of parent involvement and engagement

Staff members were selected as part of the survey sample if they were actively providing services at the site that directly served students participating in the program. 21st CCLC project directors were directed to select those staff members who worked most frequently in their program and delivered activities that were most aligned with their center’s objectives for student growth and development. The goal was to have project directors identify a minimum of 12 staff members per center to take the survey. In cases in which centers had fewer than 12 active staff members, all staff members working with students at the center were directed to take the survey. This data collection took place between January and March 2015. In all, complete surveys were obtained from 106 centers<sup>5</sup> active during the 2014–15 school year, an average of approximately nine completed surveys per site. Questions asked on the staff survey can be found in Appendix A.

### **New Jersey 21st CCLC Evaluation Tracking and Reporting System**

Developed by AIR as part of the statewide evaluation, the 21st CCLC Evaluation Template and Reporting System (ETRS) is a Web-based data collection application designed to obtain center-level information about the characteristics and performance of afterschool programs funded by 21st CCLC, based on information garnered from local evaluation efforts. The system is designed to collect information concerning:

- Program operations
  - Enrollment and recruitment
  - Policies and procedures
  - School-day links
  - Program staff members
  - Monitoring tools
  - Summer programs

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<sup>5</sup> Centers operating during summer 2015 only were not included in this data collection activity.

- Goals
  - Goal A: Improve student academic achievement
  - Goal B: Improve student behavior and attitudes
  - Goal C: Improve parent education and involvement
  - Goal D: Improve community partnerships
- Conclusions and recommendations, including questions on sustainability

Completion of these data components (between approximately December 2014 and February 2015) was undertaken by project directors, often in conjunction with their local evaluators.

### **Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs Survey**

During spring 2016, steps were taken to administer the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey, developed by the Youth Development Executives of King County, on a pilot basis in 22 21st CCLC programs serving youth in Grades 4–12. The survey measures youth experiences in programming, youth perceptions of how the program impacted them, and how youth are functioning on a series of indicators of social and emotional competence. A total of 834 completed surveys were collected during the 2016 pilot, with approximately 38 surveys completed per program.

### **Analytic Approach and Methods**

Although previous reports prepared by the AIR evaluation team as part of this project have included findings predicated on both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the findings outlined in this report are purely quantitative. This approach was largely driven by the evaluation questions being answered. Analyses highlighted in this report fall within two general categories:

1. *Descriptive Analyses.* Information related to grantee, center, and student characteristics obtained from PARS21, the staff survey, and the ETRS reports were analyzed descriptively to explore the range of variation on a given characteristic. Some of the leading indicators also were calculated employing descriptive analysis techniques.
2. *Analyses to Create Scale Scores.* Many questions appearing on the staff and youth surveys and that were represented in the ETRS reports were part of a series of questions designed to assess an underlying construct/concept, resulting in a single scale score summarizing performance on a given area of practice or facet of afterschool implementation (e.g., practices that support linkages to the school day). An example is shown Figure 1, which outlines the questions making up the *Intentionality Program Design* scale that appeared on the staff survey.

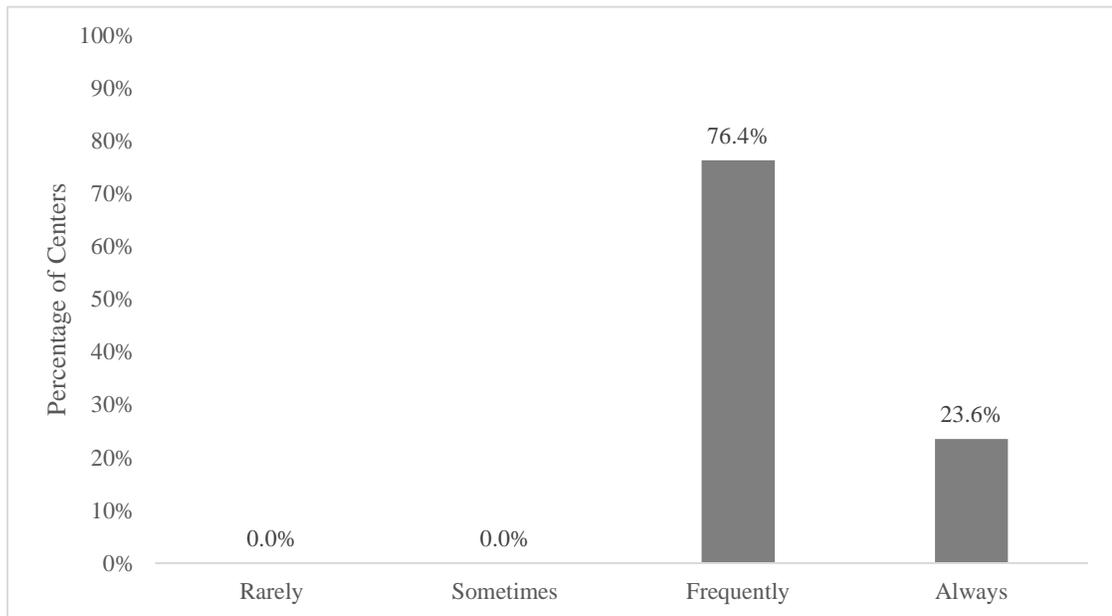
**Figure 1. Example of a Survey Scale Calibrated Using Rasch Techniques**

<b>How often do you lead or participate in program activities that are...</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Always</b>
a. Based on written plans for the session, assignments, and projects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Well planned in advance?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Tied to specific learning goals?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Meant to build upon skills cultivated in a prior activity or session?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Explicitly meant to promote skill building and mastery in relation to one or more state standard?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Explicitly meant to address a specific developmental domain (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional, civic, physical, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Structured to respond to youth feedback on what the content or format of the activity should be?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Informed by the expressed interests, preferences, and/or satisfaction of participating youth?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For scales like this, Rasch scale scores were created using staff member and project director responses to a series of questions to create one overall score. These scale scores ranged from 0 to 100, where higher scores were indicative of a higher level or more frequent adoption of a specific quality practice or set of practices. Center-level scale scores derived from the ETRS reports represented responses from one respondent, most likely the project director, while scale scores based on staff survey data represented the average of scale scores for all staff respondents who took the survey associated with a given center. A similar approach was taken with youth survey scale scores as well.

Scale scores resulting from the application of Rasch approaches also can be used to classify what portion of the rating scale the average scale score fell within. For example, the statewide mean value for the *Intentionality in Program Design* scale highlighted in Figure 1 was 73.08, which put the statewide average in the *frequently* range of the scale, indicating the typical staff member responding to the survey reported engaging in these practices on a frequent basis. As shown in Figure 2, this approach also allowed the evaluation team to explore the distribution of centers in light of what response option their average scale score put them in. As shown in Figure 2, 76 percent of centers had an average scale score that put them in the *frequently* range of the scale.

**Figure 2. Distribution of Average Center Scale Score on the Intentionality in Program Design Scale by Response Option**



Source: Data from 935 staff survey responses associated with 106 centers were used.

The primary benefit of this approach is the capacity to distill responses from several questions down into one overall score for the center, simplifying the process of interpreting how a center did on a given element of quality, particularly in relation to other programs in the state.

### **Limitations and Challenges**

It is important to note that there are a number of limitations associated with the methods employed to support the evaluation. The primary limitation of the results highlighted in this report relate to the fact that most of the data sources employed to answer the evaluation questions outlined are predicated to some extent on self-reported data provided by 21st CCLC grantee staff members. This characteristic of most of the data analyzed likely led to the introduction of some level of error into the process predicated on the following:

- **Imperfect Recall and Motivation.** The staff survey, youth survey, ETRS reports, and even PARS21 contained items that required respondents to mentally review events, conversations, practices, and experiences that took place during the course of a school year and then decide which rating scale option best summarized their perceptions. It is likely that some respondents were more adept at this than others and that some responses were better than others. Similarly, some respondents were likely more motivated than others were to be diligent as they selected a response—investing time and making more efforts to recall events.
- **Social Desirability.** Anyone reading the items appearing on each of the measures employed as part of the evaluation could quite easily select a response that would indicate a high level of functioning on the program implementation element under consideration. Respondents motivated to put their program’s best foot forward may have been apt to

choose a favorable response—one that reported a higher level of functioning than was actually the case—thereby biasing the estimate of 21st CCLC program implementation derived from their responses.

Despite these potential error sources, the analyses undertaken here simply make use of the data available, even while attempting to continuously improve the quality of the data received. During the course of the past several years, AIR staff, along with staff from NJDOE, have worked with grantees to help them understand the importance of submitting and maintaining high-quality data, which hopefully has helped to increase the overall accuracy and completeness of the data used in the evaluation. This effort is ongoing.

## Chapter 3. Grantee, Center, and Student Characteristics

Programs funded by 21st CCLC grants are often characterized by a wide diversity of approaches, student populations, and types of organizations involved in providing 21st CCLC programming. This chapter summarizes the characteristics of grantees, centers, and students associated with 21st CCLC programs active during the 2014–15 school year. Overall, there were 50 grantees operating 124 centers (although data were available for only 116) serving 15,049 youth.<sup>6</sup>

### Grantee Characteristics

This section contains information on key grantee characteristics. As used here, the term *grantee* refers to the organization that serves as the fiduciary agent on the grant in question, whether it is a school district, community-based organization, or other entity and whether it is ultimately responsible for administering grant funds at the program level.

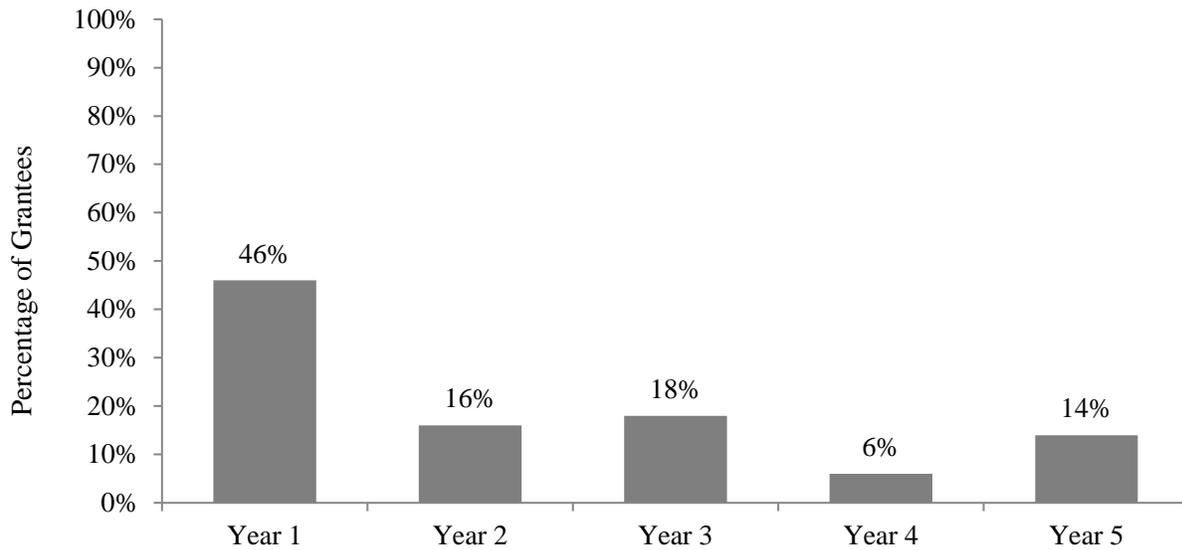
### Grantee Maturity

With respect to program quality, how programs evolve during the grant period is increasingly receiving attention. For example, grantees may find themselves needing to emphasize some elements of their programs and reducing or eliminating others in response to changes in the students served. In addition, the hope is that grantees over time would learn how to (1) provide more effective and engaging programming for youth and (2) more meaningfully embed academic content into their program offerings in ways that address the needs of the students they are serving. As shown in Figure 3, the majority of the grants active during the 2014–15 school year were in Year 1 of funding. Given that 21st CCLC grants in New Jersey are made for five years, many of the programs active during this period could be considered new, focusing their efforts on getting their programs up and running smoothly and learning how to navigate and troubleshoot the requirements of a 21st CCLC grant.

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<sup>6</sup> Note that the number of sites and centers include those that may not have operated the full year.

**Figure 3. Number of Grantees by Year of Operation**

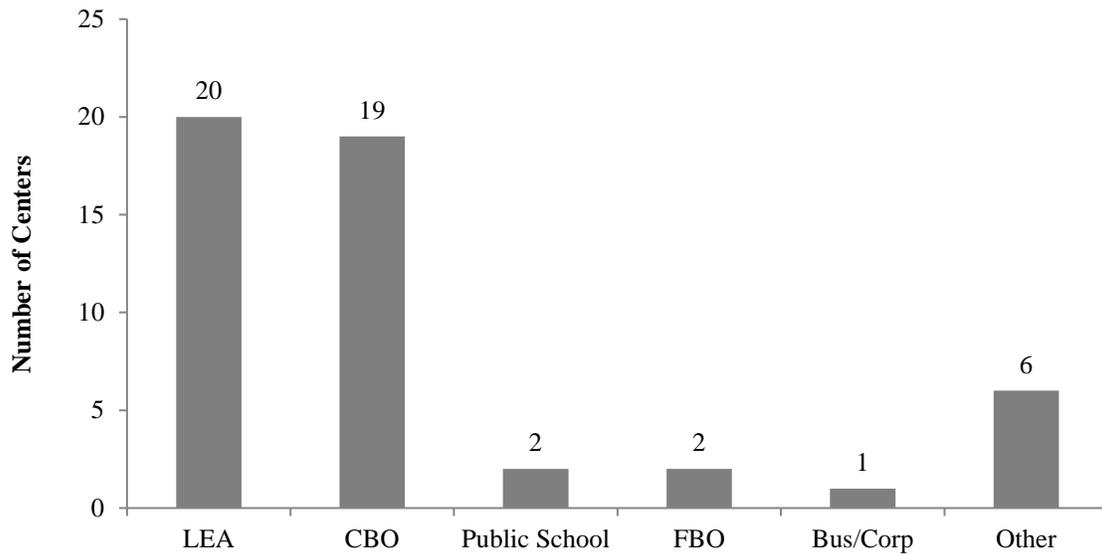


Source: PARS21.

### **Grantee Organization Type**

One of the interesting elements of the 21st CCLC program is that all types of organizations are eligible to apply for and receive 21st CCLC grants. As shown in Figure 4, 40 percent of grants active during the 2014–15 school year were held by school districts, and community-based organizations accounted for slightly less than 40 percent of the grants active during this period. All told, 18 percent of the grants were held by faith-based organizations, public schools, businesses/corporations, and other entities, including colleges and universities.

**Figure 4. Number of Grantees by Organization Type**



n = 50 grantees

Source: PARS21.

## Key Center Characteristics

This section presents key center characteristic data. It is important to note that in this report, the term *center* is used to refer to the physical location where 21st CCLC–funded services and activities take place. Centers are characterized by defined hours of operation, have dedicated staff members, and have a site coordinator to manage operations at the center. Each 21st CCLC grantee in New Jersey has at least one center; many grantees have more than one center.

In addition, center characteristics can be described either as indicative of research-supported best practices or as innate attributes of the center in question without a strong connection to the afterschool quality practice literature. Center characteristics indicative of the latter might include the grade level served, program maturity, and organizational type. For example, identifying a program as one that serves only elementary students says nothing about the quality of that program.

Other characteristics at a site, such as the staffing model, are still somewhat ambiguous when viewed from a quality practice standpoint, with the literature less clear on the superiority of certain staffing approaches. From a policy standpoint, NJDOE considers certain approaches to staffing for certain types of activities to be appropriate from a quality standpoint—namely, that certified teachers should staff academic programming provided in the afterschool program.

## Staffing Clusters and Ratios

Like their counterparts nationally, programs funded by 21st CCLC in New Jersey employ a variety of staff members, including academic teachers, nonacademic teachers, college and high

school students, counselors, paraprofessionals from the school day, and other program staff members with a wide spectrum of backgrounds and training. To more effectively summarize the different staffing models employed by centers during the 2014–15 school year, an effort was made to classify centers into groups or clusters using cluster analysis techniques, based on the extent to which they relied upon different categories of staff to deliver programming during the school year in question. In this instance, the variables used to create the clusters represented the percentage of total paid staff members who were academic teachers, nonacademic teachers, counselors, and other staff members working at a center during the school year. Data used to construct these variables were obtained from PARS21.<sup>7</sup> As shown in Figure 5, five primary staffing models were identified:

- *Centers staffed mostly by teachers.* On average, 95 percent of the staff members associated with centers in this cluster were academic teachers.
- *Centers staffed by mostly nonacademic teachers and teachers.* This cluster reported having 60 percent nonacademic teachers as staff and 19 percent academic teachers.
- *Centers staffed mostly by program staff members.*<sup>8</sup> On average, 86 percent of the staff members associated with centers in this cluster were classified as program staff members, and 17 percent were teachers.
- *Centers staffed by mostly paraprofessionals and teachers.* On average, 65 percent of the staff members associated with centers in this cluster were paraprofessionals, and 21 percent were academic teachers.
- *Centers staffed by college students.* College students represented 100 percent of staff in this cluster.

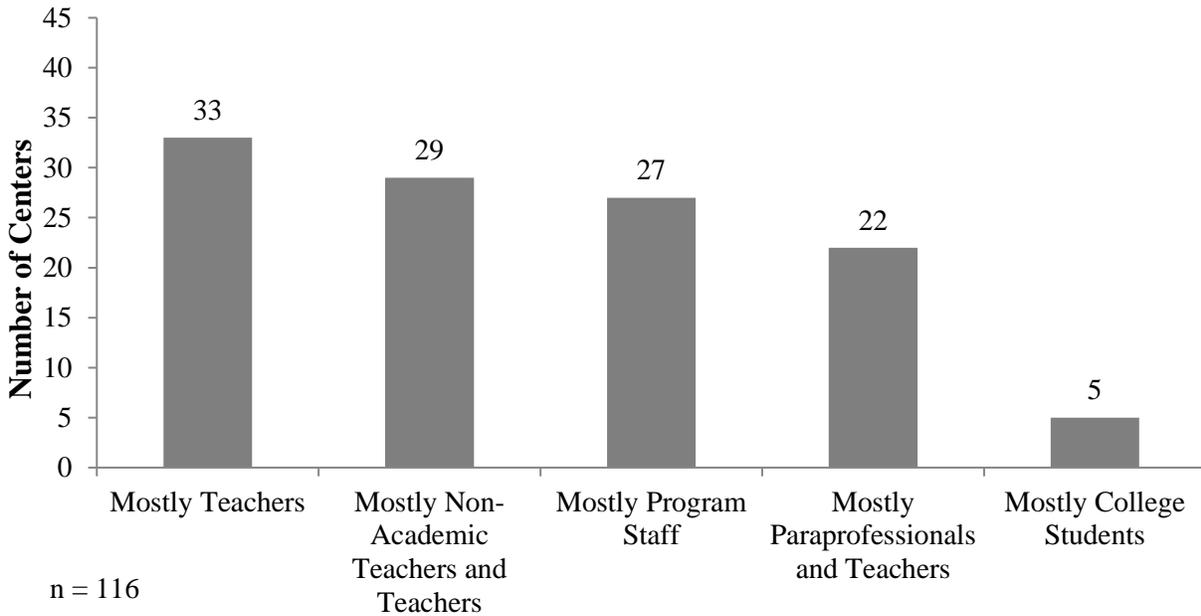
Overall, centers were most apt to be classified in either the *Mostly Teachers* or *Mostly Nonacademic Teachers and Teachers* staffing model.

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<sup>7</sup> Only staff records associated with each center's offered activity sessions were used in this analysis.

<sup>8</sup> *Program Staff* is one of the options that can be selected in PARS21 when selecting the *Staff Type*.

**Figure 5. Number of Centers by Staffing Cluster Type**



Source: PARS21.

In addition to exploring the various approaches to staffing employed by centers during the 2014–15 school year, an effort was made to calculate the average student-to-staff ratio associated with activity sessions provided during the span of the school year in question. As shown in Table 1, the average student-to-staff ratio was found to be approximately one staff member for every 11–12 youth participating in specific activities, although across centers the span of ratios was quite broad, ranging from just under two students to approximately 33.

**Table 1. Average Student-Teacher Ratio per Center, 2014–15**

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
2014–15 student-staff ratio	116	1.81	32.64	11.49	5.34

Source: PARS21.

### Participation in Reading and Mathematics Activities

Another approach to examining students’ participation in 21st CCLC programming offered during the span of the 2014–15 reporting period is to explore the extent to which students participated in activities that were meant to support skill building in mathematics and reading, regardless of activity type (e.g., enrichment, tutoring). As mentioned earlier, one of the central goals of the 21st CCLC program is to support student growth and development in reading and mathematics. As outlined in Table 2, students on average participated in approximately 29 hours of reading/literacy programming during the 2014–15 reporting period and 26 hours of mathematics programming. These hours were calculated using activity attendance data reported

by the grantees in PARS21 (reported at the session level for each individual student), along with data concerning the subjects targeted by each activity. Activity records reported in PARS21 include session duration, which enables student-level calculation of participation in reading/literacy or mathematics.

**Table 2. Average Number of Hours in Reading and Mathematics per Student, 2014–15**

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
2014–15 reading/literacy education activities	15,049	0.75	101	29.16	25.23
2014–15 mathematics education activities	15,049	0.25	54	25.68	19.68

Source: PARS21.

### Grade Levels Served

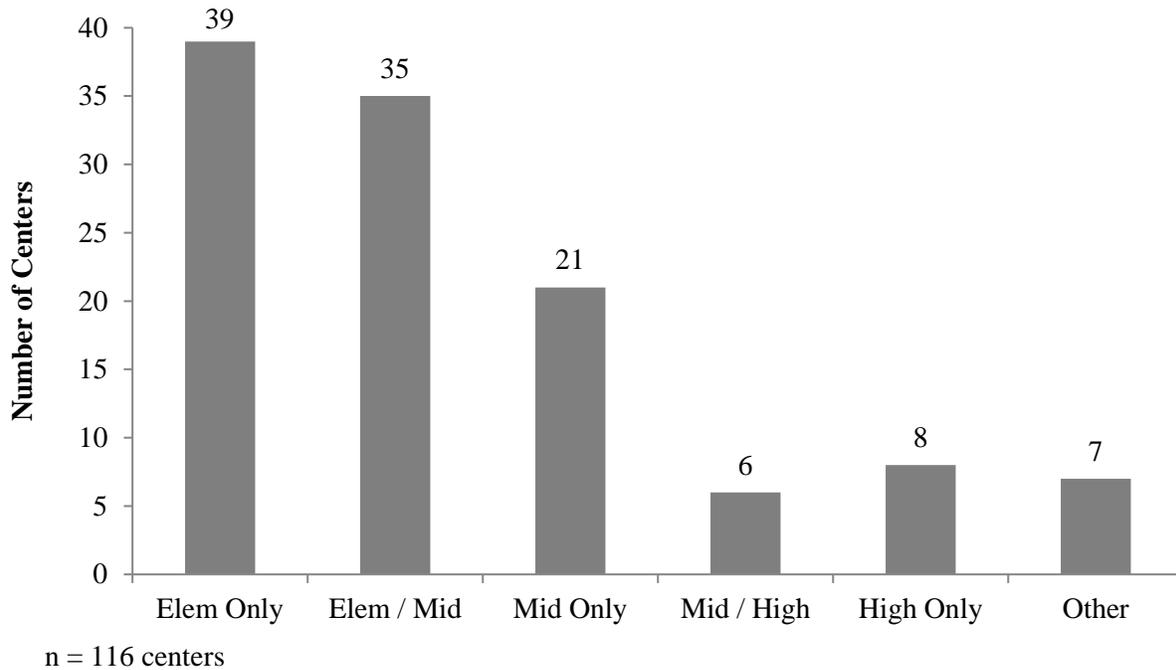
A topic garnering increasing attention on the federal stage relates to the role grade level plays in terms of (1) how 21st CCLC programs should structure their operations and program offerings and (2) the domain of outcomes they should be accountable for through performance indicator systems. Using student-level data about the grade levels of students attending centers, centers active during the 2014–15 school year were classified as follows:

- *Elementary Only*, defined as those centers serving students up to Grade 6.
- *Elementary/Middle*, defined as those centers serving students up to Grade 8.
- *Middle Only*, defined as those centers serving students in Grades 5–8.
- *Middle-High*, defined as those centers serving students in Grades 5–12.
- *High Only*, defined as those centers serving students in Grades 9–12.

A sixth category, called *Other*, includes centers that did not fit one of the five categories and includes centers that served students across all three grade levels or some other combination of grade levels.

The *High Only* category is especially important to analyze because afterschool programming for older students often looks considerably different from programming for elementary or middle school students (Naftzger et al., 2007). In addition, high school students have different needs from younger students, and they often have other afternoon obligations, such as jobs or extracurricular activities. As shown in Figure 6, the bulk of the centers active during the 2014–15 school year served elementary or middle school students in some capacity.

**Figure 6. Number of Centers by Grade Level Served**



Source: PARS21.

### Student Characteristics

During the course of the 2014–15 school year, 15,049 students participated at some level (i.e., attended programming for at least one day during the school year) in 21st CCLC programming at 116 active centers for which we had data during this period.<sup>9</sup> This population was diverse, as shown in Table 3. Generally, the population of students served during the 2014–15 school year was Black and Hispanic/Latino; was enrolled in elementary or middle school, especially in Grades 4–6; and was eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch programs.

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<sup>9</sup> One hundred sixteen centers active during the 2014–15 school year were found to have student-level attendance records in PARS21, confirming participation in actual activity sessions during the span of the school year.

**Table 3. Summary of Demographic Information for Students, 2014–15**

	Demographic Category	2014–15	
		Number of Students	Percentage
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	White	2,199	14.6%
	Black	4,820	32.0%
	Hispanic/Latino	6,592	43.8%
	Asian	386	2.6%
	Native American	44	0.3%
	Pacific Islander	26	0.2%
	Unknown	982	6.5%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	7,705	51.2%
	Female	7,344	48.8%
<b>Grade Level</b>	4	2,853	19.0%
	5	2,489	16.5%
	6	2,501	16.6%
	7	1,940	12.9%
	8	1,821	12.1%
	9	907	6.0%
	10	735	4.9%
	11	627	4.2%
	12	331	2.2%
<b>Free or Reduced-Price Lunch</b>	Reduced	1,105	7.3%
	Free	10,003	66.5%
	Not available	3,941	26.2%

Source: PARS21.

### Student Attendance Levels

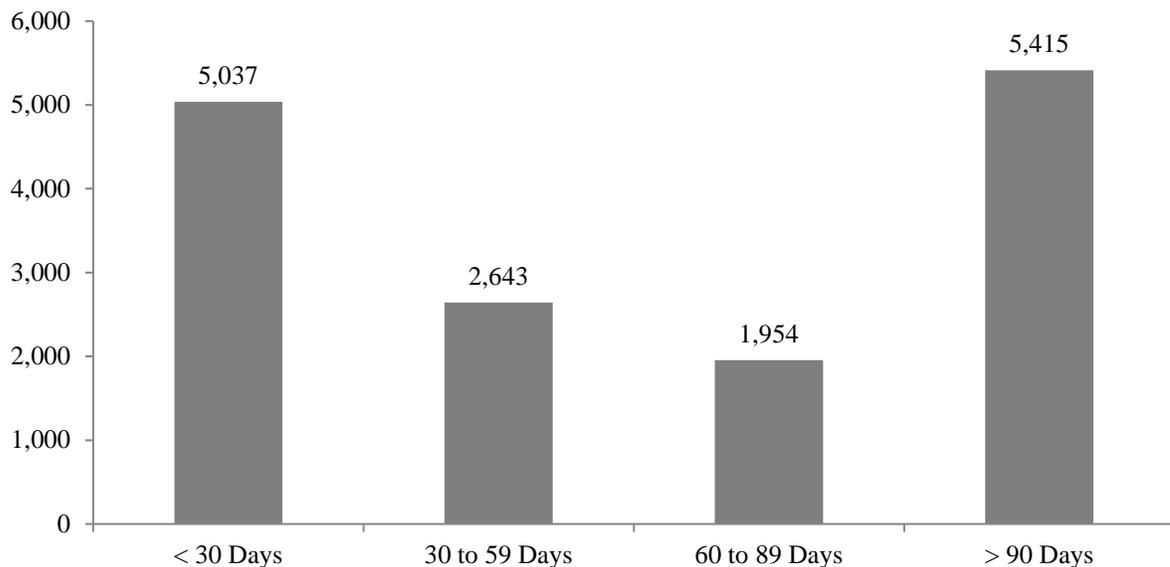
Attendance is an intermediate outcome indicator that reflects the potential breadth and depth of exposure to afterschool programming. In this regard, attendance can be considered in terms of the (1) total number of students who participated in the center’s programming throughout the course of the year and (2) frequency and intensity with which students attended programming when it was offered. The former number can be used as a measure of the breadth of a center’s reach, whereas the latter can be construed as a measure of how successful the center was in retaining students in center-provided services and activities.

Among students participating in activities during the 2014–15 school year, the average number of days attending 21st CCLC programming was 66. In Figure 7, the student population served during the 2014–15 school year is broken down into four attendance gradations—the percentage of students attending fewer than 30 days, those students attending 30 to 59 days, those students

attending 60 to 89 days, and those students attending 90 days or more. As shown in Figure 7, one third of the students (33.5 percent) attended fewer than 30 days, a level consistent with previous years, and slightly less than one half participated for 90 days or more (40 percent), which is consistent with what has been witnessed in prior years.

To demonstrate program impact, one would hope that there would be a positive relationship between higher levels of attendance in the program and the likelihood that students witnessed gains in student achievement and behavioral outcomes. We certainly have seen evidence of this fact through data collected nationally through the Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS), especially for elementary students (Naftzger, Vinson, & Swanlund, 2011), though this finding will need to be verified through further impact analysis. Here the results were likewise promising. For the 30+ day group, participants on average had a truancy rate .868 times that of nonparticipants, while the 70+ day group had an average truancy rate .760 times that of nonparticipants.

**Figure 7. Number of Students Served in 21st CCLC by Attendance Gradation**



n = 15,049 students

Source: PARS21.

In addition to levels of program attendance during the course of the 2014–15 school year, we were interested in exploring the extent to which students participating during this period had been attending the program at a given center for more than the school year in question. Hypothetically, it would be expected that a higher number of years of continuous participation in the program would be associated with a greater degree of improvement on the outcomes of interest in this report. However, as shown in Table 4, for the vast majority of students (nearly 70 percent), the 2014–15 school year represented the first year they participated in 21st CCLC programming at the center in question; approximately 21 percent were in their second year of participation during the 2014–15 school year. Three or more years of continuous participation was found to be relatively rare.

**Table 4. Continuous Years of Student Participation, 2014–15**

	2014-15	
	Number of Students	Percentage
1 year	10,468	69.7%
2 years	3,131	20.8%
3 years	1,083	7.2%
4 years	289	1.9%
5 years	49	0.3%
6 years	2	0.0%
7 years	0	0.0%
8 years	1	0.0%

Note: Prior year records were matched to 15,023 students using statewide student identifiers (SSIDs). One year of continuous participation, for example, indicates that a given student is either in his or her first year of programming during the 2014–15 school year or that there was an interruption in participation prior to the 2014–15 school year.

Source: PARS21.

### **Student Attendance Profiles**

An effort was made to determine the extent to which students participated in different types of activities during the school year. To achieve this outcome, we again employed *k*-means clustering to identify the most dominant student activity profile types within the population of students served during the school year in question.

The first step in this process was to identify for each student what percentage of his or her time in 21st CCLC was spent in each of the following types of activities:

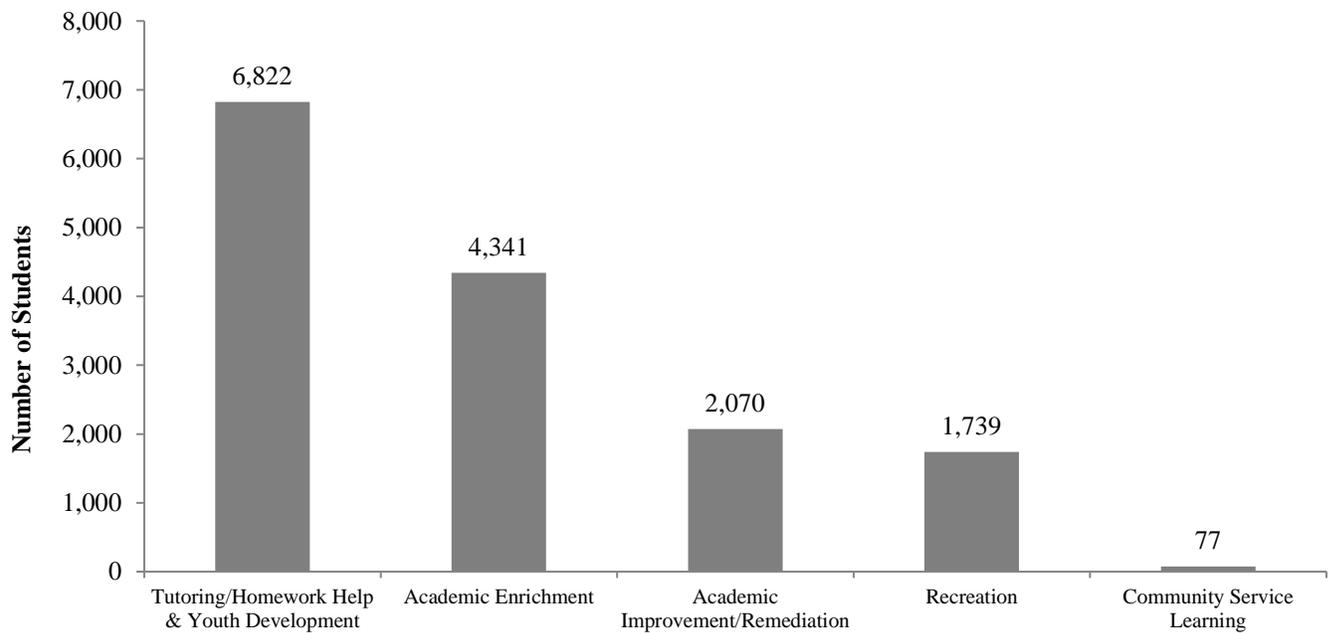
1. Academic improvement/remediation
2. Academic enrichment
3. Tutoring/homework help
4. Mentoring
5. Drug and violence prevention counseling
6. Expanded library service hours
7. Recreational activities
8. Career/job training
9. Supplemental educational services
10. Community service learning programs
11. Character education
12. Youth development/learning activities

Using these activities, five clusters were identified, each characterized by a dominance of one activity type:

- *Mostly Tutoring/Homework Help & Youth Development*, characterized by an average of 52 percent of time spent in academic improvement/remediation
- *Mostly Academic Enrichment*, characterized by an average of 54 percent of time spent in tutoring/homework help
- *Mostly Academic Improvement/Remediation*, characterized by an average of 66 percent of time spent in enrichment activities
- *Mostly Recreation*, characterized by an average of 64 percent time spent in community service activities
- *Mostly Community Service/Service Learning*, characterized by an average of 93 percent of time spent in recreational activities

The number of students in each cluster is presented in Figure 8. The largest cluster, roughly twice as large as any of the others, is the *Mostly Tutoring/Homework Help & Youth Development* cluster. Note, however, that the average percentage of time spent on tutoring activities within this cluster was somewhat modest, at 52 percent. This, however, is a higher average for this cluster than observed in previous years; for example, it was 48 percent in 2011–12, 40 percent in 2012–13, and 35 percent in 2013–14.

**Figure 8. Students by Activity Cluster**



n=15,049 students

Source: PARS21.

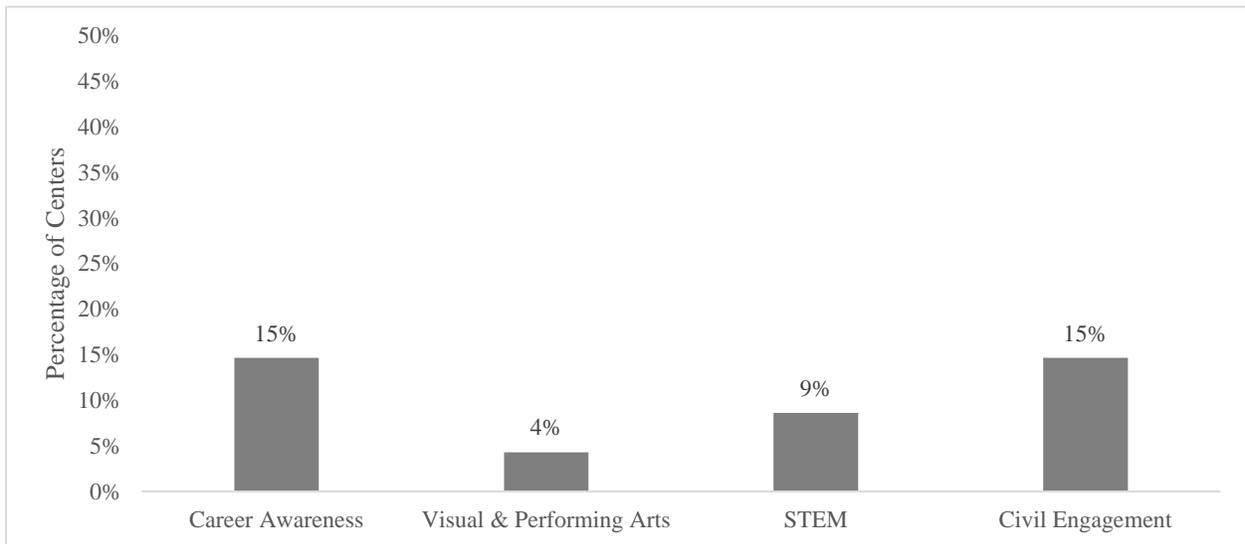
## Activity Themes

During the course of the 2014–15 school year, NJDOE also required grantees in Cohort 7 to adopt one or more of the following themes when providing activities, while grantees funded in previous cohorts were afforded the option of selecting a theme but were not required to do so. Themes were to be selected based on the students’ needs, interests, and developmental age and were meant to further support targeted skill building and development through the provision of activities youth would especially find engaging.

- Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)
- Career awareness and exploration
- Civic engagement
- Visual and performing arts

Forty-two percent of centers active during the 2014–15 school year were found to have provided activity sessions associated with one or more of the aforementioned themes, based on data reported in PARS21. As shown in Figure 9, 15 percent of centers adopted a career awareness theme, four percent a visual arts theme, nine percent a STEM theme, and 15 percent focused on civic engagement.

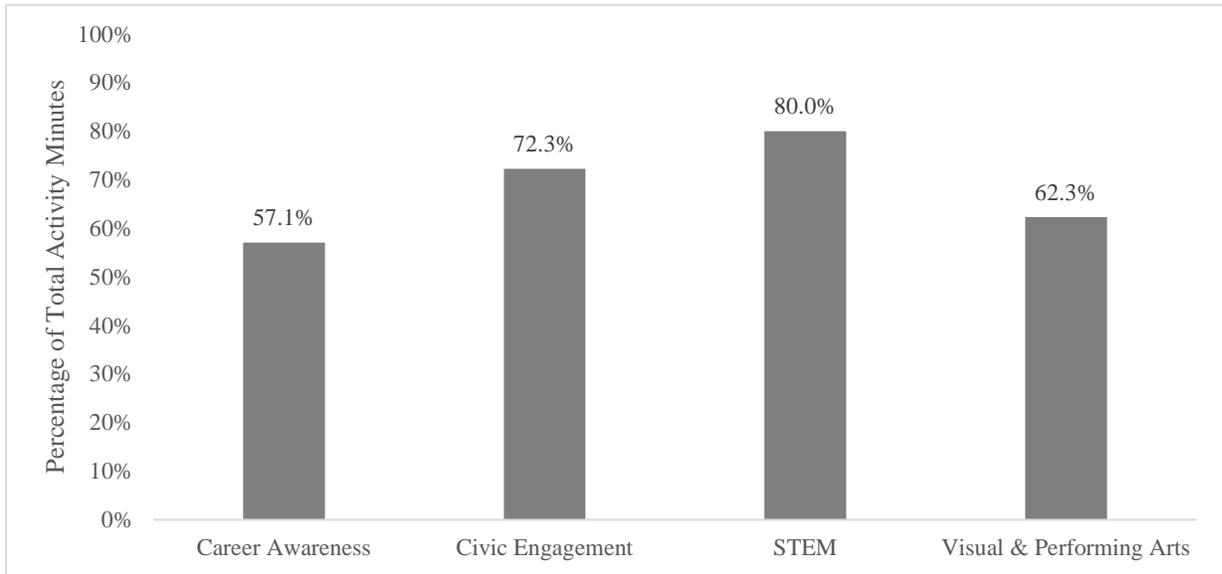
**Figure 9. Percentage of Centers by Primary Theme**



Source: PARS21. Based on 116 centers.

As shown in Figure 10, centers on average spend anywhere from between 57 percent and 80 percent of their total activity minutes for the 2014–15 school year providing activities consistent with their selected theme. Although fewer centers appear to be providing activities by theme, those that do seem to be providing a significant portion of their time within that theme.

**Figure 10. Percentage of Total Activity Minutes Dedicated to Selected Theme by Theme Type**



Source: PARS21.

## Chapter 4. Leading Indicators

A primary goal of the statewide evaluation was to provide 21st CCLC grantees with data to inform program improvement efforts regarding their implementation of research-supported best practices. AIR and NJDOE worked collaboratively to define a series of leading indicators predicated on data collected as part of the statewide evaluation. The leading indicators were meant to enhance existing information and data available to 21st CCLC grantees regarding how they fared in the adoption of program strategies and approaches associated with high-quality afterschool programming. Specifically, the leading indicator system was designed to:

- Summarize data collected as part of the statewide evaluation in terms of how well the grantee and its respective sites are adopting research-supported best practices.
- Allow grantees to compare their level of performance on leading indicators with similar programs and statewide averages.
- Facilitate internal discussions about areas of program design and delivery that might warrant additional attention from a program improvement perspective.

Predicated on the data collected from the staff surveys, the ETRS midyear report, and PARS21, the leading indicator system is focused on *quality program implementation* as opposed to youth or program outcomes. The midyear report is designed to consolidate and report on the data collected as part of the basic operation of the program (like PARS21 data, for example). The report is also designed to provide information on the data describing program evaluation efforts regarding the adoption of research-supported practices so that programs can identify strengths and weaknesses and reflect on areas of program design and delivery in need of further growth and development. More consistent implementation of research-supported best practices will theoretically support the attainment of desired youth and program outcomes.

### The Leading Indicator Redesign and Current Presentation

As part of the overall data-collection redesign undertaken during 2014–15 and 2015–16, the leading indicators were modified. Based on grantee, Evaluation Advisory Group, and NJDOE feedback, as well as analyses conducted by AIR, the old leading indicators were changed in two general ways:

1. **Reduced.** AIR removed ten indicators that had been made obsolete through subsequent program changes, were largely unused, or were predicated on data that could be better obtained elsewhere. This reduction serves to highlight the indicators that remain. Indicators that were retained (a total of 12) were also those that held up as part of the 2012 impact analysis that investigated correlations between indicator values and desired participant outcomes.
2. **Reorganized.** The previous leading indicator structure was based on two different frameworks: (1) program level (organizational processes, quality at the point of service, and participation and engagement) and (2) domain of quality practice (academic development, youth development, parent engagement, partner engagement, and program

improvement). In place of this structure, the indicators have been organized in a simpler format around *general program* indicators and *activity-related* indicators. This new structure will hopefully be simpler and clearer for grantees.

In the sections that follow, statewide levels of leading indicator performance are summarized according to the revised structure. Note, however, that despite using the revised indicator format for presentation here, the indicators have not at this point been thoroughly revised in terms of selected performance thresholds. For this reason, some indicators shown here may undergo revision in terms of presentation for future reports.

## General Program Indicators

General program indicators are those that relate to program practices at the general or program level but that may have a strong effect on participant experience. Programs characterized by a supportive and collaborative climate permit staff to engage in self-reflective practice to improve overall program quality, and, as noted by Smith (2007), Glisson (2007), and Birmingham et al. (2005), an organizational climate that supports staff in reflecting on and continually improving program quality is a key aspect of effective youth-development programs. Further, research suggests that youth achievement outcome improvement can be supported by simply paying attention to *how* programming is delivered (Birmingham et al., 2005; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). These indicators, therefore, provide information on program internal communication, links to the school day, collaboration with school partners, and staff commitment to quality at the point of service. The indicator values are presented in Table 5.

Overall, the results presented in Table 5 show:

- The average statewide scale score for internal communication fell within the *once a month* response category (scale response options included *never*, *a couple of times per year*, *about once a month*, and *nearly every week*), suggesting that the assessed collaborative efforts were frequently implemented during the 2014–15 programming period (Leading Indicator 1).
- Centers tended to have at least some access to school-based data on youth academic functioning and needs (Leading Indicator 2).
- In terms of program staff collaborating with school personnel to adopt practices that are supportive of academic skill building, including linkages to the school day and using data on youth academic achievement to inform programming, the statewide average was 69.2, which indicates that staff *agree* that linkages exist and *occasionally* or *often* use data on youth academic achievement (Leading Indicator 3).
- In terms of activities provided at the point of service meant to support youth development, statewide averages on the *Staff Capacity to Create Interactive and Engaging Environment* scale (the source for Leading Indicator 4) suggest that staff adoption of such practices is more common than not.

**Table 5. Summary of Statewide Leading Indicator Performance on General Program Indicators**

Leading Indicator	Description and Calculation	Source	Indicator Value, 2014–15
<p>Leading Indicator 1 (previously 11): Internal Communication—Staff communicate with other program staff to enhance internal collaboration toward continuous program improvement.</p>	<p>Each site received a score on a 0 to 100 scale, based on mean responses provided to questions related to the degree of communication and collaboration reported in relation to questions on the staff survey.</p>	<p>Responses to questions, which appear in the <i>Internal Communication and Collaboration</i> scale of the staff survey.</p>	<p>The statewide mean scale score was 62.0, which was within the <i>once a month</i> portion of the scale.</p>
<p>Leading Indicator 2: Link to School Day—Program staff take steps to establish effective linkages to the school day that inform the design and delivery of program activities meant to support youth academic growth and development.</p>	<p>Each site received a score on a 0 to 100 scale, based on responses provided to questions related to the degree to which strategies were adopted to support the academic development of participating youth that appeared on the midyear version of the evaluation template.</p>	<p>Responses to the following questions, which appeared in the <i>Improve Student Academic Achievement</i> section of the ETRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How did the program obtain student information? How accessible was this information, and how often was it used?</li> <li>▪ What strategies did you use to link the program to the regular school day?</li> <li>▪ What strategies were your staff members using to communicate with classroom teachers, and how frequently were they being used?</li> </ul>	<p>The statewide mean scale score was 49.8, which meant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information on student academic performance was <i>rarely or occasionally used</i>.</li> <li>▪ Linking with the school day was <i>somewhat of a strategy</i> to a <i>major strategy</i>.</li> <li>▪ Communication with school-day teachers occurred <i>once per grading period to monthly</i>.</li> </ul>

Leading Indicator	Description and Calculation	Source	Indicator Value, 2014–15
<p>Leading Indicator 3 (previously 19): Collaboration with school partners— Program staff collaborate with school personnel to adopt practices that are supportive of academic skill building, including linkages to the school day and using data on youth academic achievement to inform programming.</p>	<p>Each site will received a score on a 0 to 100 scale, based on mean responses provided to questions related to linkages to the school day and using data on student academic achievement to inform programming that appeared on the staff survey.</p>	<p>Responses to questions, which appear in the <i>Linkages to the School Day</i> and <i>Using Data on Student Academic Achievement</i> to inform programming scales of the staff survey.</p>	<p>The statewide mean scale score was 69.2, which meant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Staff <i>agree</i> that linkages to the school-day exist.</li> <li>▪ Staff typically use data on students’ academic needs <i>occasionally/often</i>.</li> </ul>
<p>Leading Indicator 4 (previously 16): Quality at Point of Service— Staff are committed to creating interactive and engaging settings for youth.</p>	<p>Each site received a score on a 0 to 100 scale, based on responses provided to questions related to the degree of <i>Staff Capacity to Create Interactive and Engaging</i> settings for youth.</p>	<p>Responses to questions, which appear in the <i>Staff Capacity to Create Interactive and Engaging Environment</i> scale of the staff survey.</p>	<p>The statewide mean scale score was 78.1, which was within the <i>Agree</i> portion of the scale indicating that staff believe their peers largely provide these opportunities to participating youth.</p>

## Activity-Related Indicators

Activity-related indicators relate to actual activity provision and as such relate directly to participant experience in 21st CCLC programming. These indicators are subdivided into three groups:

1. Indicators related to mathematics and language arts
2. Indicators related to social and emotional development
3. Indicators related to parent or guardian involvement

The state-level indicator results are presented in this section according to these categories, with a table and summary points provided for each subset.

With respect to mathematics and language arts activity provision, each of the programs funded by a 21st CCLC grant of course has the express goal of improving youth achievement outcomes. As already noted, there are general program practices important to achieving this goal, but program sites will be more apt to accomplish this goal if the 21st CCLC staff working directly with youth provide activities intentionally meant to support academic learning in some way and if youth actually attend such activities on a consistent and ongoing basis. The indicators in this section, therefore, focus on such activity provision as well as participation in these activities.

Overall:

- A statewide average of about 20 percent of activity sessions had either a mathematics or a language arts focus (Leading Indicator 5).
- Statewide, approximately half of all regular attendees participated in mathematics or language arts activities for at least half their activity time (Leading Indicator 7).
- Frequent intentionality in the design of activity sessions in terms of the skills and knowledge they were trying to impart to participating youth (Leading Indicator 6).

See Table 6 for complete indicator results relating to mathematics and language arts activities.

**Table 6. Summary of Statewide Leading Indicator Performance on Activity-Related Indicators  
Associated With Mathematics and Language Arts**

Leading Indicator	Description and Calculation	Source	Indicator Value, 2014–15
<i>Mathematics &amp; Language Arts</i>			
<p>Leading Indicator 5: 21st Century Skills—A meaningful level of activity sessions delivered during the first semester of the school year are intentionally meant to support youth growth and development in either mathematics or reading/English and are led by a certified teacher.</p>	<p>Using data collected in PARS21 in relation to student attendance in activities with either a mathematics or reading/English focus, what proportion of activity sessions delivered during the school year were intentionally meant to support student growth and development in either mathematics or reading/English and are led by a certified teacher?</p>	<p>Activity detail and attendance pages in PARS21.</p>	<p>Statewide, an average of 19.6 percent of activity sessions offered during 2014–15 met these criteria. A total of 102 centers (94.4 percent of centers with indicator data) had at least some activities that intentionally targeted mathematics and/or language arts.</p>
<p>Leading Indicator 6 (previously 18): Common Core—Staff design and deliver intentional and relevant activities designed to support youth growth and development in mathematics and reading/language arts.</p>	<p>Each site received a score on a 0 to 100 scale, based on mean responses provided to questions related to the degree of intentionality in activity and session design that appeared on the staff survey.</p>	<p>Responses to questions, which appeared in the <i>Intentionality in Activity and Session Design</i> scale of the staff survey.</p>	<p>The statewide mean scale score was 73.1, which was in the <i>Frequently</i> portion of the scale indicating that the adoption of these practices by staff is common.</p>

Leading Indicator	Description and Calculation	Source	Indicator Value, 2014–15
<p>Leading Indicator 7 (previously 21): Common Core Skills—Youth enrolled in the program participate in a meaningful level of activities designed to support youth growth in reading and mathematics achievement.</p>	<p>Using data collected in PARS21 in relation to student attendance in activities with either a mathematics or reading/language arts focus, students participating in 21st CCLC programming for more than 30 days during the school year will have participated in activities that were intentionally meant to support student growth and development in mathematics and reading/language arts for at least 50 percent of their total time in the program.</p>	<p>Activity detail and attendance pages in PARS21.</p>	<p>Statewide, an average of 51.4 percent of students participating in programming during the 2014–15 school year for more than 30 days met these criteria.</p>

The second set of activity-related indicators have to do with social and emotional youth development. Youth development is a multifaceted construct consisting of a series of positive developmental experiences youth have when key supports and opportunities are afforded throughout their participation in youth-serving programs. In high-quality programs, environments are supportive and interactive, and they provide youth with opportunities to experience engagement and ownership of the setting (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Smith & Hohmann, 2005). Additionally, social and emotional learning (SEL) is also an integral component of youth growth and achievement that has been shown to be positively impacted in afterschool settings that promote the development of these skills through the creation of specific conditions for learning (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Afterschool programs that have been shown to be successful in supporting the development of SEL skills integrate opportunities for participants to build on their social and emotional competencies through sequenced activities that are actively engaging and focused on the development of social skills. Ideally, these strategies are based on an understanding of participants' assets and needs garnered through ongoing formal and informal assessment.

As shown in Table 7, the sites operating 21st CCLC programs during the course of the 2014–15 school year were characterized by the following levels of performance on the indicators associated with social and emotional development:

- Statewide, an average of approximately 70 percent of activity sessions offered infused components that were meant to support youth development-related behaviors and SEL (Leading Indicator 8).
- An average of about 78 percent of regular attendees participated for at least 20 percent of their time in activities meant to support youth development-related behaviors and SEL (Leading Indicator 9).
- The *Practices Supportive of Positive Youth Development* and *Opportunities for Youth Ownership* scales of the staff survey (the sources for Leading Indicator 10) suggest, as in previous years, that staff adoption of such practices is more common than not.

See Table 7 for leading indicator values.

**Table 7. Summary of Statewide Leading Indicator Performance on Activity-Related Indicators Associated With Social and Emotional Development**

Leading Indicator	Description and Calculation	Source	Indicator Value, 2014–15
<p>Leading Indicator 8 (previously 9): Social and Emotional Learning—Staff infuse components that are meant to support the social and emotional development of participating youth.</p>	<p>Fields exist in PARS21 that allow users to specify whether an activity is characterized by an infusion of components that are meant to support youth-development-related behaviors and SEL functioning. Users specify what areas of youth development and SEL functioning are being targeted, if any. The goal is to have 20 percent of activity sessions delivered during the school year be characterized by an infusion of components that are meant to support youth development-related behaviors and SEL.</p>	<p>Responses to the following fields in PARS21: Is this activity intentionally designed to support the improvement of youth-development-related behaviors and social-emotional functioning in any of the following areas (check all that apply)?</p>	<p>Statewide, an average of 69.5 percent of activity sessions offered during the 2014–15 school year met these criteria. Nearly all programs (103) had at least some activity sessions relating to youth-development-related behaviors and SEL.</p>
<p>Leading Indicator 9 (previously 20): 21st Century Skills—Youth enrolled in the program participate in a meaningful level of activities designed to support youth development and social and emotional competencies.</p>	<p>Using data collected in PARS21 in relation to student attendance in activities that infused youth development-related and social-emotional components, 50 percent of students participating in 21st CCLC programming for more than 30 days will have participated in activities infused with components that are meant to support youth-development-related behaviors and social-emotional functioning for at least 20 percent of their total time in the program.</p>	<p>Responses to the following fields in PARS21: Is this activity intentionally designed to support the improvement of youth-development-related behaviors and social-emotional functioning in any of the following areas (check all that apply)?</p>	<p>Statewide, an average of 77.7 percent of students participating in programming during the 2014–15 school year for more than 30 days met these criteria.</p>

Leading Indicator	Description and Calculation	Source	Indicator Value, 2014–15
<p>Leading Indicator 10 (previously 17): Youth Development—Staff develop activities that are meant to support youth ownership and other opportunities for positive youth development.</p>	<p>Each site received a score on a 0 to 100 scale, based on responses provided to questions related to the degree to which staff reported adopting practices designed to support youth development and ownership.</p>	<p>Responses to questions, which appear in the <i>Practices Supportive of Positive Youth Development</i> and <i>Opportunities for Youth Ownership</i> scales of the staff survey.</p>	<p>The statewide mean scale score was 69.7, which meant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Select opportunities for youth development were made available <i>regularly</i>.</li> <li>▪ Staff largely <i>agree</i> that youth ownership opportunities are provided.</li> </ul>

The third set of indicators relating to activity provision has to do with parent or guardian involvement. Engaging families in programming and providing family learning events is an important component of the 21st CCLC program. Programs can engage families by communicating with them about site programming and events, collaborating to enhance their child’s educational success, and providing intentional activities meant to both support family involvement and the cultivation of family literacy and related skills. Historically, 21st CCLC programs have witnessed some of their greatest challenges in terms of getting parents and adult family members meaningfully engaged in program offerings and events (Naftzger et al., 2011).

Indicators 11 and 12 relate to programs’ efforts to involve parents or guardians in 21st CCLC programming. Overall:

- In terms of engaging in practices to support and cultivate parent involvement and engagement (Leading Indicator 11), most sites were found to do so just *sometimes* (73 percent of sites fell within this range of the scale), as opposed to *never* (4 percent of sites) or *frequently* (20 percent).
- Only a very small percentage of programs (8 percent) were able to engage parents or other adult family members in activities for at least 15 percent of the youth served in the program during the 2014–15 school year, with adult family members of only 3.2 percent of all program participants attending at least one 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC activity (Leading Indicator 12). Overall, only 40 centers (37 percent) reported activities of this sort.

See Table 8 for a summary of Leading Indicators 11 and 12.

**Table 8. Summary of Statewide Leading Indicator Performance on Activity-Related Indicators Associated With Family Involvement**

Leading Indicator	Description and Calculation	Source	Indicator Value, 2014–15
<p>Leading Indicator 11 (previously 14): Staff and Family Connections—Staff actively engage in practices supportive of parent involvement and engagement meant to support youth growth and academic development.</p>	<p>Each site received a score on a 0 to 100 scale, based on mean responses provided to questions related to the extent to which staff engage in practices supportive of parent involvement and engagement.</p>	<p>Responses to questions, which appear in the <i>Practices Supportive of Parent Involvement and Engagement</i> scale of the staff survey.</p>	<p>The statewide mean scale score was 64.7, which was within the <i>did sometimes</i> portion of the scale.</p>
<p>Leading Indicator 12 (previously 22): Family Involvement—Parents and family members of enrolled youth participate in activities designed to support family engagement and skill building.</p>	<p>Using data collected in PARS21 in relation to parent and adult family member attendance in activities, 15 percent of youth attending programming during the school year had at least one parent or adult family member participate in at least one activity meant to support parental or adult family member involvement or skill building.</p>	<p>Activity detail and attendance pages in PARS21.</p>	<p>Overall, only 3.2 percent of all program participants had at least one parent or adult family member participate in at least one activity. Only 40 programs, or 37 percent of all programs with indicator data, reported activities of this sort.</p>

## Determining Program Improvement Priorities From the Leading Indicators

One goal of the leading indicator system is to help NJDOE make a determination regarding where efforts should be invested to support programs in the adoption of quality afterschool practices. In years past, this has been done using the thresholds set for each indicator. This year, however, given the planned revisions to the thresholds, this section focuses on areas where it seems there is room for growth, basing this on overall percentages or averages without reference to thresholds. In the future, it may make sense to revisit thresholds, but to implement them only if there is compelling reason to think a particular threshold is aligned with best practice.

Generally, then, there was one *type* of indicator where there seemed to be consistent room for growth: That is, indicators predicated on PARS21 activity attendance data (leading indicators 5, 7, and 12):

- Leading Indicator 5, offering activities meant to support student growth in either mathematics or language arts that are led by a certified teacher. Statewide, 19.6 percent of activity sessions offered targeted mathematics and/or reading/English. However, nearly all centers offered at least some activities of this sort (102, or 94.4 percent of all centers with indicator data).
- Leading Indicator 7, youth participate in activities meant to support mathematics and/or language arts. Statewide, an average of 51.4 percent of students participating in programming for at least 30 days during the 2014-15 school year spent at least 50 percent of their time in such activities.
- Leading Indicator 12, parent or family member involvement in activities. Statewide, only 3.2 percent of youth program participants had a parent or family member participate in an activity. Overall, only 40 centers, or 37 percent of centers with indicator data, reported activities of this sort.

These particular indicators have been identified as areas for growth for several years (albeit with reference to thresholds), and is one of the reasons why these particular indicators were retained (since they will likely be helpful to programs in highlighting improvement areas). Whether these current levels are appropriate or do indeed indicate room for improvement may need to be a point of discussion. However, it should also be pointed out that, given all three of these indicators are taken from PARS21 data, these values may to some degree reflect a data-reporting issue rather than a program offering issue. For instance, if a center offers an activity that in fact embeds language arts, but does not report the activity as such, the activity simply would not be counted either for leading indicator 5 or 7. This possibility should be considered, with continued emphasis to grantees concerning the importance of reporting high-quality data.

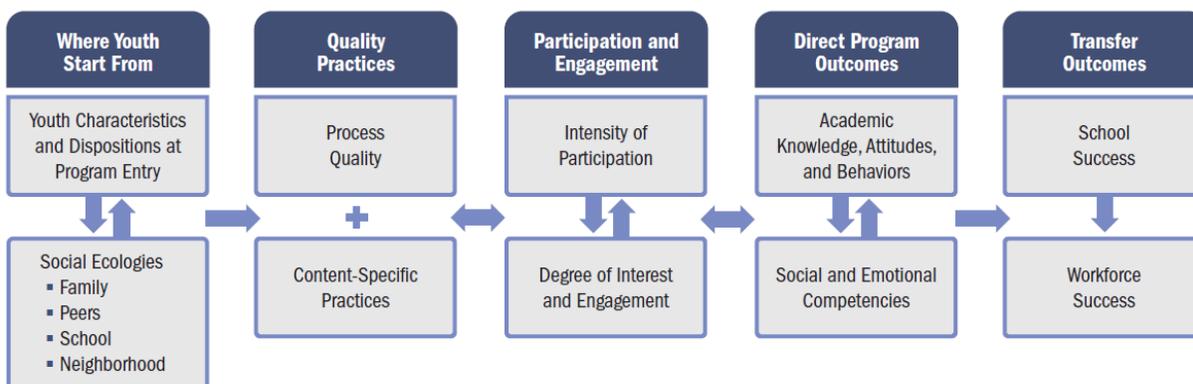
## Chapter 5. Youth Survey Pilot

This section presents information pertaining to a pilot of a youth survey conducted at a subset of New Jersey 21st CCLC sites during spring 2016. The section begins with a conceptual overview explaining why a youth survey is a desirable addition to evaluation data collection, proceeds with an explanation of the youth survey instrument and the pilot, and then presents analysis of the function of the survey scales. The section concludes with a brief summary of important take-aways and steps.

### Background and Conceptual Logic of the Youth Survey

In previous years, the AIR evaluation team has focused on analyzing the impact of New Jersey’s 21st CCLC program by investigating school-related outcomes such as school attendance and assessment results. Although school-related outcomes have been commonly employed to assess the impact of the 21st CCLC on participating youth—and positive impacts have been observed, albeit to varying extent—most 21st CCLC programs across the country implement programming designed to support a broader array of more *immediate* youth development outcomes, including those related to the formation of positive mindsets and beliefs and social and emotional skills and competencies. To place this in context, Figure 11 presents a conceptual framework for how change happens in 21st CCLC programs.

**Figure 11. Conceptual Framework for How Afterschool Programs Can Have an Impact on Youth Participants**



The framework starts with the youth themselves and how they are influenced and supported by the environments in which they live and go to school. Past programming experiences, relations with peers and teachers, the level of interest in programming topics and content, expectations regarding program experience, and the level of choice in attending all have a bearing on how youth will engage in and experience 21st CCLC programming.

After taking into account the predispositions and contextual factors influencing youth before they even enter a program, a number of factors influence the experiences youth have once they are in the program. First, programs must be of high quality to have an impact. Generally, there are two categories of quality: (1) process quality and (2) content-specific practices. Process quality refers to the adoption of practices and approaches to service delivery that result in the creation of a

developmentally appropriate setting for youth, where participants feel safe and supported and are afforded opportunities to form meaningful relationships, experience belonging, and be an active participant in their own learning and development. These practices are universal because they are truly applicable to any type of youth programming, regardless of content, approach, grade level, or setting. Content-specific practices are program practices designed to intentionally cultivate a specific set of skills, beliefs, or knowledge. Often, such practices are closely aligned with the direct outcomes a program is seeking to cultivate in participating youth.

Of course, for youth to benefit from programming, they need to attend programming, ideally at high levels, across multiple years, and in a variety of different types of activity. Being merely present in the program is not enough, however, to ensure that youth will benefit from activities. They also need to experience both engagement and interest during their activities in order to develop the beliefs, skills, and knowledge that can help them in school and beyond. In theory, the extent to which programs effectively adopt both practices related to process quality and content-specific practices should heavily influence the degree of engagement and interest youth experience while participating in 21st CCLC programming. Note that youth surveys can play a key role in exploring youth experiences in programming.

Once youth are engaged and participating, it is expected that they will begin to develop key skills, beliefs, and knowledge based on their participation in program activities. These are termed direct program outcomes in the conceptual framework. Based on AIR's research into 21st CCLC programs during the past decade, direct program outcomes fall into two categories: (1) academic knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors and (2) social and emotional skills and beliefs. These types of skills, beliefs, and knowledge are the most immediate outcomes that can emerge from participation in high-quality afterschool programs. That is, youth growth and development across these outcomes happens within the confines of the program and often can be observed directly by the staff leading afterschool activities. Attempting to track youth progress across some of these areas can also be accomplished through a youth survey.

Finally, the skills, beliefs, and knowledge youth develop through their participation in high-quality 21st CCLC programming may be used in other settings outside of the program to drive achievement and success in school and the workplace. This is commonly referred to as transfer.

Given the framework as outlined, introduction of a youth survey that can capture at least some information about youth program *experience* and *engagement*, as well as provide some data regarding *direct program outcomes*, will help to clarify the nature of 21st CCLC program impact within New Jersey. To this end, AIR tested a youth survey instrument during spring 2016.

### **The Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs Survey Pilot**

AIR worked with NJDOE in order to select a specific youth survey instrument. Multiple options were presented by AIR to NJDOE, with final selection falling on the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey developed by Youth Development Executives of King County in conjunction with AIR. The survey has undergone extensive validation and testing by AIR and has the benefit of being open-source. It has been designed to measure the extent to which youth report having skills and dispositions that have been shown to be critical for positive youth growth and development.

Three types of scales were included on the piloted version of the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs survey. A full copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

1. *Items pertaining to youth experience in the 21st CCLC program.* The purpose of these items was to obtain authentic feedback from youth on their experiences in the 21st CCLC program they were enrolled in during the 2014–15 school year. Examples of items of this type included *Do you get to choose how you spend your time?*, *In this program, there is an adult here who is interested in what you think about things*, and *Kids here are friendly with each other*. For all items appearing on the survey, youth were asked to respond to each item by endorsing one of several response options such as: *never, rarely, sometimes, and often*; or *not at all true, somewhat true, mostly true, or completely true*.
2. *Retrospective items pertaining to youths' sense of how they may have been impacted by participation in the program.* The purpose of these items was to explore the extent to which youth believed the program may have helped them in terms of developing positive academic behaviors and better self-management skills. Examples of items of this type included *This program has helped me find out what I'm good at doing* and *This program has helped me discover things I want to learn more about*. Again, youth were asked to respond to each item by endorsing an option on a truthfulness scale.
3. *Items pertaining to how youth reported functioning at present when taking the survey on a series of areas related to positive youth development.*<sup>10</sup> The purpose of these items was to gauge how well youth described themselves as doing in four key areas: (a) academic identity, (b) positive mindsets, (c) self-management, and (d) interpersonal skills. Examples of items appearing on these scales include *Doing well in school is an important part of who I am (academic identity)*, *I can solve difficult problems if I try hard enough (mindsets)*, *I can calm myself down when I'm excited or upset (self-management)*, and *I work well with others on shared projects (interpersonal skills)*. These items were also answered by means of a truthfulness scale.

The pilot version of the survey was administered during late spring 2016 and included seven grants comprising 22 centers. A total of 834 youth surveys were collected. Note that, for the pilot, all sets of questions indicated above were asked during a single administration; when launched statewide (planned for fall 2016 and spring 2017), only items pertaining to youth-reported functioning (set three above) will be asked on the fall preadministration version, with all items included in the spring's postadministration version.

## Youth Survey Pilot Results

As noted, the survey included three general types of scales, with each scale consisting of sets of questions. The scales employed in the survey are shown in Table 9.

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<sup>10</sup> When analyzed in a preadministration and postadministration format, these items can help provide a clearer picture regarding youth outcomes. These areas are theoretically tied to longer term, academic outcomes.

**Table 9. Scales Appearing on the Youth Survey, by Scale Type**

Scale Type	Scales Included in the Survey
Program experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Youth leadership and autonomy</li> <li>▪ Relationships with adults</li> <li>▪ Relationships with other youth</li> </ul>
Retrospective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Perceived program experience</li> </ul>
Youth-reported functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Academic Identity</li> <li>▪ Mindsets</li> <li>▪ Self-Management</li> <li>▪ Interpersonal Skills</li> </ul>

The evaluation team used Rasch analysis approaches to calculate a scale score for each survey scale in the survey, with the exception of the retrospective scale (which is not designed for analysis with Rasch, and consequently is presented in a descriptive format). The Rasch rating scale model (Andrich, 1978; Wright & Masters, 1982), as implemented with WINSTEPS (Linacre, 2005), was used to create scale scores for each of the scales, which was then used to determine what response category (*not at all true, somewhat true, mostly true, or completely true, etc.*) best described a youth’s overall *experience* in the program, perception of program effect (*retrospective*), and current level of youth *functioning* on outcome areas.

In terms of program experience, youth were first asked a series of questions regarding opportunities for youth leadership and autonomy. Respondents were provided options of *never, rarely, sometimes, and often*. During the course of Rasch analysis, it became clear that the response categories of *rarely* and *sometimes* were not distinct options based on the way youth responded to the questions, and so these response categories were collapsed in the final analysis. See Table 10.

**Table 10. Number and Percentage of Respondents Falling in a Given Portion of the Rating Scale for Program Experience Scale Leadership and Autonomy**

Scale	Never		Rarely/Sometimes		Often	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Youth leadership and autonomy	59	7%	665	80%	109	13%

In addition, youth were asked a series of questions regarding their relationships with adults and other youth. Responses were on a truthfulness scale from *not at all true* to *completely true*. See Table 11.

**Table 11. Number and Percentage of Respondents Falling in a Given Portion of the Rating Scale for Program Experience Scales Regarding Relationships**

Scale	Not at all true		Somewhat true		Mostly true		Completely true	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Relationships with adults	28	3%	110	13%	238	29%	454	55%
Relationships with other youth	49	6%	273	33%	348	42%	163	20%

As shown in Tables 10 and 11, most youth reported a generally positive experience in their 21st CCLC programs. In terms of leadership and autonomy, however, the vast majority of youth were in the *rarely/sometimes* range of the scale, indicating modest opportunities for growth. In response to prompts regarding positive relationships with adults, on the other hand, a majority, 55 percent, fell within the *completely true* range on the scale, with another 29 percent in the *mostly true* portion of the scale. Responses were not quite as high for relationships with other youth, with a plurality of respondents falling within the *mostly true* part of the scale and around a third falling within the *somewhat true* portion of the scale. Only about 20 percent were in the *completely true* portion, with six percent in the *not at all true* response category.

In terms of retrospective effects, youth were asked a series of questions concerning how they thought the program had helped them. Note that these questions, unlike those provided elsewhere in the survey, are not designed to work together as a single construct scale and are consequently presented as separate response items. Response options to each question were again provided on a scale, however, from *not at all true* to *completely true*. See Table 12 for details concerning individual responses to retrospective questions.

**Table 12. Responses to Retrospective Questions**

Question	Not at all true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Completely true	N
Feel good about myself.	4%	11%	27%	58%	829
With my confidence.	5%	14%	29%	53%	826
Make new friends.	3%	12%	24%	61%	826
Find out what is important to me.	4%	13%	28%	55%	824
Find out what I'm good at doing.	5%	10%	28%	56%	825
Find out what I like to do.	4%	11%	27%	58%	824
Discover things I want to learn more about.	5%	13%	29%	53%	828
Learn things that will help me in school.	3%	12%	28%	56%	830
Learn things that will be important for my future.	3%	11%	27%	59%	828
Think about what kinds of classes I want to take in high school.	7%	14%	29%	50%	824
Think about what I might like to do when I get older.	5%	13%	27%	55%	823
Learn about things that are important to my community or the environment.	5%	16%	28%	51%	825
Feel good because I was helping my community or the environment.	6%	15%	28%	51%	820

Overall, responses to the retrospective items were very consistent, with a little more than half of respondents marking *completely true* for each item. A little more than a quarter of respondents tended to answer *mostly true*, indicating that 21st CCLC participants in the pilot generally think the program had a positive effect in terms of the questions asked. However, about 15 to 20 percent of respondents indicated *not at all true* or only *somewhat true* for each item.

In terms of youth perceptions regarding their current level of functioning, youth varied in terms of their overall scale score response category. For academic identity, more than two thirds of respondents fell in the *completely true* response category, with more than another quarter falling

within the *mostly true* category. This shows that academics, at least as perceived at the time of the survey, is important to the pilot survey population. Less clear, however, are mindsets, interpersonal skills, and self-management, for which slightly less than half tended to fall within the *completely true* response band and where more students fell in the *mostly true* category. (Note that, for self-management, the *somewhat true* and *mostly true* categories were combined, since Rasch analysis showed no clear patterns differentiating these two response bands.) See Tables 13 and 14.

**Table 13. Number and Percentage of Respondents Falling in a Given Portion of the Rating Scale for Academic Identity, Mindsets, and Interpersonal Skills**

Scale	Not at all true		Somewhat true		Mostly true		Completely true	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Academic identity	5	1%	39	5%	220	26%	570	68%
Mindsets	10	1%	61	7%	389	47%	374	45%
Interpersonal skills	13	2%	66	8%	345	41%	409	49%

**Table 14. Number and Percentage of Respondents Falling in a Given Portion of the Rating Scale for Self-Management**

Scale	Never		Rarely/Sometimes		Often	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Self-management	11	1%	490	59%	332	40%

## Summary and Next Steps

Rasch analysis on the survey responses showed the survey to generally be working as intended, with each scale operating as desired. That is, excepting the retrospective items (which are designed to be analyzed individually through descriptive statistics), the questions designed for each scale seemed to be working together to identify a single scale dimension and seemed to do a reasonable job of differentiating between respondents, even if more differentiation might ultimately be desired. Overall, the survey results themselves also showed that respondents generally think positively about the program and are having positive experiences, granting that the survey provides only a point-in-time snapshot and was collected only at a discrete number of sites.

However, several of the constructs analyzed presented some degree of a “ceiling effect.” Ceiling effects occur when respondents “max out” a scale, clustering at the top response classification level. Although it may seem that this would be a desired result (in the sense that it indicates participants are responding positively to the survey items), this is not necessarily so; it means that the scale is not necessarily capturing the full range of ability, perception, or belief, a notable problem from a program improvement perspective because it becomes less clear which construct areas deserve the most attention. It also creates difficulties if observed in data collected as part of a preadministration survey, notably for youth functioning, because any effect of the program becomes more difficult to detect.

That said, it is important to emphasize that these ceiling effects (of varying strengths) were observed as part of a pilot. This alone may influence the data because it is at least possible that the youth attending the sites included in the pilot are attending higher functioning programs (because pilot grants had an opportunity to volunteer, which may be correlated with better designed programming overall). Although this explanation is only theoretical and may not be true, at this point in time the scale ceiling effects simply bear watching; that is, it is likely premature to try to change the scales (typically by adding one or two “harder” items that help differentiate among respondents a bit better). If ceiling effects are observed during 2016–17, then addition of harder items, or modification of existing items to make them harder, will perhaps be warranted. For now, the results support proceeding with a full rollout of the survey to all of New Jersey’s 21st CCLC grantees.

## Chapter 6. Conclusions and Next Steps

Overall, the 21st CCLC program in New Jersey seems to be serving the population intended and is offering activities in keeping with New Jersey's 21st CCLC goals. Some of the specific statistics, notably for the leading indicator values, have moved up or down or adjusted slightly, but this is not terribly surprising given the change in grantee cohorts. However, given the introduction of a sizeable new cohort, it may make sense to investigate more year-to-year changes in subsequent reports, with more emphasis placed on over-time changes. This would not only make it easier to perform year-to-year comparisons but also would enable NJDOE to see how the movement of this large cohort from their year 1 to Year 2 affects the data. Of course, the introduction of another large cohort of new grantees could change this assessment (should NJDOE make many new awards), but such an approach would provide a new view into cohort and year-to-year development dynamics.

In any event, barring the introduction of a second large group of new grant awards, the grantees that were new in 2014–15 will all be second-year grantees for the purpose of the 2015–16 impact analysis. The stage consequently seems well set for new impact analyses in 2017 and 2018, especially with the introduction of a well-functioning youth survey (which should provide an array of new outcome measures for assessing 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC impact). The immediate next steps for the evaluation work, then, is simply launching the preadministration of the youth survey, completing the overall data-collection redesign, and providing training to grantees to ensure overall data quality. With this foundation, the evaluation team will be well positioned to carry out a robust impact analysis in each of the next two years.

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## Appendix A. New Jersey 21st CCLC Staff Survey

<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding all staff that work with students in this program:</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
a. Program staff listen to youth more than talk at them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Program staff actively and continuously consult and involve youth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Program staff provide structured and planned activities explicitly designed to help youth to get to know one another.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Program staff provide opportunities for youth to lead activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Program staff provide opportunities for youth to help or mentor other youth in completing a project or task.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Program staff provide opportunities for the work, achievements, or accomplishments of youth to be publicly recognized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding all staff that work with students in this program:</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
a. Program staff provide ongoing opportunities for youth to reflect on their experiences (e.g., formal journal writing, informal conversational feedback).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Program staff are effective at finding ways to provide youth with meaningful choices when delivering activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Program staff are effective at providing youth with opportunities to set goals and make plans within the confines of the program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Program staff ask for and listen to student opinions about the way things should work in the program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<b>How often do you lead or participate in program activities that are...</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Always</b>
a. Based on written plans for the session, assignments, and projects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Well planned in advance?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Tied to specific learning goals?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Meant to build upon skills cultivated in a prior activity or session?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Explicitly meant to promote skill building and mastery in relation to one or more state standard?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Explicitly meant to address a specific developmental domain (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional, civic, physical, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Structured to respond to youth feedback on what the content or format of the activity should be?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Informed by the expressed interests, preferences, and/or satisfaction of participating youth?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding linkages to the school day:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Relevant to My Role in the Program	Not Sure
a. On a week-to-week basis, I know what academic content will be covered during the school day with the students I work with in the afterschool program.	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. I coordinate the content of the afterschool activities I provide with my students' school-day homework.	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. I know whom to contact at my students' day school if I have a question about their progress or status.	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. The activities I provide in the afterschool program are tied to specific learning goals that are related to the school-day curriculum.	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. I use student assessment data to provide different types of instruction to students attending my afterschool activities based on their ability level.	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. I help manage a formal 3-way communication system that links parents, program, and day-school information.	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. I participate in regular, joint staff meetings for afterschool and regular school day staff where steps to further establish linkages between the school day and afterschool are discussed.	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. I meet regularly with school day staff not working in the afterschool program to review the academic progress of individual students.	○	○	○	○	○	○
i. I participate in parent-teacher conferences to provide information about how individual students are faring in the afterschool program. (NOTE: If you are a school-day teacher, please respond to this question in relation to students you do not have in your school-day classroom).	○	○	○	○	○	○

<b>Please indicate whether you receive each of the following, and to what extent you use it in planning for the activities you provide:</b>	<b>Do Not Receive</b>	<b>Occasionally Use</b>	<b>Often Use</b>	<b>Not Relevant to My Role in the Program</b>
a. Individual student academic plans.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Students' standardized test scores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Students' grades.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Input from students' day school teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Other. Specify _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<b>How often are students participating in the activities <u>you</u> provide in the program afforded the following types of opportunities:</b>	<b>Never Available</b>	<b>Available Occasionally in Some Classes or Activities</b>	<b>Available Regularly in Most Classes or Activities</b>	<b>Always Available</b>
a. Work collaboratively with other students in small groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Have the freedom to choose what activities or projects they are going to work on or participate in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Work on group projects that take more than one day to complete.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Lead group activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Provide feedback on the activities they are participating in during time set aside explicitly for this purpose.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Participate in activities that are specifically designed to help students get to know one another.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Make formal presentations to the larger group of students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about how your students build ownership of the program:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
a. Youth are afforded opportunities to take responsibility for their own program.	○	○	○	○	○
b. Youth have the opportunity to set goals for what they want to accomplish in the program.	○	○	○	○	○
c. Youth help make plans for what activities are offered at the program.	○	○	○	○	○
d. Youth make choices about <i>what</i> content is covered in program offerings.	○	○	○	○	○
e. Youth make choices about <i>how</i> content is covered in program offerings.	○	○	○	○	○
f. Youth help create rules and guidelines for the program.	○	○	○	○	○

<b>How frequently do you engage in the following tasks with other staff working in the afterschool program:</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>A Couple of Times Per Year</b>	<b>About Once a Month</b>	<b>Nearly Every Week</b>
a. Conduct program planning based on a review of program data.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Use evaluation data to set program improvement goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Discuss progress on meeting program improvement goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Observe other afterschool staff delivering programming in order to provide feedback on their practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Conduct program planning in order to meet specific learning goals in coordinated ways across multiple activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Share ideas on how to make programming more engaging for participating students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Share experiences and follow up about individual youth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Receive feedback from school-day teachers and/or administrators on how the program could better support student learning needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Participate in training and professional development on how to better serve youth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Discuss current research-based instructional practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<b>How often do you or other center staff:</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
a. Send materials about program offerings home to parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Send information home about how the student is progressing in the program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Hold events or meetings to which parents are invited.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Have conversations with parents over the phone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Meet with one or more parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Ask for input from parents on what and how activities should be provided.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Encourage parents to participate in center-provided programming meant to support their acquisition of knowledge or skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Encourage parents to participate in center-provided programming with their children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix B. New Jersey 21st CCLC Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs Survey (Pilot Version)

This youth survey was used by American Institutes for Research (AIR) during the course of the spring 2016 youth survey pilot. *Please note that this is not the final version of this survey and may undergo slight revision prior to official statewide launch in fall 2016.* Once any changes have been finalized, a copy of the final survey will be made available in ETRS.

**Young people might describe themselves in many ways. We have listed some things youth might say or think about themselves. For each one, pick the answer that is most true for you.**

	<i>Not at all true</i>	<i>Somewhat true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Completely true</i>
Doing well in school is an important part of who I am.	o	o	o	o
Getting good grades is one of my main goals.	o	o	o	o
I take pride in doing my best in school.	o	o	o	o
Getting a college education is important to me.	o	o	o	o
I am a hard worker when it comes to my schoolwork.	o	o	o	o
It is important to me to learn as much as I can.	o	o	o	o
I finish whatever I begin.	o	o	o	o
I stay positive when things don't go the way I want.	o	o	o	o
I don't give up easily.	o	o	o	o
I try things even if I might fail.	o	o	o	o
I can solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	o	o	o	o
I can do a good job if I try hard enough.	o	o	o	o
I stay focused on my work even when it's boring.	o	o	o	o
I can stop myself from doing something I know I shouldn't do.	o	o	o	o
When I'm sad, I do something that will make me feel better.	o	o	o	o
I can control my temper.	o	o	o	o
I can handle stress.	o	o	o	o
I can calm myself down when I'm excited or upset.	o	o	o	o
When my solution to a problem is not working, I try to find a new solution.	o	o	o	o
I think of my past choices when making new decisions.	o	o	o	o
I listen to other people's ideas.	o	o	o	o
I work well with others on group projects.	o	o	o	o
I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt.	o	o	o	o
I respect what other people think, even if I disagree.	o	o	o	o
I try to help when I see someone having a problem.	o	o	o	o
When I make a decision, I think about how it will affect other people.	o	o	o	o

**When you are at this program...**

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>
Do you get to choose how you spend your time?	o	o	o	o
Can you suggest your own ideas for new activities?	o	o	o	o
Do you get to choose which activities you do?	o	o	o	o
Do you get to help plan activities for the program?	o	o	o	o
Do you get the chance to lead an activity?	o	o	o	o
Do you get to be in charge of doing something to help the program?	o	o	o	o
Do you get to help make decisions or rules for the program?	o	o	o	o

**What are the teachers and staff members like at this program? Is there an adult here...**

	<i>Not at all true</i>	<i>Somewhat true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Completely true</i>
Who is interested in what you think about things?	o	o	o	o
You can talk to when you are upset?	o	o	o	o
Who helps you when you have a problem?	o	o	o	o
You enjoy being around?	o	o	o	o
Who has helped you find your special interests and talents (what things you are good at)?	o	o	o	o
Who asks you about your life and goals?	o	o	o	o
Who you will miss when the program is over?	o	o	o	o

**At this program, how do kids get along?**

	<i>Not at all true</i>	<i>Somewhat true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Completely true</i>
Kids here are friendly with each other.	o	o	o	o
Kids here treat each other with respect.	o	o	o	o
Kids here listen to what the teachers tell them to do.	o	o	o	o
Kids here tease or bully other kids.	o	o	o	o
Kids here support and help one another.	o	o	o	o

**How has this program helped you?**

	<i>Not at all true</i>	<i>Somewhat true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Completely true</i>
Feel good about myself.	0	0	0	0
With my confidence.	0	0	0	0
Make new friends.	0	0	0	0
Find out what is important to me.	0	0	0	0
Find out what I'm good at doing.	0	0	0	0
Find out what I like to do.	0	0	0	0
Discover things I want to learn more about.	0	0	0	0
Learn things that will help me in school.	0	0	0	0
Learn things that will be important for my future.	0	0	0	0
Think about what kinds of classes I want to take in high school.	0	0	0	0
Think about what I might like to do when I get older.	0	0	0	0
Learn about things that are important to my community or the environment.	0	0	0	0
Feel good because I was helping my community or the environment.	0	0	0	0