

NYSED 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Round 8 Case Studies: 2022 - 2023



Overview

This report intends to promote learning and insights within the NYS 21CCLC universe by elevating successful practices and identifying shared concerns.



SELECTION CRITERIA

The sample included 10, prior Round 7 sites with evidence of successful implementation

The sample represented the distribution of Round 8 programs, e.g., grantee type, location, size, and grade levels served.

10 SITES SELECTED

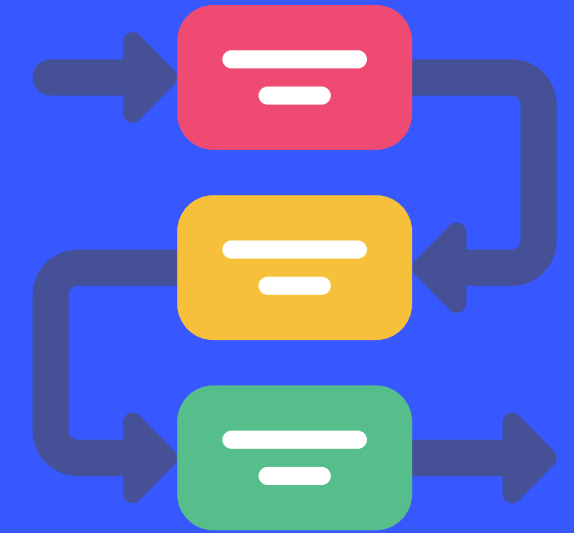
Location: 6 NYC and 4 RoS

Lead Agency: 6 LEAs and 4 CBOs

Grades; 5 Elementary, 2 Middle School; and 3 High School sites

Methodology

MI undertook an exploratory case study approach to examine the implementation strategies, challenges, and innovations of 21CCLC programs in the first year of Round 8. Between April and June 2023, the researcher visited one site for each of the 10 participating grantees, observed program activities, conducted in-person interviews with program and/or site leadership, and conducted separate, remote, interviews with the local evaluators. Each interview lasted between 1 and 2 hours.



SITE SELECTION

10 programs with prior evidence of successful implementation in Round 7

DATA COLLECTION

Interviews with 10 program directors, 7 site coordinators, 4 community partner staff; and 1 school leader

9 program observations (1 program had ended)

Interviews with 14 local evaluators

ANALYSIS

Qualitative analysis of key themes, successful strategies, and challenges

Themes



Developing
21CCLC
Partnerships



Hiring &
Supporting
21CCLC Staff



Serving Secondary
Students in
21CCLC Programs



What DEI Looks
Like in 21CCLC
Programs



Incorporating
SEL in 21CCLC
Programs

Interview questions focused on areas targeting first-year implementation issues as well as changes in the 21CCLC program for Round 8. Five themes emerged from the interviews as being particularly salient.

What are the Key Challenges and Promising Practices for 21CCLC Partnerships among School Sites, Districts, and CBOs?



The 21CCLC program has a clear presence in sites with strong partnerships. There is a shared vision to meet students' and families' needs and collaborative planning to design, implement, and evaluate services. 21CCLC programming is part of the school culture.

CHALLENGES

- New partnerships or changes in program or school leadership may require more effort to establish trust and effective collaboration.
- 21CCLC staff are not always supervised by or accountable to the Program Director, which can affect recruitment, fidelity of implementation, attendance taking, and evaluation.
- Delays in receiving funding impede cohesive, planning, implementation and partnership building.

PRACTICES

- Schools provide 21CCLC with designated spaces to promote their physical presence, e.g., offices, classrooms, bulletin boards.
- Schools include 21CCLC in its family-facing functions and communications, e.g., orientation, parent meetings, and digital messaging.
- There is ongoing communication and planning between the school site and program leadership. Schools include 21CCLC staff in their established planning structures.
- Partner and school staff intentionally pool their respective strengths and expertise to make programming seamless and target students' needs.
- Program leadership incorporates service providers that have solid track records and bring valuable resources to the schools.

Examples of Notable Partnership Practices



Working with the new, supportive, MS principal, this site increased enrollment through their inclusion in school orientation. Through collaborative planning, they launched a literacy initiative, as well as SEL and culturally responsive curricula integrated with the arts, ELA, and math.

“The physical and emotional space for children has changed. There is a real desire for collaboration. It’s not just on paper. It makes for a successful implementation path. The biggest success was the partnership with the school.”

The site coordinator and principal work collaboratively, meeting at least weekly, to plan and ensure the program is meeting students’ needs. The principal champions the program and advocates for services. Student and parent activities are well attended and teachers are enthusiastic about participating.

“The success of [this partnership] is effective communication. There is lots of planning and organizing. We use data for planning and following up. We hold ourselves accountable.”

The CBO partner is on-site throughout the school day. In addition to providing SEL and career readiness classes, they work with students, families, and school staff to address family crises and mental health needs. At the same time, they share their expertise with school staff.

“There is a lot of collaboration throughout the day. We work with the staff and help the social worker and counselor. We consider that a “collateral” - the adults are impacting the young person’s health. Thinking communally is better for everyone.”

How do 21st CCLC Programs Hire and Support Staff?

21CCLCs hire and train staff from the school site, partner organizations, and contracted vendors to deliver comprehensive programming to address students' needs.



CHALLENGES

- Teachers do not want to work after school after teaching all day.
- Hiring experienced staff within the budget is difficult. They cannot compete.
- The amount of time it takes for staff in NYC to get clearance negatively impacts programming and enrollment.
- School dismissal does not align with the schedules of high school or college students.
- Programs are not able to train and/or evaluate all 21CCLC staff.

PRACTICES

- The AS program is organized so that teachers work fewer days and can leave earlier. Partner staff and vendors are there daily and cover the later hours.
- There are opportunities for staff to design or lead activities based on their interests and skills.
- Job fairs are used to recruit HS students who are on track for graduating and are interested in related careers (e.g., education, social work, etc.).
- Americorp volunteers are included to increase staffing.
- Staff includes community members - former students, teachers' aides, and parents.
- Staff receive comprehensive onboarding preparation, ongoing professional development, active supervision, and structured evaluations.

Examples of Notable Staffing Practices



One program hired and trained a group of high school students as “literacy leaders” to support struggling K-5 students. All were BIPOC and had reading disabilities themselves, so understood the literacy issues the participants were experiencing. Three of the high school students have since graduated and are getting teaching degrees from their local college.

“I hadn’t expected it to be so effective. They work in the summer program. They are so motivated they go to morning reading lessons before their classes.”

The benefits of hiring school staff include their knowledge of and relationships with the students, their teaching experience, and in some cases their bilingual/biculturalism. Sites like this one, with an afterschool program that is embraced by teachers can be selective in their hiring.

“We have many interested teachers. We interview them and look at their experience, why they want to work after school, what they plan to do that will differentiate them from the school day, what their degrees are, and whether they are bilingual.”

Utilizing various options, including TARC, this site provides targeted PD to staff, including SEL and strength-based training, classroom management for group leaders, and instructional PD for teachers and specialists. Structured observations are used in conjunction with PD.

“Everyone gets staff development. We try to align the literacy curriculum with SEL and the teaching artists’ activities. We do observations to make sure that the curriculum is being facilitated with fidelity and goals are being met. Group leaders get “emotional backpack training” - how you respond to triggers in ways that are not punitive but understanding.”

What are the Key Challenges and Promising Practices for 21st CCLC programs Serving Secondary Students?



In order for 21CCLCs to engage older students who could benefit from supportive services, their structure and programming have to adjust to the students' different academic and developmental needs. Sites used extended-day programming, when possible, to create flexible scheduling.

CHALLENGES

- After-school programming functions less as child care for parents and depends on student choice.
- As students start traveling to school independently, safety becomes a factor in AS attendance.
- Sites can exceed enrollment but struggle to meet attendance targets for older students.
- Due to older students' greater demands on their time, the 5-day-a-week AS program schedule is not the best fit,

PRACTICES

- Programming held during the day, such as advisory classes and lunch clubs, allows students to participate who would benefit but cannot attend after school.
- In addition to surveying, personal, engagement with students is key to identifying their interests and determining if programming is meeting their needs.
- Having a strong AS culture and presence fosters students' connections to the program, which is particularly important for secondary student attendance.
- Building positive, supportive, relationships with AS staff/teachers are critical for secondary programming since they affect students' choices to attend.
- Instead of competing with concurrent activities (e.g., team sports, school plays), sites offered alternative scheduling or flexible activities to promote more inclusion.
- Over-age students, in particular, benefit from incentivized programming that helps them meet academic or career goals (e.g., credits, credentials, work experience).

Examples of Notable Practices for Secondary Students



In addition to afterschool programming, the MS offers morning basketball and lunchtime groups, including one focused on SEL. Students who did not enroll in 21CCLC because they did not want to stay after school chose to come to these other activities, but were not being counted as part of their 21CCLC program. The MS is moving toward a more inclusive enrollment process for year two.

“They might come in the morning for basketball. They come to lunch programming. They might stay after school one day for tutoring. They might go to the step class. But, they're not kids who want to be in a 5-day program.”

The HS has a small, core group of students attending the program after school consistently. Activities are developed organically, based on students' expressed interests. Students who cannot stay after school, including those who participate in team sports, are included in trips, events, and counseling. They also have advisories for all students during the school day with a college or SEL focus.

“These young people really need mental health support. It's great that they were able to get the program modification to do more of it during the school day. I'm really proud of the work that they do. They offer the type of activities that the young people want.”

After changing some activities due to student input, and offering elective credits and internship hours for some classes, the HS site experienced increased student engagement in the program.

“The students were vocal about the activities they wanted. We made changes. Then we started receiving more applications for robotics and dance.”

“They provide extra incentives for students. That is a huge game-changer. They listen to the kids and see what activities work for them. That's important to HS kids. If they don't like it, they aren't coming.”

What does Diversity, Equity and Inclusion look like in 21st CCLC Programs?



21 CCLCs strive to build inclusive learning environments that celebrate and benefit all community members, regardless of gender, background, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or ability.

CHALLENGES

- Programs have to respond to changing student populations and needs due to factors such as immigration and homelessness.
- There are not enough bilingual and bicultural staff to hire, particularly licensed professionals,
- Logistical constraints, such as busing and staffing can exclude some groups of students.
- Staff need training to understand and be responsive to cultural differences.

PRACTICES

- Programming consists of culturally and linguistically relevant content, and age-appropriate activities that foster cultural competencies through ELA, sports, arts, culinary, etc.
- There is inclusive family and community engagement that provides family members with opportunities for personal development and/or economic mobility.
- There are opportunities for students to participate in activities and environments where they have been historically underrepresented (e.g., STEM) or excluded.
- Programming includes activities that are familiar and meaningful to the cultures of the participants and their families.
- Services and activities are Intentionally designed to address barriers to participation.
- Staff are actively engaged in learning about and cultivating culturally responsive-sustaining practices.

Examples of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in 21st CCLC Programs



In a new robotics program, students not only gained technical and team skills to compete, but through supportive staff increased their confidence to take on unfamiliar challenges.

“The robotics team competed in 5 competitions. There was no diversity there. The students were terrified to be among schools with these accolades and felt they did not belong. We told them they deserved it as much as any other school. They earned a spot there. They did so well that they got invited to a very prestigious tech fair where they were able to discuss their robots with reps from Google and Apple.”

One program translated their application into 8 languages to recruit English language learners. They obtained extra funding for therapists so students with disabilities could be included in the summer program and receive mandated services. Teachers and specialists received professional development in culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices. Students proposed design changes to make outdoor spaces accessible for mobility-impaired students.

“The 5th-grade students chose to develop universal design recommendations for outdoor learning spaces for their project-based learning assignment. The Facilities Department was an authentic audience for the students’ work. Children with walkers can’t go through the mulch, so now there is no mulch and crusher run instead.”

All students receive a program of literacy, SEL, STEM, arts, and movement that promotes cultural competency. For an entire month lessons and activities are organized around a different cultural theme. The staff learns about that theme, students do activities, and then there is a showcase for families.

“This school had received an influx of immigrant families. We are really great at promoting cultural competency. It’s integrated into every activity. It affects the way the families receive the program and how students celebrate each other. It is effective parent engagement. They feel welcome and appreciated. It is meant to be a community school and it is.”

How do 21st CCLC Programs Incorporate SEL and Mental Health Support?



21 CCLCs incorporate published and locally designed curricula, integrated instructional strategies, and mental health support to help students develop social-emotional competencies.

CHALLENGES

- Students and families are experiencing multiple stressors.
- Students are struggling with interpersonal skills following COVID school closures.
- Programs want to do more tracking of SEL outcomes aligned with curricula or activities.
- Hiring and/or training staff who understand SEL and positive youth development is an ongoing effort.

PRACTICES

- Programs utilize various SEL curricula and instructional approaches aligned with the NYS SEL Benchmarks.
- SEL programs in earlier grades promote the foundational skills that are needed for Restorative and Social Justice programming in secondary grades.
- Staff receive professional development that includes SEL integration, positive youth development, trauma-informed practice, and a focus on how adults' SEL competencies impact young people.
- There are parent activities that focus on self-care, mental wellness, and support.
- Programs have a process for assessing and tracking SEL outcomes.
- SEL programming is integrated with literacy, arts, and movement, and other activities.
- There is access to crisis-based or ongoing mental health support for students and families.

Examples of SEL and Mental Health Support in 21st CCLC Programs



Students participate in the research-based Second Step program which has a curriculum for the school day and activities specially designed for afterschool. SEL is offered on a designated, health and wellness day and tailored to students' grade level (K-3 or 4-8).

"I like this curriculum because it's intended for after school. Our outcomes would be better behavior, emotional regulation, and better cooperation. We haven't yet assessed SEL, but I think there should be one."

MS participants attend gender-specific workshops and engage in interactive activities on character development, self-esteem, coping skills, peer pressure, relationships, and health. The curriculum comes with pre/post assessment so they are able to track SEL outcomes. Students also receive individual or small group counseling from a social worker who also does reentry support when there are incidents between students.

"They need this. They lost social skills during COVID. There were discipline issues in the fall. We created a new culture for AS. Some students had a hard time during the day, and it would carry over into AS. Now those students are having some success in AS. There are fewer discipline issues and improved behavior among students."

HS students have SEL programming that includes emotional regulation, somatic work, and mindfulness practices. Classes vary by grade. 9th grade includes behavior management, communication styles, acculturation, and group work. Seniors learn about relationships -- how to break up, and consent. They offer informal groups where students can discuss personal issues and will follow up with individual therapy if students are open to it.

"Students tell us what they want to do. The senior boys' class said they wanted to meditate again. We did body scans and breathing. Then they did spontaneous painting. You could hear a pin drop in the class."



Let's Extend the Conversation!

Next Steps

The goal of this report is to provide an avenue to share the thoughtful and innovative work being conducted across 21CCLC programs. We hope to hear from you!

- ✓ *Please let us know how you liked this report.*
- ✓ *Ask us questions.*
- ✓ *Is there a practice you would like to share, or do you have ideas for themes for next year's case study?*



Email Us! 😊

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