

Benefits of the 2011 Before- and After-School Summer Expansion Grant Program



Introduction

WHY HAVE SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAMS?

Beyond offering supervision to children and youth while their parents are at work, summer youth programs have the potential to promote academic skill building and positive youth development. However, in a period of tight budgets, the question arises of whether summer programs for children attending low-performing schools are a good value. In this brief, we report the outcomes of the 2011 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Before- and After-School Summer Expansion Grant program in promoting academic achievement, student participation, and positive youth development.

“Summer learning loss” during the typical three-month summer vacation is a significant problem for many students. A recent review of research conducted by RAND¹ found that, on average, students in the fall perform one month below where they were in the spring, but losses are much greater for some than for others. Students from low-income families are more likely to experience learning loss; worse yet, the effects of summer learning loss are cumulative and over several years contribute significantly to the achievement gap between low-income and higher-income students. Low-income students also experience an “opportunity gap” over the summer, with fewer opportunities for informal learning experiences that promote positive youth development.²

The Michigan 21st CCLC Before- and After-School Summer Expansion Grant program was funded to provide expanded summer opportunities to students in grades K-9 who attend 21st CCLC after-school programs, which offer out-of-school-time activities for K-12 students in high-poverty areas. Twenty-nine grants were awarded to programs to enhance or expand their summer programs.



PURPOSES OF THE 2011 21ST CCLC SUMMER EXPANSION GRANTS

Supported through the Michigan Legislature with a \$3 million appropriation to the Department of Human Services, the summer expansion grants had three general purposes:

- To provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including tutorial services, to help students, particularly students who attend high-priority schools, meet performance standards in core academic subjects
- To offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities designed to reinforce and complement academic programs offered during the regular school year
- To offer families served by the community learning centers additional opportunities for education and involvement

Grantees were required to select at least four goals for their program from a list that included improved academic achievement, increased student participation and engagement, increased family involvement, community collaboration, and a range of positive youth development goals, such as drug and violence prevention, personal or Internet safety, art, music, nutrition, recreation, technology, vocational education, and character education programs.

Results

Overall, summer program grantees were successful in improving students' academic performance, increasing participation, and enhancing positive youth development. Table 1 summarizes the results for academic performance and youth development goals.

Table 1: Summary of Student Outcomes

Goal	Number of Grantees	Improved	Improved or stayed stable
Academic achievement	19		
Reading		31%	76%
Math		40%	77%
New skills and interests	11	55%	89%
Increase nutritional awareness	6	38%	81%
Increase leadership skills	6	20%	86%
Job skills	1	33%	83%
Preparedness for self sufficiency	1	24%	81%
Drug and alcohol prevention	3	24-31%	88-92%
Pregnancy prevention	1	45%	85%
Coping with bullying	2	27%	75%
Aggression and bullying	2	31%	75%
Juvenile violence and gang-related activities	3	15-30%	94%

Note: Improved is defined as increased by at least ½ standard deviation. Drug and alcohol prevention and juvenile violence and gang-related activities were each measured in two ways by different grantees.





IMPROVED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

On average, students in the 19 programs targeting academics showed significant improvements in both reading and math scores from the beginning to end of the program, measured by pre- and post-tests.³

Students improved significantly in reading

- Almost one-third (31%) of students improved substantially
- Boys and girls at all grade levels showed significant improvements
- 76% improved or stayed stable, indicating reduced summer learning loss

Students improved significantly in math

- 40% of students improved substantially
- 77% improved or stayed stable, indicating reduced summer learning loss
- Older students (7-9th grade) were particularly likely to improve, with 52% showing substantial increases

INCREASED PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Ten grantees focused on increased student participation and reduced dropout rates and 17 grantees targeted increased parental involvement and improved family functioning.

Student participation increased significantly

- Compared to summer 2010, summer 2011 attendance increased significantly
- The number of students attending increased 54%
- Average daily attendance increased 50%
- The number of hours of activities increased 38% and the number of program days increased 16%

Participation in family events increased significantly

- Compared to summer 2010, the number of participants in 2011 family events increased by 366%
- The number of days of family events increased by 86%, but total number of hours of family events decreased 28%

INCREASES IN POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Grantees targeted a number of goals intended to promote positive youth development and social-emotional functioning. Table 1 shows the number of grantees who targeted each outcome and the degree of improvement in each area from the perspective of the students who participated.

A significant number of students developed new skills and interests

- Students improved significantly in perceived knowledge and skills in areas such as sports, gardening, social skills, computers, babysitting, and problem-solving
- 55% said they improved substantially
- 76% found the program consistently engaging and challenging

A significant number of students reported improving in other skills related to positive youth development and improved social-emotional functioning

- 38% of students improved substantially in nutritional awareness; older students were particularly likely to benefit
- 28% of students improved substantially in perceived leadership skills
- 15-45% of students perceived they had improved in other youth development areas targeted by the summer programs

INCREASED COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Increasing community partnerships is an effective way to improve program quality with limited resources.⁴ Twelve grantees targeted increased community collaboration as a program goal.

- Grantees collaborated effectively with community partners/vendors to expand services for participants
- Partnerships permitted programs to offer more activities and services than in previous summers

Conclusions

The results suggest that the summer expansion grant program was an effective way to expand services to students who need them, help students retain academic gains from the previous school year, and assist students' development in areas important for success in school and life. Program participants improved significantly in academic performance and had reduced summer learning loss, increased their summer program participation, and reported significant improvements in a number of areas related to positive youth development and social-emotional functioning.





1. McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., Schwartz, H. L., Bodilly, S. J., McInnis, B., Lichter, D.S., & Cross, A.B. (2011). *Making summer count: How summer programs can boost children's learning*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. Retrieved from <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1120.html>

2. Vandell, D. L., Resiner, E. R., & Pierce, K. M. (2007, October). *Outcomes linked to high-quality afterschool programs: Longitudinal findings from the study of promising afterschool programs* [Report to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation]. Retrieved from <http://www.gse.uci.edu/childcare/pdf/afterschool/PP%20Longitudinal%20Findings%20Final%20Report.pdf>

3. Data were available for 2,042 students in reading, and 1,759 in math.

4. McCombs et al., 2011.

Data for this report were drawn from several sources: EZReports after-school program reporting system; pre/post tests of academic skills; and program administrator and student surveys.

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