South Dakota Department of Education
21st Century Community Learning Centers
2018 Evaluation

21st Century Community
Learning Centers

Soaring Beyond Expectations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Dakota Department of Education

21st Century Community Learning Centers Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

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Background

Case for Evaluation

According to the South Dakota Department of Education (SD DOE), 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programs provide a range of services that support student learning and development in South Dakota. Examples of such services include tutoring and mentoring, homework help, academic enrichment (such as hands-on science or technology programs), community service opportunities, as well as music, arts, sports, and cultural activities.

This evaluation was commissioned to provide insights into if and how 21st CCLC program activities result in positive changes for participating youth and families. This evaluation served the following purposes: (1) to synthesize the overall progress made and challenges faced by 21st CCLCs for the SD DOE, (2) to give grantees a greater understanding of their progress, and (3) to fulfill reporting requirements as outlined by the United States federal government.

About South Dakota 21st Century Community Learning Centers

21st CCLC sites are located across all of South Dakota, from the large metro areas of Sioux Falls and Rapid City, to small towns such as Summit and Mission. The map below provides an overview of site locations across the state and indicates communities that are home to more than one 21st CCLC grantee.

Each site operates independently but all work to serve the unique needs of their communities. 21st CCLC programs must serve students that attend schools eligible for school-wide Title I programs or schools where 40% or more enrolled students are eligible for free and reduced lunch as determined by federal guidelines. Program locations must be located in public school facilities or in facilities that are as available and accessible to students as public school facilities.

The 21st CCLC grant consists of five annual grant award periods that run from July 1st to June 30th of each fiscal year. 21st CCLC grant applicants must apply for a minimum of $50,000. Funding and grant decisions are made by a committee who evaluate applicants in the following six categories: Need for Project, Quality of Project Design, Adequacy of Resources, Quality of Management Plans, Cooperation, and Goals/Evaluation. Funding for years two through five of the project is dependent upon continued federal appropriations to support this program.

Evaluation Results

The following analysis shares observed, high-level trends in 21st CCLC site administration, student demographics, student participation, and a qualitative site success index. The site administration section covers trends related to operating hours and differences between school year and summer operations. The student demographics section shares summary statistics regarding the overall student population served by 21st CCLC sites in South Dakota. The student participation section discusses student attendance overall and also for groups of particular interest. Finally, the qualitative site success index ranks 21st CCLC statewide performance in 20 focus areas representing four key program operation spheres of (1) youth development, (2) partnerships, (3) academic programming, and (4) administration.

Site Administration

Analysis of data provided by 21st CCLC staff and stakeholders revealed trends regarding 21st CCLC site hours spent serving children. Hours of operations varied between the school year and the summer season. During the school year 41 of the total 51 sites operated Monday through Friday, 7 of which operated during an intersession. Of the remaining sites, 8 operated 4 days a week. One site operated for only 3 days and another operated for 6. Sites averaged 3 hours of programming per day, with programming time ranging from 1 hour per day to more than 6.
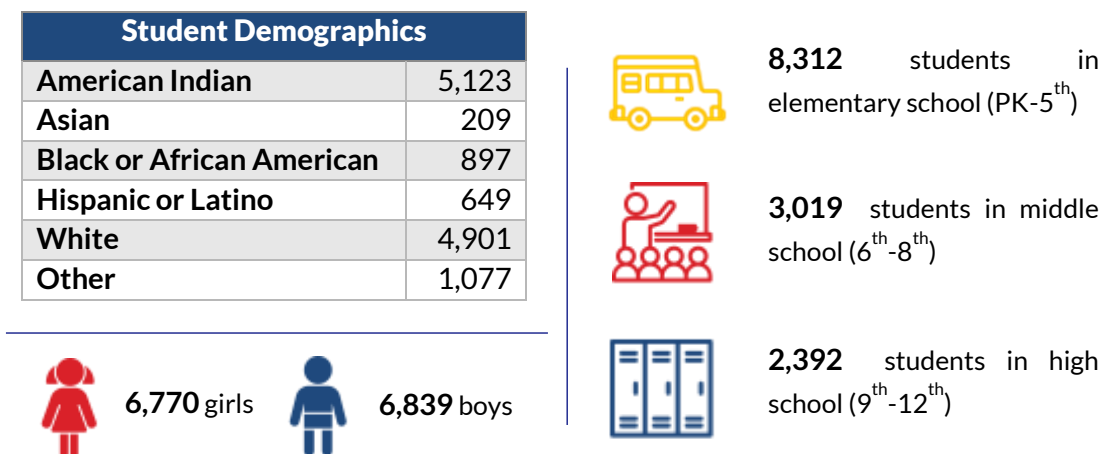
Site operations varied more during the summer months. A total of 47 sites operated during the summer while 4 sites did not offer summer programming. Of those operating, 40 offered programming 5 days per week. An additional 6 sites were open 4 days per week and 1 site was open 6 days per week. Sites averaged 7 hours of programming per day, with programming time ranging from 2.5 hour per summer day to almost 12. Overall, 21st CCLC sites were highly responsive to the needs of both students and parents, and foster an environment outside of both school and the home that was both safe and conducive to learning.

Site Staffing Patterns		
	School Year	Summer
Full-time staff paid from 21st CCLC funds	106	123
Part-time staff paid from 21st CCLC funds	446	300
Total	**552**	**423**
Full-time staff paid from other sources	106	141
Part-time staff paid from other sources	380	405
Total	**486**	**546**

The staffing data provided by 21st CCLC sites also provided insights into overall patterns of operation across 21st CCLC sites. First, all 21st CCLC sites require a great deal of scheduling flexibility and therefore rely heavily on part-time staff to meet site needs. Additionally, 21st CCLCs were slightly more reliant upon part-time staff during the school year, as opposed to the summer. Finally, the table on the preceding page shows that, overall, sites were more likely to use 21st CCLC funds to support their staffing needs during the school year than during the summer, and therefore were more reliant upon external funding sources for staffing during the summer.

Student Demographics

Promoting diversity and inclusion is a core value of the 21st CCLC program. SD DOE encourages 21st CCLC grantees to offer programming that focuses not only on academic enrichment but also serves the needs of increasingly diverse student and family populations. This includes grantees efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

Student Demographics	
American Indian	5,123
Asian	209
Black or African American	897
Hispanic or Latino	649
White	4,901
Other	1,077

6,770 girls   **6,839** boys

8,312 students in elementary school (PK-5th)

3,019 students in middle school (6th-8th)
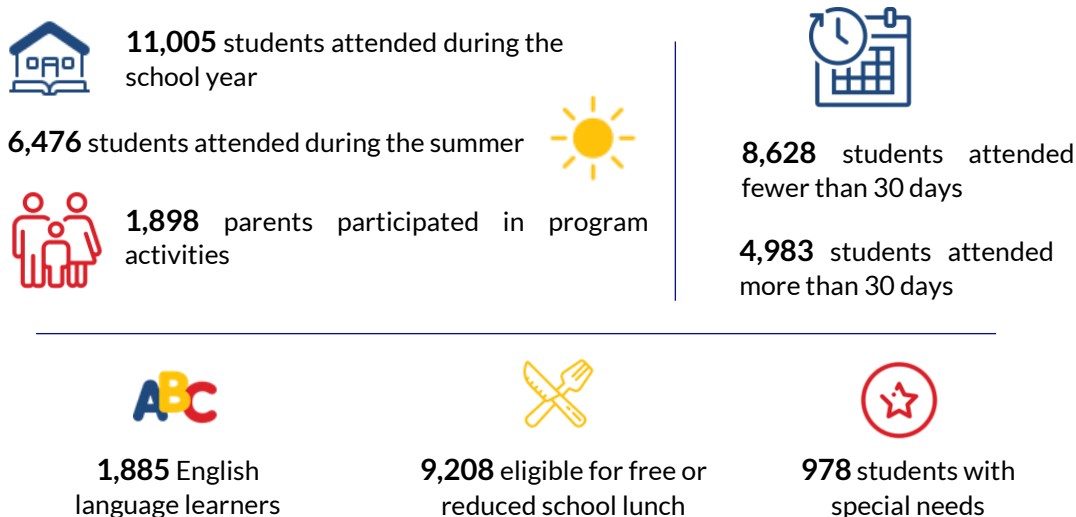
2,392 students in high school (9th-12th)

21st CCLC grantees served students representing diverse grade levels, races, ethnicities, and genders. Sites collectively served 8,312 elementary students, 3,019 middle school students, and 2,392 high school students. Sites served students from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Sites also served an almost equal number of male (6,839) and female (6,770) students.

Student Participation

The SD DOE supports 21st CCLC grantees that provide programming to a diverse student base throughout the year. Grantees are encouraged to offer an array of services and activities that engage students of all learning levels and abilities.

The graphic below shows that 21st CCLC grantees served an estimated 13,611 students over the 2017-18 school year and through the 2017 summer session. The majority of students participated in 21st CCLC programs for fewer than thirty days (63%), but a large fraction (37%) attended for more than thirty days.

11,005 students attended during the school year

6,476 students attended during the summer

1,898 parents participated in program activities

8,628 students attended fewer than 30 days

4,983 students attended more than 30 days

1,885 English language learners

9,208 eligible for free or reduced school lunch

978 students with special needs

The quantitative survey also showed a good deal of diversity in student backgrounds and learning levels. Across all 21st CCLCs, an estimated 1,885 students (14%) were English-language learners and a further estimated 978 (7%) were students with special needs.

Qualitative Self-Assessment Site Success Index

In consultation with SD DOE, the Black Hills Knowledge Network (BHKN) used the Wisconsin After-School Continuous Improvement Process assessment tool (WASCIP) as the qualitative stakeholder self-assessment tool. WASCIP is an evidence-based assessment developed by the National Community Education Association. Respondents were asked to rate their program within four key program operation spheres: (1) youth development, (2) partnerships, (3) academic programming, and (4) administration. These four primary operation spheres were further divided into twenty focus areas. Staff rated their proficiency in each of the focus areas according to a formal rating system. The table below describes the possible ratings, their assigned numeric value, and the defined level of operational activity.

Rating	Numeric Score	Definition
Exemplary	4	The program intentionally creates and adjusts systems and environments that support positive youth development & achievement of youth outcomes.
Proficient	3	The program has begun to connect policies & practices so that they produce an environment that directly supports a goal of positive youth development.
Emerging	2	The program begins to move beyond the basics into strengthening policies & practices that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness in the program.
Basic	1	Policies and practices exist within the program but are under-developed formally and informally.
Not Applicable	0	The program does not currently offer programming in the area.

Using the numeric scores assigned to the various ratings, BHKN aggregated site responses and constructed a success index to identify key areas of success and challenge. The success index was created by computing an average score across all sites and focus areas. The average score was assigned an index

value of 100. The average score was assigned the index value of 100 and scores above 100 hundred indicate that more 21st CCLCs rated their performance as Proficient or Exemplary than was typical. Importantly, the index only ranks relative performance, not absolute performance. For example, a success score of 110 in a given focus area *does not* mean that sites were 10% more exemplary than average in that category. The success index should only be used to understand broad patterns of where 21st CCLCs rated themselves stronger verses weaker.

The success index shows that 21st CCLCs performed very well in four key focus areas: Program Climate, Management, Resources, and Staff Capacity. Each of these areas had success scores that were far higher than the average score of 100.

The success index also indicates focus areas that proved challenging for 21st CCLCs. These focus areas were Academic Enrichment in Social Studies and Science, and Youth Leadership. Each of these areas had success scores that were much lower than the average score. Forming partnerships with outside groups also appeared to be a challenge as Community Partnerships and School Partnerships both scored similarly low on the success index.

Focus Area	Success Index	Rank
Program Climate	120	1
Management	118	2
Resources	118	3
Staff Capacity	115	4
Program Goals	106	5
Family Partnerships	105	6
Evaluation and Data Collection	105	7
Recreation Programming	104	8
Arts Enrichment	103	9
Youth Engagement	101	10
Marketing and Advocacy	99	11
Funding	97	12
Academic Enrichment in Literacy	93	13
Health and Safety	91	14
Academic Enrichment in Mathematics	90	15
Homework Assistance	89	16
Community Partnerships	89	17
School Partnerships	88	18
Academic Enrichment in Social Studies and Science	87	19
Youth Leadership	82	20

Case Studies

Site-specific case-study vignettes were identified by BHKN and SD DOE staff according to the results of the assessments. These case studies were intended to illuminate outstanding achievement in particular focus areas. They serve as examples to other 21st CCLC grantees of successful approaches to challenges faced by South Dakotan programs. They were as follows.

Red Cloud Indian School After-School Program Case Study

The Red Cloud Indian School After-School Program (Red Cloud) primarily serves American Indian youth on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Red Cloud stood out for its commitment to engaging with the families of its 542 participating K-12 students.

Although 21st CCLCs rated Family Partnerships above average, with a success score of 105, many 21st CCLC grantees voiced struggles with engaging student families on a consistent basis in the comment section. This is an area in which Red Cloud Indian School excels. Staff credit commitment to the Lakota way of life with ensuring that family participation is at the heart of their programming. During the school year, community meals are leveraged to draw entire families, not just parents, to support their students. During the summer, day-long family events are scheduled on weekends to maximize attendance. Red Cloud also holds special field trips in increase family participation in the summer including private movie screenings and visits to Crazy Horse Monument, among others.

To ensure that families continue to be aware of school programming and events, Red Cloud leverages the SchoolMessenger digital communication system. Initially launched to disseminate information about weather related school closures, the system enables Red Cloud staff to share information with students and families by phone call, email, and text message.

Red Cloud also excels at designing after-school programming that is responsive to youth input. Red Cloud's after-school program, which runs Monday through Thursday each week, includes a wide variety of clubs and student groups that are specifically tailored to student interest. Programming starts immediately after school, with staff consisting exclusively of daytime teachers. Students are welcomed with a healthy snack followed by recess time. Homework help is offered to students in need. The majority of programming, however, is organized as club activities. Because after-school staff are also the students' daytime teachers, they do their best to ensure that club activities reflect their students' passions.

Many clubs work towards regional competitions, especially those that occur during the Lakota Nation Invitational (an annual multi-sport and activity tournament held each winter in Rapid City). During the summer, students participate in a four-week program focused on academic achievement during the first four days with a fifth day field trip for those that attend all four days. Field trips are often to locations

outside the reservation. These trips are meant to be fun for students but also introduce them to navigating urban areas.

Summit School District Out-of-School-Time Program Case Study

The Summit School District Out-of-School-Time Program (Summit OST) provides a strong example of successful Community Partnerships. Summit OST students are now viewed as the go-to volunteer organization in the community after only two years of existence. Summit OST serves approximately 114 students, most of whom are in elementary and middle school.

Staff felt that it was imperative to ensure that students of Summit, a town of less than 300 residents, engage with the local and neighboring communities. During the summer, student groups are given their choice of enrichment activities during the week. Students with consistent attendance are allowed to participate in Friday field trips to locations as far as the South Dakota Discovery Center in Pierre, over 200 miles away.

Staff shared that students were particularly invested in volunteering and actively lobbied for more opportunities. Staff were met with tremendous community support as the program transitioned from approaching local businesses for projects to being actively sought out for student volunteers. Students have completed projects for local businesses including painting benches, clearing brush, and even planting a garden for a senior living center.

Students also devised a system of measurement for their volunteer work. Each student tracks their donated hours on a bar chart, with pieces of tape corresponding with number of hours worked. This board, along with other OST student projects, are showcased at the end-of-summer family night.

Summit OST programming is so popular that children from other school districts attend in the off-school months. Staff credit their active programming and free community meal program (subsidized by a grant from the Rural Child Poverty Nutrition Center with the University of Kentucky) for much of this success.

Belle Fourche Middle School JAM Case Study

Though many programs struggled with retaining collaborative and transparent relationships with their local school districts, Belle Fourche Middle School JAM holds a special relationship with the school district. The program was primarily initiated by the school district and holds most programming on school property. Program staff have close relationships with school teachers. If teachers feel that their students struggled to grasp a concept or need extra support, it is not uncommon for them to seek out JAM staff to incorporate concepts into their afterschool programming. Teacher initiated help is also common. When program staff observe students struggling with homework, they feel comfortable enlisting their teacher to collaborate to address the student's needs.

Staff identified the Mind Your Own Business Activity as one of their most successful youth leadership activities, which also furthers the program's visibility within the school and community. This activity has students experience the process of owning a business to develop math, entrepreneurship, art, and social skills. Students first develop a business plan by identifying a product they can make to sell. They then apply for a monetary loan from program staff to purchase materials for their business. (Staff are adamant that students have access to all they need without relying on family contributions.)

Students then create their product, establish a marketing plan, and price their items. School staff, families, and community members are then invited to an open market where they purchase student products. Previous products for sale have ranged from handmade sugar scrubs to antler-handle S'more pokers. Students then repay their loan to Belle Fourche JAM and keep the remaining profits.

The Belle Fourche Middle School Jam program serves 86 elementary and 314 middle school students in the Belle Fourche school district.

Rapid City YMCA - Youth Institute Case Study

Youth Leadership emerged as the lowest scoring focus area for 21st CCLC grantees. One program, however, noticeably emerged as successful in this area. The Youth Institute (YI), a project of the Rapid City YMCA, was established in June 2012 as the first Youth Institute project outside of California. The Youth Institute gives students the opportunity to develop skills in digital media arts through the framework of youth development, character building, and leadership. Students learn programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, & Premiere. They also learn photography, how to write a script, film and edit a short film, and writing and designing a magazine. The YI program is comprised of two components: a full-day summer program that runs for 8 weeks between June and July and an after-school program that runs from September to May.

Each summer, the Youth Institute selects students through an application process that includes an essay of intent and an informal interview. Staff look for students that need a place to connect socially, many of whom may not have established friend groups or teams at school or stable family situations at home.

YI has a unique approach to staffing. Though the program has two full time adult employees, the remaining staff positions needed for the summer camp are filled by graduates of their program that are still in high school. They work with incoming students who, in addition to skill building classes, are tasked with making their own short film. Groups are formed and then expected to draft a script, storyboard the shots, cast actors, film, edit, and apply special effects to their films. Once complete, these short films are debuted in front of friends, family, and the larger community. Though staff assist with certain skills, the process is almost exclusively student led.

Staff credit their "I do, We do, You do" mentality with ensuring that students grow to be self-directed youth leaders. Staff enable younger students to lead their own learning path and encourage older students to teach skills and lessons to the younger students.

Technical Assistance Requests

21st CCLC sites were asked to share ways in which they believed SD DOE could provide additional assistance to their program. Technical assistance requests emerged from the data in the following categories: communication, evaluation and data collection, standardized and recommended materials, funding, state and national awareness, and training.

Communication

Requests for help with communication arose as the most prominent theme across all program areas and sites. Communication barriers were identified between a variety of stakeholders including; 21st CCLC staff, school administrators, families of students, and partner schools. Communication with SD DOE staff was not identified as an issue. In fact, respondents voiced gratitude for how accessible SD DOE staff have been for questions or recommendations. Many sites shared their appreciation for emails from SD DOE staff that shared programming opportunities and successes around the state.

A substantial number of sites reported a desire to improve communication with their partner schools and school districts. Sites shared desires for tools that would enable them to better collaborate effectively and build working relationships. Many teams shared that a closer relationship with school-day staff and teachers would help them better understand student progress, classroom objectives, and standards. Some sites expressed interest in hearing how other program sites had successfully gained information regarding specific student's learning needs.

"Although they appreciate us and we have a good personal relationship with them, we struggle to build the communication bridge in which we can share information regarding the students' assignments and awareness of what they are working on standard-wise within their classrooms."

- 21st CCLC Teacher on communication with school-day teachers

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Respondents also identified the need for better lines of communication between 21st CCLC administration and 21st CCLC staff. Sites varied in their approach to staff meetings and communication. Though it is unclear how SD DOE could facilitate growth in this area, some sites shared a desire for more consistent communication tools (i.e. tools to send messages or curriculum back and forth).

Some sites identified communication with parents and families to be an area of concern. Responses focused on a range of issues from engendering family ownership of their role in their child's programming to soliciting feedback from parents. One site asked for examples of parent surveys that have been successful at other sites.

Evaluation and Data Collection

Many sites shared desires to better employ data to drive programming. Sites also reported a need for improved avenues for youth input in programming, from surveys to reflection time. Sites look to SD DOE and fellow 21st CCLC grantees for further advice and guidance on how to make data-driven decisions.

Standardized and Recommended Materials

A number of sites voice the need for more standardized and SD DOE recommended materials. The largest

single resource request revolved around partner identification, recruitment, and retention. A number of sites particularly requested a list of local organizations and businesses that could serve as potential program partners in their service area. Others also asked for guidance on how to involve guest speakers that promote youth development or leadership. Partner identification was also seen as a means by which the sites could further their sustainability with either in-kind or fiscal donations from local partners.

Sites shared a desire for the standardized SD DOE materials pertaining to the following:

- 21st CCLC program manuals with guides to best practices in all areas that are found to create a high-quality afterschool program.
- Educational materials that are flexible for after-school programs.
- Resources with suggestion on how best to use community partners.
- Differentiated learning training resources.
- Resources on state standards and best practices.
- Resources on how to talk to students about diversity.
- Leadership activities and ideas for students.
- Resources that relate to increasing funding security and diversity.
- Marketing or program promotion assistance or materials.

Funding

As stated above, many 21st CCLC sites are fully dependent on SD DOE funding. Though all sites voiced need for more sustainable funding sources, specific smaller-scale funding requests also emerged. Sites shared the need for financial support for travel to and participation in professional development opportunities, the purchase sports equipment for their programs, and small grants that would allow their site to diversify their existing program activities.

State and National Awareness

Respondent sites indicated a keen interest in national and state standards. Sites requested resources and trainings that would cover current state and national standards they are required to meet. Furthermore, sites also requested examples of best practices at the state and national level. One site also requested a statewide database that could serve the comparative information needs for sites and schools.

Training

Many sites called for a renewed effort for a variety of trainings for a variety of stakeholder groups. 21st CCLC teachers requested trainings in the following topic areas:

- Differentiated learning.
- Mental health and special needs.
- Behavior management.
- Social-emotional training.
- Increasing parent involvement.
- Youth development and leadership programming.
- Programming that integrates age groups.
- Diversity.

Responses also indicated keen interest in SD DOE continuing to provide training opportunities for administrators. Formalized opportunities were requested with modules on fiscal management, data collection, program evaluation, grants management, resource development, marketing, human resources, and staff development. Many also requested focus on how to build communication avenues between staff, program administrators, and even school boards.

About the Black Hills Knowledge Network

The Black Hills Knowledge Network (BHKN) is an online community information service that connects people to local information and ideas within the Black Hills region. BHKN staff work with librarians and community organizations to aggregate and organize local news, resources, data, and historical archives from a variety of sources. The organization also seeks to engage citizens and educate community leaders regarding the value of local information for decision-making.

In addition to the core activity of providing local content online, BHKN provides a limited amount of free technical assistance and training to local nonprofits, government, researchers, and community organizations, as well as to the general public. Staff are also available on a fee-for-service basis to consult on larger economic data projects, program monitoring and evaluation, report writing, needs assessments, and assistance with grant proposals or reports. These revenues help sustain the project and its public benefits.