

**NYS 21st CCLC Evaluators Networking Session: Participatory Evaluation
January 9, 2018**

Session Objectives:

- (1) **Why participatory evaluation?** Motivation for facilitating this discussion
- (2) **Overview of PE required for 21st CCLC programs**
- (3) **Summary of benefits and challenges** as cited in the literature
- (4) **Highlights of best practices** for participatory evaluation established in the literature
- (5) **Discussion** of local evaluators' perspectives on whether/how it is happening and how it can benefit.
- (6) **Suggestions for other topics** for the Network to explore.

In attendance:

- From Measurement Incorporated:
 - Jonathan Tunik, Project Director - Facilitating
 - Bernadette DeVito, Project Assistant
- From NYSED:
 - Elizabeth Whipple, New York State Coordinator, 21st CCLC
- Evaluators: See attendance list, attached

Minutes:

Jonathan reviewed the Participatory Evaluation requirements for 21st CCLC programs, provided a summary of the benefits and challenges as cited in the literature, and reviewed highlights of best practices for participatory evaluation established in the literature (*see PowerPoint Presentation for details*).

Jonathan then opened the floor to discussion about Participatory Evaluation—the extent to which it is currently happening in programs, the successes and challenges being encountered, etc. Following are the main points raised by session participants during the conversation:

Benefits/Value

--We firmly believe in it. We consider evaluators as critical friends to the program—working with the program to encourage continuous improvement. This represents a shift in the philosophy of evaluation compared with the traditional approach where the evaluator acts as an independent third party.

-- Participatory evaluation is especially important for formative/implementation evaluation.

-- Participatory evaluation can help establish strong linkages between school day and afterschool programming.

Challenges

--We didn't recognize the value of participatory evaluation when we wrote the grant

--It's very time consuming to develop the relationships, etc.

--When we did our budget, we underestimated the amount of time required for participatory evaluation. It takes a while to develop relationships, create instruments, etc. I am struggling to meet the participatory evaluation expectations while not overspending.

--Elizabeth Whipple indicated that there currently is a maximum of 8% of the total program budget that can be earmarked for evaluation services but no floor/minimum. One program provides only 4% for the evaluation; local evaluators raised the idea that there should be a floor as well as a cap. Elizabeth expressed willingness to consider setting a minimum % .

--Regarding the challenge of meeting requirements while staying within budget, one evaluator noted that, when working with a new program, we work very hard and spend lots of money in the first year, but it pays off in the end.

--In terms of participatory evaluation, I feel there is room for improvement with regard to the QSA. It's difficult to get parents and students to complete the survey (especially elementary age students – surveying probably isn't a good way to get feedback from younger students). Administrators also aren't as available as we'd like them to be for completing the survey and engaging in the process.

--It's also difficult to get parents to attend advisory board meetings because of their schedules.

--It's difficult to maintain communication and obtain feedback from multiple stakeholder groups. Jonathan suggested the possibility of establishing a chat room so people can weigh in on their own schedule; but it was pointed out that internet connectivity can be problematic in a lot of schools.

--Participatory evaluation is especially challenging for smaller programs with smaller budgets. They need to focus on meeting the minimum requirements first.

Ideas/Promising Practices

--Our program sends an electronic version of the QSA tool to various stakeholders. By getting their feedback ahead of time, it takes less time to complete the QSA when we meet as a group. This practice also allows me to ensure that all voices are heard during the meeting (because I know what feedback was provided in advance and can prompt people to share their viewpoints).

--We hold focus groups to discuss follow up to QSA data.

--One participant said she tries to schedule evaluation activities in conjunction with program events, so she can reach parents and students.

--Recommendation of using the Realist Evaluation paradigm. (JT asked him to send a link, which will be shared with the group.)

--Important to make data visual and accessible to stakeholders. Use of data dashboards in NYC public schools—for example, one focused on attendance data—allows stakeholders to identify patterns/trends and leads to conversations about possible solutions (e.g. planning activities and strategies to encourage better attendance).

--We try to bring school administration into the equation—need principal buy-in. We always try to have the principal at advisory meetings, so we plan the meetings around the principal's schedule.

---Promising practice of partnering with particular school staff (e.g. school social workers or math teachers) to get referrals of students who are in need of support in a particular area (for example, social skills training or math skills). Also get these staff to contribute activities for the program. A win-win.

--We do site visits like medical rounds. The evaluator, program director, CBO director, principal, etc. go on visits together and then debrief afterward. Have found this to be an effective way to collectively identify and address issues in real time.

Miscellaneous

--Monitoring is often neglected, however, our firm chooses to spend most of our time on monitoring activities, ensuring that good systems are in place so we obtain quality data. I feel that monitoring should be emphasized in the manual.

--NYC DOE is trying to use participatory evaluation to build capacity within schools around data-based decision making.

--You get more buy-in from district administrators when a school district holds the grant vs. a CBO.

--Evaluators are the glue within 21C programs, even though they technically aren't "partners." They help programs understand what's required vs. what's useful. Evaluators need to be advocates for the value of their role.

--Elizabeth Whipple suggested that there should be more communication with programs about the benefits of evaluators and how they can help programs.

--Challenges with the Out of School Time Evaluation Tool. It's cumbersome. Can we simplify it?

Elizabeth stated that programs are allowed to modify the OST if they want. She indicated that ExpandEd has developed a modified version of the OST tool.

--Elizabeth asked participants for opinions on the OST.

--It's a little long.

--We made it electronic and adapted the last page into more of a summative piece.

--We added a safety component (e.g. did they ID us when we arrived? Did we have to sign in? etc.)

Requests for Future Topics

--Year-end evaluation reports: Would like to know soon if there are requirements/preferences around what should be included in reports.

--Idea of not creating a standard outline but instead specifying required components/information to be addressed within the report.

--How to Make Best Use of Existing/Available Data within schools

Participants:

Amy Shema	Synergy enterprises Inc.
Ana Mari Grigoras, Ph.D.	L&G Research
Bethsaida Charlot	L&G Research & Evaluation
Bruce Kaufmann	
Danielle Campbell, Dr. PH, MPH/NYC Evaluator	L&G Research
Dean Spaulding/Evaluator	Gullie LLC
Dr. Dancia Harris-Maddon	City of MVB
Dr. Mansoor A. F. Kazi	Realist Evaluation Inc
Elizabeth Whipple	NYSED
Emily Hagstrom/Evaluator	Via Evaluation
Helen Scalise/Senior Manager	NYC Department of Ed.
Isabel Polon	L&G Research & Evaluation
Jane Greiner/Evaluation	Apter & O'Connor
Jessica Weitzel/President	Via Evaluation
Kimberly Hall/Evaluator	LPB Consulting
Laurel Tague, PhD/Evaluator	Information Resources
Lynn Moulton/Evaluator	Brockport Research Institute
Maeve Powlick	OCB LLC
Mark Davies/Evaluator	Bluepoint Consulting LLC
Michelle Law	Laura Payne Bourcy consulting
P.B. Uninsky, Ph.D., JD	Youth Policy Institute
Rob Lillis/Evaluation	Evalumetrics Research
Shayna Klopott/Evaluator	L&G Research & Eval.
Sofia Oriedo	L&G Research & Evaluation
Tatiana Sava/Evaluator	L&G Research
Tracy Herman/Evaluator	Brockport Research Institute
Wayne Jones	JPS Solutions