

Michigan 21st Century Community Learning Centers Evaluation

2014-2015 Annual Report

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Highlights for the 2014-2015 Program Year

Michigan 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs) served diverse groups of primarily low-income and low-performing students.

Michigan 21st CCLC afterschool programs provide academic learning and enrichment activities such as sports, arts, youth development, technology, and health/nutrition education to youth who often do not have access to such experiences (Afterschool Alliance, 2016). In 2014-2015, 26,518 youth participated in 21st CCLC programs, 84% of whom qualified for free/reduced price meals and were academically low performing. Enrollments were evenly distributed across gender, with about a fourth of participants being returning students for elementary sites, and a third for middle and high school sites.

Programs were relatively successful in sustaining participation of low-performing students.

- Almost two-thirds (65%) of low-performing students attended at least 30 days, compared to 70% of other students
- Forty-three percent of low-performing students attended at least 60 days, but only 28% attended 90 days or more

More students participated in academic activities and lessons similar to school-day academics than in enrichment activities based on embedded learning.

- 83% participated in academic activities that are similar to or closely connected with school-day learning (i.e., lessons, tutoring, and homework help)

- Fewer youth (55%) participated in academic enrichment activities that allow students to learn academic skills through hands-on projects, such as science experiments or writing a news blog
- To transform afterschool programs from an extended school day/childcare model to an enhanced learning environment, programs are encouraged to provide more hands-on learning activities

Students were very satisfied with the learning opportunities at the program, but fewer mentioned that they had opportunities for making decisions about the overall program or the activities they participated in.

Students at all grade levels expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their learning experiences at the afterschool programs:

- 85-90% thought the program helped them develop mastery and build new skills
- 80-89% said programs helped them with schoolwork, provided them with opportunities to learn in a fun way, and improved their attitudes about school and their academic performance.
- 50%-68% expressed that they had opportunities to choose their activities, make decisions about projects or the overall program, or participate in a youth advisory committee.

Programs offered a wide variety of enrichment activities but participation rates varied.

- Most students participated in sports, recreation, youth development, and arts activities
- Far fewer participated in technology activities and very few in any health-related activities

- Since schools offer little in the way of health education, there is an opportunity for afterschool programs to supplement and enhance school-day learning in this area
- As technology literacy is so important in the 21st century workplace, programs are encouraged to look for ways to get more students involved in these activities

Turnover of program staff remains relatively high from year to year.

- 37% of the programs could not maintain a good staff retention rate (76-100% same staff) within a year
- 43% of the programs lost half or more staff year since last year
- Retention strategies from the field include offering salaries comparable to school-day staff with reasonable yearly increases, recognizing staff's contributions, giving staff more responsibilities, and providing staff with opportunities to grow

Students who reported having more social and emotional learning (SEL) experiences in their afterschool programs showed greater improvement in school behavior than did other students based on teachers' perspectives.

- Teachers perceived greater improvement in students who said they experienced more SEL in the afterschool programs
- This difference was significant even when we accounted for other program or student factors that were related to improvement in school behavior (such as high program quality, being a female or being a student with limited English proficiency)

Introduction

The Michigan Department of Education website¹ describes the 21st CCLC program as follows:

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Grant Program's focus is to provide expanded academic enrichment opportunities for children attending low-performing schools. Tutorial services and academic enrichment activities are designed to help students meet local and state academic standards in subjects such as reading and math. In addition, 21st CCLC programs provide youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, technology education programs, art, music and recreation programs, counseling and character education to enhance the academic component of the program.

This report describes the organizations that received grants, the organizations that operated the program sites, and the types of activities that program sites provided. It also describes who participated in the program, the types of activities they took part in, and the outcomes that program participants have achieved.

Following the same approach used in previous years, the 2014-2015 Annual Report continues the use of the leading indicators (with the symbol ⓘ) to highlight program-level quality characteristics that are known from research and practice to affect student development. Although these quality measures are important to creating a context for overall development, they are not necessarily directly related to academic improvement.

In the outcomes section, we also analyze how students' social and emotional learning (SEL) experiences in the program relate to improvements in their academic outcomes, taking into account the characteristics of programs and students that might also affect their performance.

¹ http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6530_6809-39974--,00.html

Who Participates in the Program?

Who participates in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) programs statewide is influenced by both the types of programs that receive grants (grantees) and the characteristics of students that they recruit into their respective programs. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) provides guidelines for entities applying for 21st CCLC grants, specifying: (1) types of organizations that may apply (such as public schools, charter schools, community organizations); (2) program factors that may qualify for priority points (such as serving a school eligible for Title I school-wide funding, serving students in 6th-8th grades, or having a faith-based organization as a partner); and (3) status of students and families served by the program (such as eligibility for free/reduced price meals and/or living in poverty). Priority is given to programs serving low-performing schools in high-poverty areas. For details about priority points relevant to the grantees who were participating in 2014-2015, contact Michigan Department of Education 21st CCLC consultants.

Grantees

Table 1 shows an overview of grantees over the past four years. In the 2014-2015 program year, 80 grants were awarded to 36 grantees who oversaw 305 sites. Among the 305 sites, 275 operated during the school year and completed the Annual Report Form. This year, there were no new grantees. The largest number of grants went to local school districts (16), followed by nonprofit/community-based organizations (12) and public school academies (4). Two grants each went to intermediate school districts and universities. This distribution of grantees has remained quite stable over the past four years. As in past years, the majority of the 21st CCLC grantees served elementary grades (147), or elementary and middle school combined (29). Eighty-two served middle school students only, and 8 served both middle and high school students. The fewest number (47) served high school students, down from 62 sites last year.

Table 1. Characteristics of Grantees Funded, 2011-2015

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>2011-12 Grantees</i>	<i>2012-13 Grantees</i>	<i>2013-14 Grantees</i>	<i>2014-15 Grantees</i>
Overall				
Number of funded grants	90	89	84	80
Number of grantees	48 (53 ^a)	44 (49 ^a)	40 (44 ^a)	36(41)
Number of new grantees	0	14	3	0
Number of sites reporting on the Annual Report Form	332	292	266	275
Cohorts				
D	90	30		
E	90	89	33	
F	160	157	155	24
G		54	56	53
H			69	71
I				157
Grantees' fiduciary organizations				
Local school district	23	22	20	16
Intermediate school district	2	2	2	2
Public school academy (charter school)	6	5	5	4
Nonprofit/community-based organization	16	13	11	12
University	1	2	2	2
Sites serving students of different grades or grade combinations^b				
Elementary	150	135	122	147
Middle school	75	69	76	82
High school	53	60	62	47
Elementary and middle school	48	53	40	29
Middle and high school	12	11	11	8
Elementary, middle and high school	2	2	2	1
^a Numbers in parentheses treat the multiple subcontractors that Detroit Public Schools and Grand Rapids Public Schools used to provide their programs as grantees.				
^b Calculated based on the grades of students served.				

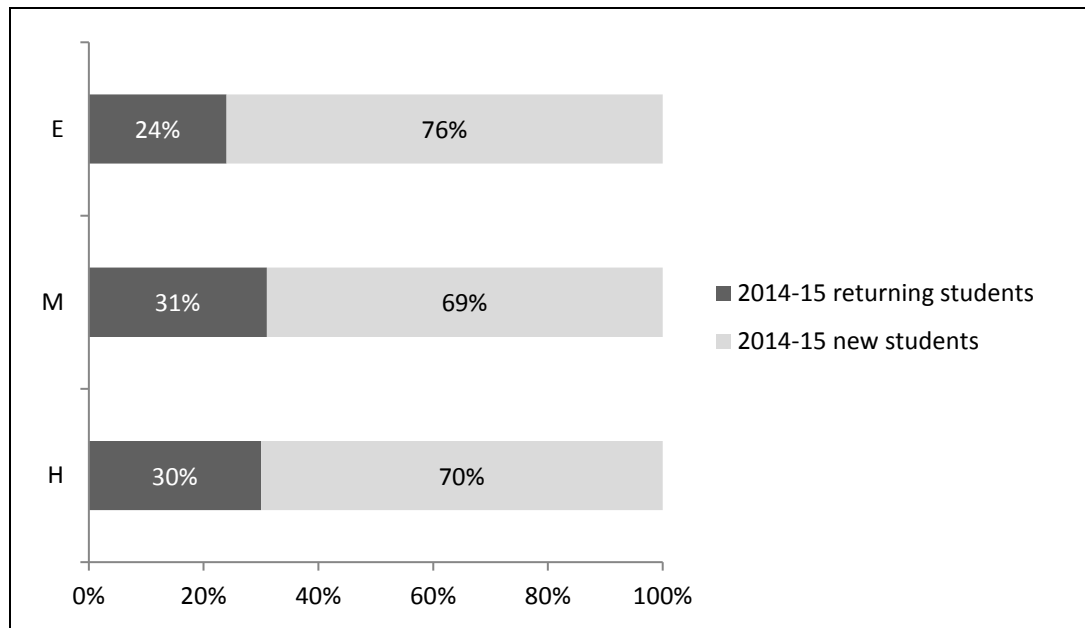
Participating Students

Gender, Grade Level, and Family Income

In the 2014-2015 program year, 26,518 students enrolled in the program. This number is about 2,700 students fewer than the previous year, but four fewer grants were awarded. As had been true in past years, students were almost

equally divided between boys (13,113; 49%) and girls (13,405; 51%). Most participants were in elementary grades (K-5th grades; 13,735; 52%), with middle school students second (6th-8th grades; 7,932; 30%). The smallest group were high school students (9th-12th grades; 4,850; 18%). Among those youth whose school outcome data were returned (21,295), about 84% were low income, which is defined as eligible for free/reduced price meals.

Figure 1. Percent of New and Returning Students



E = elementary school; M = middle school; H = high school

New vs. Returning Students

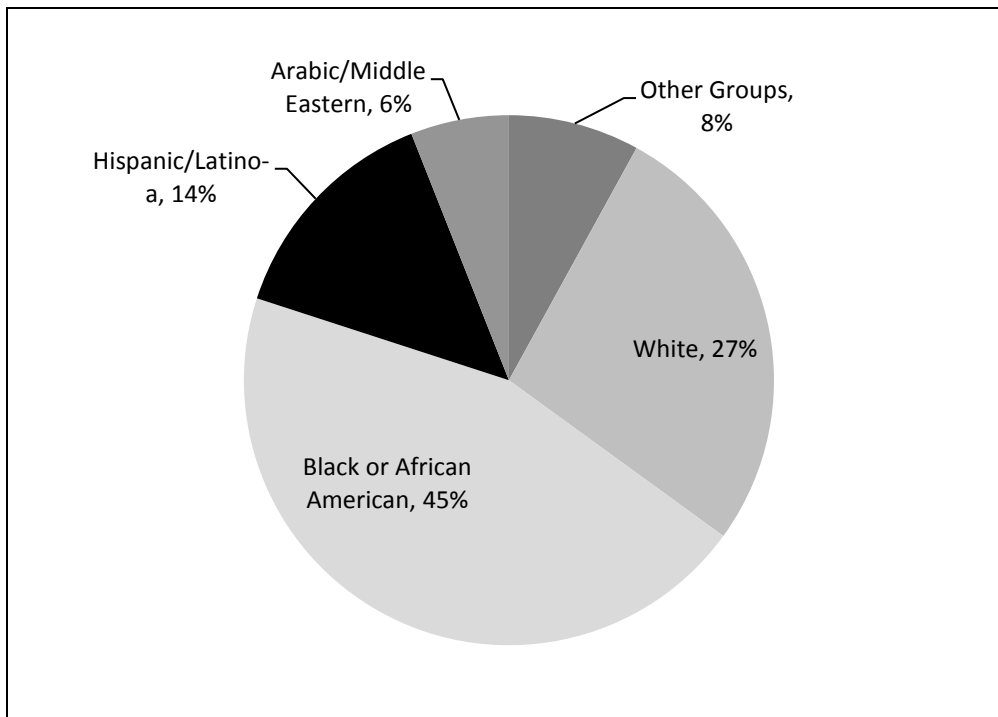
Participants could be either newly enrolled in this program year or returning for a second or third year. Getting students to participate for multiple years is important because sustained participation over time can lead to greater benefits, although the ability to do so can be limited as students move away or up to higher grades and different schools. Figure 1 shows the average proportion of students who were new in 2014-2015 or were returning from previous years. This year, middle and high school programs had a somewhat higher proportion of returning students (30%-31%) than did elementary programs (24%). This finding suggests the elementary school programs were more active in reaching new students,

while middle and high school programs maintained more consistent enrollment over time.

Race/Ethnicity

Figure 2 shows the distribution of participants according to race/ethnicity. Almost half (45%) of the students identified themselves as Black or African American; twenty-seven percent identified themselves as White, 14% as Hispanic/Latino-a, and 6% Arab/Middle Eastern. Eight percent identified themselves as part of “some other group.” The large proportion of non-White participants reflects the urban focus of many programs.

Figure 2. Race of Student Participants



Parents’ Reasons for Enrolling Their Children

Parents who completed the end-of-year survey rated the importance they placed on various reasons for enrolling their child in the program. Table 2 shows the percent of parents at each grade level who rated each reason as “very important.”

**Table 2. Parents' Reasons for Enrollment by Grade Level:
Percent who Reported "Very Important"**

<i>Reason</i>	<i>GRADE LEVEL</i>			
	<i>E</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>All</i>
It is a safe place for my child after school.	92%	89%	87%	90%
I hope it will help my child do better in school.	86%	82%	86%	85%
It provides dependable afterschool care.	79%	72%	68%	76%
It will help my child stay out of trouble.	78%	77%	79%	78%
It provides affordable afterschool care.	75%	68%	65%	72%
School staff suggested that my child enroll.	52%	50%	60%	53%
My child has a disability or learning problem that this program can help.	46%	42%	49%	45%
NOTE: E = elementary school; M = middle school; H = high school.				

Reasons for enrolling children in the afterschool program have remained stable over multiple program years. Most parents at all grade levels enrolled their child to have a safe place for their child to go after school (90% overall). Most also thought participation would help the child do better at school (85% overall) and help their child stay out of trouble (78% overall). The proportion of parents who considered these reasons important or very important were similar at all grade levels. About 70% also sought dependable and affordable child care, although these reasons were most important for parents of elementary school children. Almost half of parents at each grade level (42-49%) enrolled their children to obtain help for a disability or learning problem. This finding suggests that programs may be serving a substantial number of students with special learning needs.

Sustaining Participation of Students with Low Academic Performance

Students with lower academic performance at the beginning of the school year are likely to benefit more from the additional academic support offered by 21st CCLC programs because they have more room for improvement and may need additional instruction to catch up with their peers. For this report, low academic performance was defined as either having a GPA of 2.5 or below at the beginning

of the school year or on average over the year.² Table 3 shows the percent of low-performing students and other students who attended for 30, 60, and 90 days. As noted in the table footnote, far more low-performing students than other students participated in the program. This year programs were rather successful in sustaining participation for 30 days, with 65% of low-performing students and 70% of other students attending for at least 30 days. A moderate number of low-performing students (43%) sustained participation over 60 days, but only 27% attended at least 90 days.

Table 3. Percent of Students with Sustained Participation

<i>Days of Attendance</i>	<i>Low-Performing Students</i>	<i>Other Students</i>
30 days	65% ⓘ	70%
60 days	43% ⓘ	51%
90 days	27% ⓘ	35%
NOTE: Total students = 26,518; students with enough data to determine academic performance level = 18,146; low-performing students = 13,124; other students = 5,022.		

² There were two exceptions to this definition: (1) Students attending alternative high schools were considered to be academically low-performing regardless of GPA; (2) Students attending schools that did not give letter grades were considered to be low-performing if they received a report of “no credit” as their grade.

What Are Students Doing in the Program?

The primary purpose of the 21st CCLC program is to provide opportunities for academic enrichment to students attending low-performing schools. To enhance the academic component of the program, grantees must also offer other enrichment activities in various areas such as youth development, drug and violence prevention, technology education, the arts, and recreation.

Academics

Participation in Academics

All 21st CCLC programs were required to offer academics, and Table 4 shows that across the state, 97% of students did participate in some kind of academic activity.

Table 4. Percent of Students who Participated in Each Type of Academic Activity

<i>Type of Academic Activity</i>	<i>GRADE LEVEL</i>			
	<i>E</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>All</i>
Academic activities delivering lessons, homework help, tutoring and credit recovery ①	85%	84%	74%	83%
Academic enrichment activities focusing on embedded learning①	60%	54%	36%	55%
Homework help ①	62%	60%	27%	56%
Tutoring ①	9%	10%	29%	13%
Credit recovery	N/A	2%	11%	2%
STEM (science, technology, engineering, math)	73%	69%	50%	68%
Did not participate in any academic activities	4%	1%	3%	3%
NOTE: E = elementary school; M = middle school; H = high school. Students are counted as having participated in an activity if they attended the program for at least 10 days and attended that type of activity for at least 10 days.				

The majority of the program participants (83%) participated in academic activities that are similar to or closely connected with school-day learning (i.e., lessons, tutoring, and homework help). Compared to that, fewer youth (55%) participated in embedded type of academic enrichment activities that allow

students to learn academic skills through hands-on projects (i.e., science experiments or creating a news blog), or through non-academic activities (i.e., learning math through converting receipt measurements for cooking). To transform afterschool programs from an extended school day/childcare model to an extended and refreshing learning environment, programs are encouraged to provide more hands-on enrichment activities to enhance students' academic learning.

In addition, STEM programming (science, technology, engineering and math) was added as a new academic category in 2011-2012, and the proportion of students participating has increased from year to year at all grade levels. This year, half of high school students and about 70% of middle and elementary school students participated in STEM activities.

Program Policies for Academics

Table 5 shows program policies reported by administrators regarding participation in academics. Most program sites (83%) required homework help for all of their students, and 78% required other activities focused on academics. Twenty-six percent required tutoring for all students and an additional 18% required it for students with low academic performance. However, 25% did not require tutoring for any student, and 16% did not offer academic tutoring at all.

Table 5. Percent of Sites Requiring Various Levels of Participation in Academic Activities

<i>Type of Academic Activity</i>	<i>Required for All Students</i>	<i>Required for Students with Low Academic Performance</i>	<i>Required for Some Other Group of Students but not All</i>	<i>Not Required for any Student</i>	<i>Did not Offer Activities of this Type</i>
Homework help	83%	7%	5%	4%	1%
Tutoring (remedial help for specific academic subjects with no more than 1-3 students/staff)	26%	18%	16%	25%	16%
Other activities where academic learning is the main emphasis	78%	3%	9%	9%	1%
NOTE: Rows may not sum to 100% due to rounding.					

Student Perceptions of Academic Support

Table 6 shows students' perceptions of academic support provided by the afterschool program and how it affected their in-school performance.

Table 6. Students' Perceptions of the Quality of the Academic Support Provided by Their 21st CCLC program

<i>Item</i>	<i>GRADE LEVEL</i>			
	<i>E</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>All</i>
This program helps me get my homework done.	89%	89%	90%	89%
This program helps me understand what we are doing in class.	80%	78%	83%	80%
At this program, I learn school subjects in fun ways.	82%	77%	80%	80%
My grades have gotten better because of this program.	76%	75%	82%	77%
The school work I do matches the school work we do in regular class.	69%	68%	74%	70%
NOTE: E = elementary school; M = middle school; H = high school.				

Students at all grade levels were quite satisfied with the academic support programs offered. The majority of students at all grade levels thought the program helped them complete homework, understand classroom material, improve their grades, and learn in fun ways. High school students were more likely than elementary or middle school students to say the work they did in the program matched their school work; however, a majority of students at all grade levels agreed with this statement.

Other Enrichment Activities Offered

Program sites varied in the types of activities they offered to students in addition to academic activities. Table 7 shows the different types of activities offered by grade level. More than 80% of program sites offered recreation, sports, art, youth development, and special events. Elementary sites were more likely to offer recreation activities, whereas high school sites offered somewhat more youth development. More than half offered technology activities, with middle school sites offering the most. Almost half of elementary sites offered health activities but only 6% of high school sites did so. It should be noted that in this table, where information was reported at the site level instead of the student level, those sites crossing elementary, middle, and/or high school boundaries, such as a K-8 school, were omitted from both the elementary and the middle school categories but do appear in the All category.

Table 7. Types of Activities Offered by Program Sites

	GRADE LEVEL			
	<i>E</i> N=139	<i>M</i> N=81	<i>H</i> N=47	<i>All</i> N=305
Recreation (social events, games, free play, etc.)	90%	79%	68%	80%
Sport	96%	93%	85%	93%
Art	89%	90%	81%	88%
Youth development (character education, conflict resolution, life skills, resistance skills, etc.)	91%	88%	98%	91%
Special events	84%	85%	98%	87%
Technology	50%	72%	68%	60%
Health	50%	42%	6%	38%

NOTE: E = elementary school; M = middle school; H = high school.

Participation in Other Enrichment Activities

Table 8 shows the percent of students at each grade level who participated in different types of enrichment activities.

Table 8. Percent of Students who Participated in Each Type of Enrichment Activity

<i>Type of Activity</i>	GRADE LEVEL			
	<i>E</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>All</i>
Recreation	60%	45%	25%	50%
Sports	62%	48%	26%	52%
Arts①	44%	36%	25%	39%
Youth development ①	49%	45%	46%	48%
Technology①	12%	16%	10%	13%
Health/nutrition	11%	5%	0%	7%

NOTE: E = elementary school; M = middle school; H = high school. Students are counted as having participated in an activity if they attended the program for at least 10 days and attended that type of activity for at least 10 days.

More students participated in sports (52%) than any other type of activity, followed by recreation (50%), youth development (48%), and arts (39%). This is not surprising, as these activities are offered by the most programs. Fewer high school students than elementary or middle school students participated in any type of enrichment activity, with the exception of youth development. Although quite a few sites offered technology activities, only 10-16% of students at any level actually participated. Very few students took part in health-related activities.

Staff Priorities for Programming

Staff priorities for programming are important because they tell us where staff are likely to focus their efforts. In Table 9 we see that improving the academic achievement of students was the top priority reported by 59% of the 21st CCLC program staff. One-third (33%) of the staff said that helping low-performing students achieve grade-level proficiency and allowing youth to relax, play, and socialize were top program priorities. About 27% thought improving social and emotional development was a high priority.

Table 9. Percent of Staff Reporting that Each Area is a Top Program Priority (First or Second Priority)

<i>Program Area</i>	<i>Percent of Staff</i>
Improve the academic achievement of youth ①	59%
Enable the lowest-performing students to achieve grade-level proficiency ①	33%
Allow youth to relax, play, and socialize	33%
Improve the social and emotional development of youth	27%
Help youth keep up with homework ①	14%
Engage youth in fun leisure activities otherwise unavailable to them (i.e., arts, music, fitness, sports, etc.)	12%
Provide opportunities for youth to learn STEM or other academic subjects in a fun way	14%

Student Engagement in the Program

Participation in Decision-Making

To keep students involved in programs, it is important for them to have opportunities to make developmentally appropriate decisions about their activities.³ Table 10 shows the percent of participants who said the program offered them various opportunities for choice and decision making.

About two-thirds of students agreed that the program allowed them to make choices about their own activities and program activities and that their opinions matter. About 60% thought they had a voice in program decisions; however, only half had participated in a youth advisory committee. As might be expected,

³ Akiva, T., Cortina, K. S., & Eccles, J. S. (2012). Youth experience of program involvement: Belonging and cognitive engagement in organized activities. *Applied Developmental Psychology, 34*, 208-218.

students in the higher grades had more voice in program decisions than did younger students.

**Table 10. Opportunities for Choice, Decision-Making, and Governance:
Percent of Students who Agreed or Strongly Agreed ①**

<i>Survey Item: At This Program...</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>All</i>
I get to decide how to complete some projects or activities.	66%	67%	75%	68%
My opinions matter when decisions are made about the program.	63%	67%	77%	68%
I get to choose my activities.	53%	62%	78%	62%
I help decide what kinds of activities are offered.	57%	61%	72%	62%
I am involved in important decisions about this program.	56%	58%	68%	59%
I have participated in a youth advisory committee.	49%	49%	52%	50%

Skill Building

It is important to recognize that skill building and mastery are gradual processes for students, as very few people are good at doing things well the first time. Staff need to be accomplished at creating an environment where students know that mistakes are fine because they are learning, and that staff will recognize both perseverance and proficiency. Table 11 shows that a large majority of participants thought the program created an atmosphere in which students could feel free to build mastery of new skills.

**Table 11. Skill-Building and Mastery Orientation:
Percent of Students who Agreed or Strongly Agreed ①**

<i>Survey Item: At This Program...</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>All</i>
It's ok to make mistakes as long as you're learning.	89%	89%	93%	90%
Trying hard is very important.	89%	87%	90%	89%
How much you improve is really important.	87%	87%	90%	88%
It's important that we really understand the activities that we do.	86%	85%	90%	87%
Learning new ideas and concepts is very important.	88%	84%	90%	87%
Staff notice when I have done something well.	83%	84%	89%	85%

Sustaining Participation

Finally, being engaged helps sustain student participation (Akiva et. al., 2013⁴).

Table 12 suggests that the majority of students were engaged with the program

⁴ Akiva, T., Cortina, K. S., & Smith, C. (2014). Involving youth in program decision-making: How common and what might it do for youth? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 43(11), 1844-60. doi: 10.1007/s10964-

through learning new skills, thinking new thoughts, and doing things that they didn't get to do anywhere else.

Table 12. Engagement: Percent of Students who Agreed or Strongly Agreed ①

<i>Survey Item: At This Program...</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>All</i>
I get to do things I like to do.	77%	79%	85%	80%
The activities challenge me to learn new skills.	82%	78%	85%	81%
The activities we do really make me think.	77%	73%	83%	77%
I do things that I don't get to do anywhere else.	66%	64%	72%	66%

How is the 21st CCLC Program Connected to the School Day?

In order to improve students' school-day performance, the 21st CCLC program must be formally connected to their school-day classes. Table 13 lists various ways that the afterschool programs connect to the school day.

**Table 13. Formal Policies for Connecting with the School Day:
Percent of Sites Selecting Each Policy Option**

	<i>Percent of Sites</i>
Policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-day staff (teachers, principal, counselors) identified and recommended students to come to the afterschool program for academic support. 	93%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site coordinator responsibilities included communicating regularly with school-day staff about student needs. 	95%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objectives for the afterschool activities were intentionally influenced by grade-level content standards. 	84%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curricula used during the school day were used as part of the afterschool program's academic activities. 	79%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone was responsible for attending teacher staff meetings at least monthly and reporting back to the afterschool program. 	64%
Program staff	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corresponded with school-day teachers at least once per week about individual students' academic progress and needs 	80%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had access to and reviewed students' grades for each marking period and standardized test scores throughout the year 	67%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had a process for identifying low-achieving students within one week of their enrollment in the afterschool program 	57%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had access to and use of school data systems (one example is Powerschool) that display students' progress and grades on school-day class work 	62%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used written progress reports to correspond with school-day teachers about individual students' academic progress and needs 	40%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had written policies and procedures about connecting with school-day teachers to support students' academic learning 	53%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted any assessments to monitor students' academic learning 	43%

Ninety-five percent of program sites made the site coordinator responsible for communicating with school-day staff, and 93% accepted recommendations from those staff for students in need of academic support. Most (84%) reported that their afterschool activities were intentionally influenced by grade-level content

standards, and 79% used school-day curricula in afterschool activities. Most program staff communicated regularly with school-day teachers about individual students' needs, and 64% assigned someone to attend teacher staff meetings. Although staff in most programs had access to and reviewed student performance data, only about half (57%) had a process in place to identify low-achieving students early in the year. Fewer sites reported having written policies for connecting with school day teachers to support their students' learning or using written progress reports to connect with school day teachers about individual students' academic progress and needs.

What School or Program Factors Affected the Program?

The context in which the 21st CCLC program operates influences its likelihood of success. For example, when many changes occur, such as program administrators or school leaders leaving or excessive turnover among the staff, the continuity that creates a positive learning environment can be difficult to maintain. In addition, staff job satisfaction and opportunities for professional development contribute to staff capacity to create a positive learning environment.

Program Director and Site Coordinator Stability

Five programs out of 40 (13%) grantees changed program directors in 2014-15 (①). Among the four single-site grantees, only one used the same person as project director and site coordinator. Three grantees (8%) reported having part-time program directors. Having a full-time program director is important because frequently the program director needs to make contact with school personnel and thus needs to be there during the school day.

Forty-two percent of the site coordinators did not return for the 2014-2015 program year, and 16% left during the program year (①).

Staff Stability

Table 14 shows site reports of staff stability. Sites reported on the percent of staff who stayed for the program year and the percent of staff who returned from the previous year.

Sixty-three percent of sites reported that at least three quarters of activity staff stayed for most or all of the program year. However, 19% of sites retained less than half of their program staff through the 2014-2015 program year. Thirty-six percent reported that most of their staff returned from the previous year, while

43% retained less than half of their staff from the previous year. The relatively high turnover rate is not uncommon in afterschool programs. We have learned from the field that programs that are able to retain more high quality staff often offer salaries comparable to school-day staff, with reasonable yearly increases to help retain the staff. The supervisors also recognize staff contributions, give staff more responsibilities to run the programs, and provide them with opportunities to grow.

Table 14. Staff Stability: Percent of Sites

<i>Staff Changes</i>	<i>STAFF RETENTION RATES</i>			
	<i>0-25%</i>	<i>26-50%</i>	<i>51-75%</i>	<i>76-100%</i>
What percent of your paid REGULAR STAFF who provided activities STAYED for most or all of the 2014-2015 school year?	11%	8%	17%	63%
What percent of this year's REGULAR STAFF also provided activities last year? (Omits the sites that did not continue)	27%	16%	21%	36%

Sites Reporting School-Related Changes

Changes in the host school can affect awareness of and support for the 21st CCLC program. As seen in Table 15, in 2014-2015 there were few changes at the schools served by 21st CCLC programs.

Table 15. Percent of Sites Reporting School-Related Changes	
<i>Changes</i>	<i>Percent of Sites</i>
Principal of the school changed ⓘ	16%
Superintendent changed or established	11%
Host school was faced with budget cuts that affected your site	4%
School reorganized ⓘ	4%
Program moved to a new school	3%
Other major changes at the school or district that affected your program	10%

How Did Students' Academic Performance Change?

We report on students' academic performance for 21st CCLC programs in the following categories:

- Percent of students showing improvement in mathematics and English/language arts/reading grades of at least $\frac{1}{2}$ grade (e.g., 2.5 to 3.0) from fall to spring
- Percent of students whose teachers reported any improvement in homework completion and class participation
- Percent of students whose teachers reported any improvement in student classroom behavior

We also present the students' and parents' perceptions of how the 21st CCLC program helped the students improve in various aspects of their academic and non-academic performance and behavior.

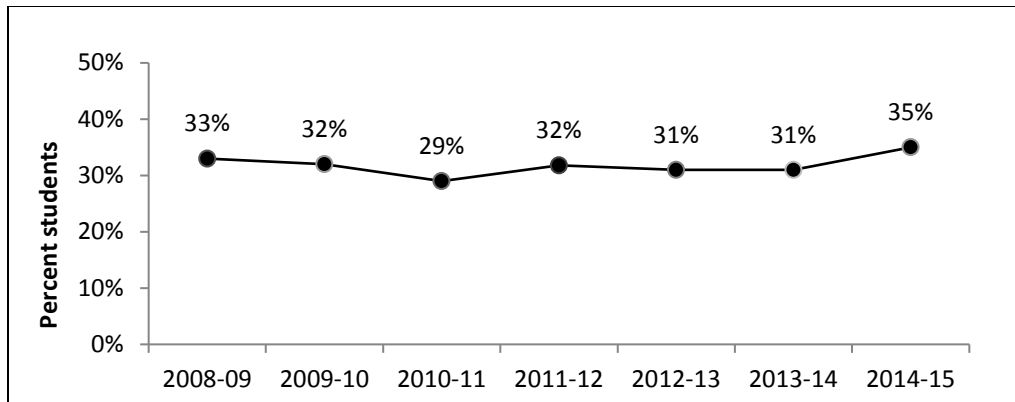
Data for this section were collected through the EZReports program reporting system, Excel files through which sites provided school grades from school records, and teacher surveys collected by 21st CCLC program staff.

Grades

Math Grades

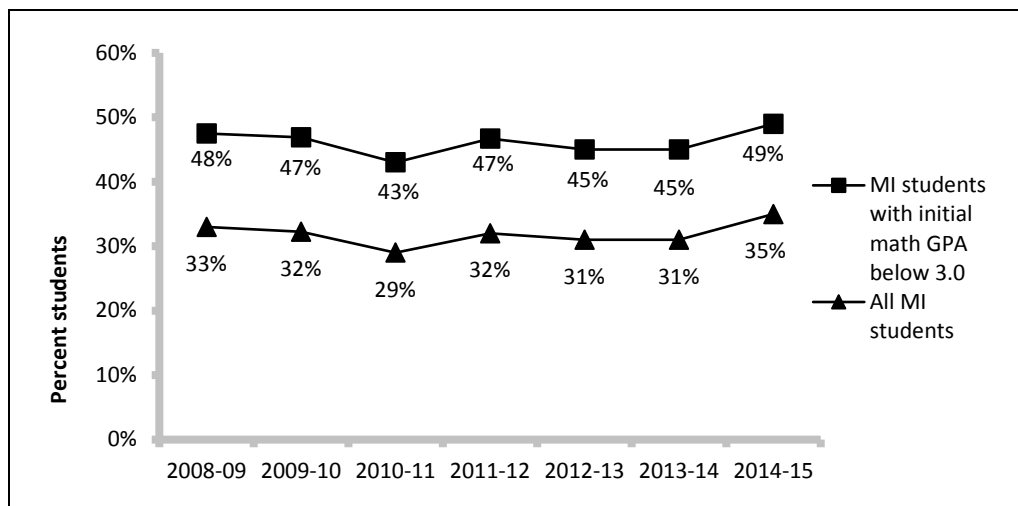
Overall. Figure 3 shows the percent of participants whose math grades improved in each year in Michigan (2008-2015). The percent showing improvement in Michigan has been stable, with almost a third of students improving in math each year.

Figure 3. Percent Showing Improvement in Math Grades (2008-2015)



NOTE: Improvement is defined as ½ grade increase from fall to spring within a year. Includes only students who participated at least 30 days.

Figure 4. Percent Showing Improvement in Math Grades for All Students vs. Students with Room for Improvement (2008-2015)



NOTE: Improvement is defined as ½ grade increase from fall to spring within a year. Includes only students who participated at least 30 days. Room for improvement is defined as having a fall grade below 3.0.

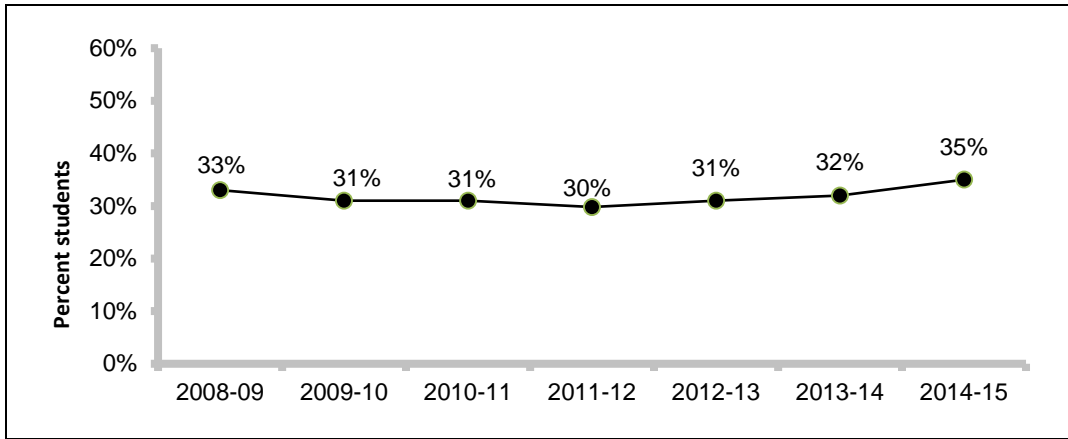
Students with room for improvement. Students who had lower grades when they entered the program had more room for improvement during the program year. Figure 3, above, includes all regularly attending students, both those who started with the highest grades, as well as those who had room to improve (defined as having a GPA in math of less than 3.0 at the beginning of the year). When Michigan students with room for improvement were compared with all Michigan students (Figure 4), a substantially higher percentage of those with room for improvement showed gains (15%). Over the past 7 years, the difference

in improvement between all students and those with GPAs below 3.0 has been very stable.

Reading Grades

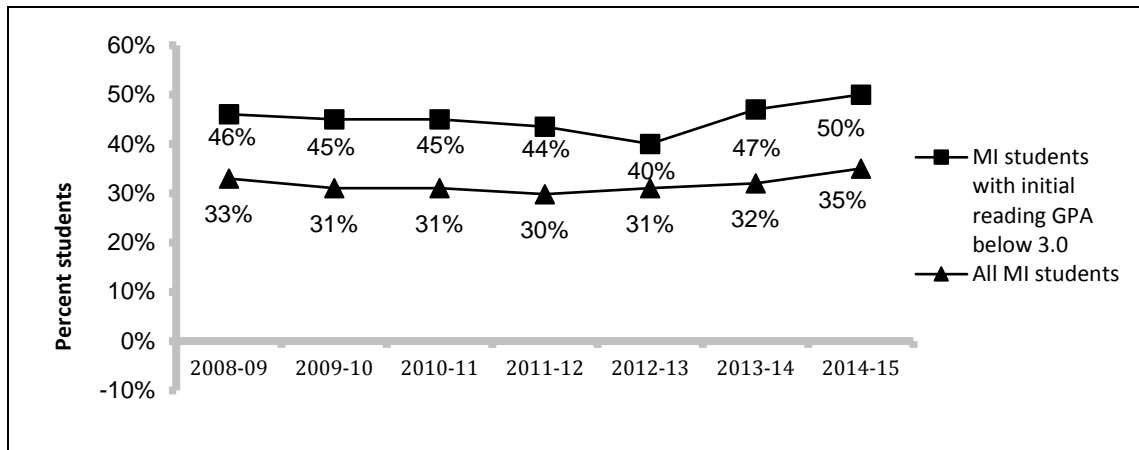
Overall. Figure 5 shows the percent of participants who improved in reading grades each year in Michigan (2008-2015). The percent who improved has remained stable during this period, with about one-third showing improvement.

Figure 5. Percent Showing Improvement in Reading Grades (2008-2015)



NOTE: Improvement is defined as ½ grade increase from fall to spring within a year. Includes only students who participated at least 30 days.

Figure 6. Percent Showing Improvement in Reading Grades for All Students vs. Those with Room for Improvement (2008-2015)



NOTE: Improvement is defined as ½ grade increase from fall to spring within a year. Includes only students who participated at least 30 days. Room for improvement is defined as having a fall grade below 3.0.

Students with room for improvement. When we compare the performance of Michigan regular participants with room for improvement to that of all regular Michigan participants (Figure 6), a substantially higher percentage of students with room for improvement showed at least a half grade gain in reading compared to all students (15%). This difference has been true over the past 7 years of the program, with the exception of program year 2012-2013 when there was an unexplained dip in the gains of students with room for improvement.

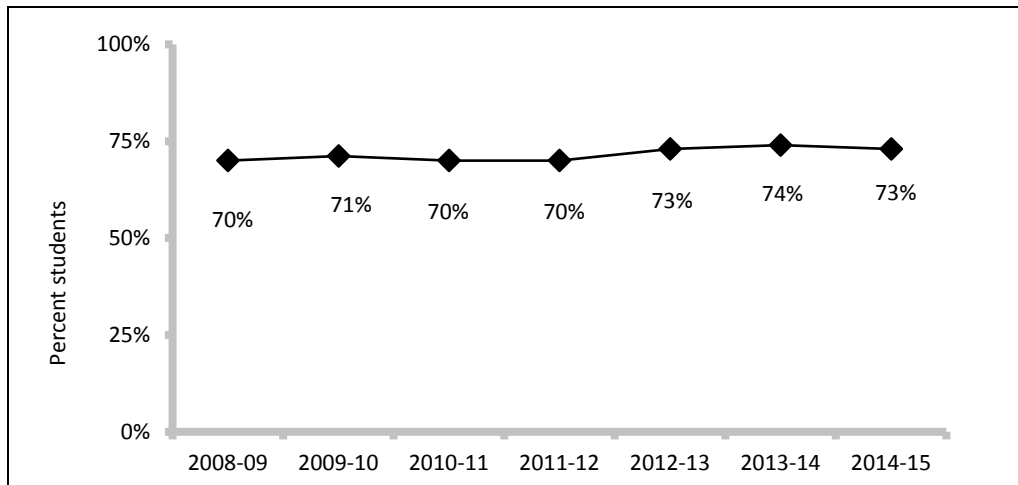
Teacher Ratings

Each year, teachers rate students attending the 21st CCLC program on the extent to which their performance changed over the year in homework completion/classroom participation and classroom behavior. Teachers may rate student performance or behavior as improved, unchanged, declined, or did not need to improve.

Homework Completion/Classroom Participation

Homework completion/classroom participation included behaviors such as turning in homework on time and completing it to the teacher's satisfaction as well as participating and volunteering in class. Figure 7 shows the percent of students who initially had room for improvement and did improve in homework completion/classroom participation according to teachers over the past seven years. The percent of Michigan students improving has remained stable at 70% to 74%.

Figure 7. Percent Showing Improvement in Teacher-Reported Homework Completion and Classroom Participation (2008-2015)

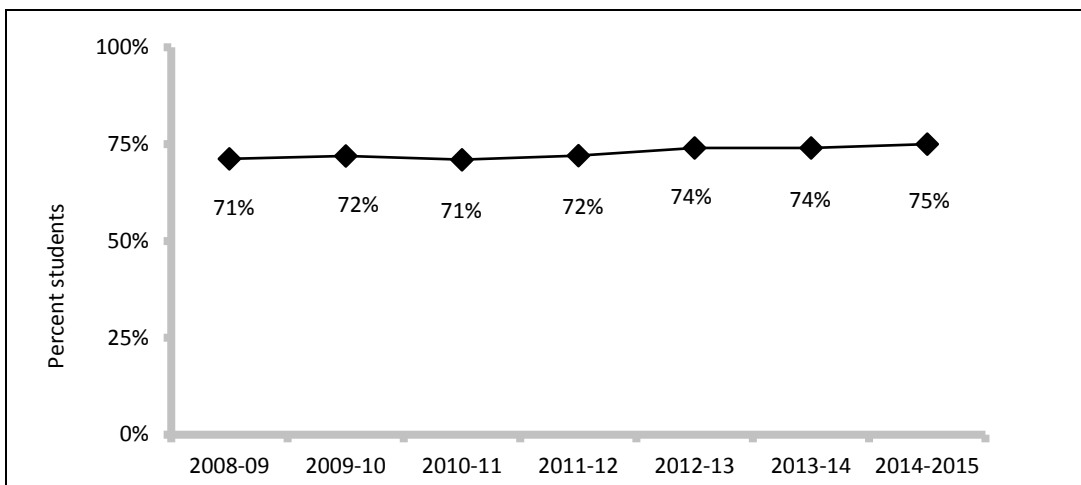


NOTE: Includes only students who participated at least 30 days and with room for improvement according to the teachers.

Classroom Behavior

Classroom behavior included items such as behaving well in class and getting along with other students. As shown in Figure 8, the proportion of Michigan students who showed improvement has remained stable (71-75%). The analysis only includes students whose teachers indicated they had room for improvement.

Figure 8. Percent Showing Improvement in Teacher-Reported Classroom Behavior (2008-2015)



NOTE: Includes only students who participated at least 30 days and with room for improvement according to the teachers.

Student and Parent Perceptions of Program Impact

Students and parents reported on their perceptions of whether the 21st CCLC program helped them/their children improve in various aspects of their academic and non-academic performance and behavior. Note that Table 16 includes only results from those students with room for academic improvement. About two-thirds of students said the program helped them improve in academic areas including reading and math, science/technology, and other subjects. Large majorities said the program helped them to perform better academically and improve their attitudes about school.

Table 16. Student and Parent Perceptions of Program Impact: Percent who Reported the Program Helped “Some” or “A Lot”

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Percent of Students</i>	<i>Percent of Parents</i>
Academic areas		
Reading, English, language arts, writing	68%	88%
Math	69%	87%
Science/technology	63%	83%
Other school subjects (history, social studies)	62%	82%
Academic engagement		
Care more about getting good grades	78%	88%
Think that doing well in school was important for having a successful career	81%	86%
Think that success in school would help you have a good life when you grow up/as an adult (parent version)	81%	89%
Want to go to college	74%	80%
Look forward to coming to school	71%	88%
Non-academic areas		
Creative skills like art, music, dance, drama	65%	84%
Sports, athletics, physical activities	67%	82%
Working with computers/Internet	64%	81%
Staying away from drugs and alcohol	68%	84%
Making and keeping friends	70%	90%
Positive youth development		
Social/psychological learning	47%	N/A
Pro-social skills	54%	N/A
Teamwork	61%	N/A
Leadership	55%	N/A

Somewhat fewer, but still a majority, said the program was helpful with other types of skills, such as creativity, physical fitness, and technology. They were least likely to say the program helped them to improve their social skills. However, note that these results do not take into account whether students actually participated in activities designed to improve the specific outcomes listed.

Parent perceptions of their student's improvement were generally higher than the student's perception of her/his improvement in most categories.

APPENDIX

Social-Emotional Learning in Afterschool Programs Linked to Improved School Behaviors

Background

Recent research has indicated that learning involves not only cognitive skills, but also the social and emotional aspects of development (Hinton, Miyamoto, & Della-Chiesa, 2008; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & J., 2004). For the most part, learning is a social process that occurs in contexts of human relationships—both positive relationships between the instructors and students and among peers increase students’ desire to learn (Payton et al., 2000). Beyond that, true learning often requires individuals to step outside of their comfort zones and face new challenges, which may be associated with increased stress and anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The advancement of neuroscience has also shown that the processes of emotions are intricately interwoven with many aspects of cognitive development such as learning, memory and critical thinking (Zins et al., 2004), suggesting the importance of healthy emotional regulation for students’ learning and cognitive development. Furthermore, because emotion is shaped by cognitive processing, the ability to manage emotions is a learned skill that students can greatly benefit from when coping with negative emotional reactions or focusing on learning (Banks & Zions, 2009).

During the past two decades, many education advocates have called for schools to infuse learning around “21st century skills” for students’ success in today’s world (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008). Although a variety of definitions can be found for the term “21st century skills,” they are generally defined as competencies related to non-cognitive skills such as collaboration, communication, problem solving, critical thinking and technology literacy (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008). Attaining these competencies requires students’ healthy social emotional development.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Responding to these needs, additional social-emotional learning curricula have been developed and adapted for school and afterschool program settings. **Social-emotional learning (SEL) is defined as the process through which individuals learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make responsible decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors** (Payton et al., 2008).

Recent research identified six skill areas that are most likely to occur in youth settings for social-emotional growth: emotional management, empathy, teamwork, responsibility, initiative, and problem-solving (Smith, McGovern, Larson, Hillaker, & Peck, 2016). A recent national survey showed that teachers recognize the importance of SEL, with 75% of the surveyed teachers believing SEL will enhance students' interest in learning and improve their behaviors and school climate (Civic Enterprises, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). Findings from two meta-analysis studies that were based on 213 school-based SEL programs and 73 afterschool programs also demonstrated that SEL interventions are effective in increasing students' SEL competency, promoting positive attitudes and behaviors (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). The authors noted that SEL interventions can be most effective when incorporating all of the following four practices: (1) applying a planned set of activities to develop skills sequentially in a step-by-step fashion, (2) using active forms of learning such as role-plays and behavioral rehearsal with feedback, (3) devoting sufficient time exclusively to developing social emotional skills, and (4) targeting specific social and emotional skills.

Benefits of SEL

Growing attention has also been given to the effects of SEL on students' academic achievement, and many studies have found positive impacts. For example, a cluster-randomized longitudinal study showed that students enrolled in the elementary schools that implemented the Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) SEL curriculum demonstrated higher levels of basic

proficiency in reading, writing and math than their counterparts in the control group where no specific SEL curriculum was enforced (Schonfeld et al., 2015). Moreover, the meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs also showed SEL interventions can improve students' academic performance, although only 16% of the studies actually included academic as their examined outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011). Schonfeld, et al. (2015) articulated reasons why SEL interventions can contribute to academic outcomes: (1) SEL curriculum teaches students to problem-solve interpersonal issues and that the same strategies can be applied to academic work (i.e., identifying a problem, analyzing the situation, finding resources, formulating a plan, implementing a plan and evaluating results); (2) SEL practices allow teachers and students to relate to each other at a more personal level so that students may feel more comfortable turning to teachers for learning assistance; and (3) Teachers who are capable of delivering SEL to students are often also the ones who are adept at classroom management, having fewer disruptive classroom behaviors and more receptive students. The reduction of problematic behavior and enhanced infrastructure for learning can be particularly beneficial to high-risk schools that often face challenges in the same areas.

Challenges of SEL

While benefits can be abundant, studies from a variety of sources also pointed that only about half or fewer students have adequate social-emotional competency in areas such as empathy, emotional management, and conflict resolution to meet the needs of their daily lives (Education Week Research Center, 2015; Lazarus & Sulkowski, 2011). Researchers have also pointed out that many schools fall short of providing an emotionally safe and caring environment for students to model SEL behaviors (Benson, 2006). In addition, implementing specific SEL curricula requires allocation of targeted resources that are often unavailable, especially among high-risk schools (Schonfeld et al., 2015).

Ideally, SEL, just like any other types of learning, could occur in many different ways and in less formal settings. It is currently one of the most commonly discussed themes in the field of afterschool programs for many reasons (American Institutes for Research, 2015). First, with the increased attention

given to student SEL, many afterschool programs have adapted such curriculum or provide intentional supports around the themes that show positive outcomes. For examples, a critical literature review shows that the social and emotional competencies youth acquire through their afterschool program participation can contribute to their success in school and life (Farrington et al., 2012). Second, in comparison to a typical school day, afterschool programs have greater flexibility in the design of the curriculum and the way activities are delivered, allowing more room for scaffolding experiences that support youths' SEL. In fact, since the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant program has steadily pushed for high quality afterschool programs that not only provide reliable childcare services, but extended learning opportunities for youth who are at risk (Weiss, 2013). Nationwide, 21st CCLC programs offer a wide range of activities from homework help, tutoring and other types of academic learning, to sports, arts, technology, nutrition, prevention and positive youth development activities.

Setting Standards for SEL

Along with the growth of program offerings, the standards set for high quality afterschool programs also increase the potential for afterschool programs to be SEL-rich environments. These standards include: being a nurturing environment for positive youth development; providing youth with active and engaged learning opportunities; helping youth build new skills; encouraging youth voice and leadership; promoting healthy choices and behaviors among youth; connecting youth with quality staff and mentors; and developing partnerships with schools, stakeholders and community members to leverage resources (National Afterschool Association, 2011). Although the term "SEL" is not specifically emphasized, the guidelines and standards help create an environment that supports and cultivates SEL experiences in a less explicit way.

In the State of Michigan, 21st CCLC programs are not only held to the same core knowledge and competencies set by the National Afterschool Association; since 2009 they have also received coaching and training support from a nonprofit organization specializing in youth program quality, the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. Each year, staff and administrators from 250-300

programs across the 40-50 funded grantees review individualized data reports provided by the state evaluator, and the majority of the administrators participate in a series of statewide, regional, or program-based training and coaching to enhance program quality (Smith, Garner, McGovern, Taylor, & Hennessey, 2010). The focus on and the steps taken to achieve high program quality, especially around instructional quality, positive relationships and youth leadership and voice, are nicely aligned with efforts that promote SEL.

Study Details

Within the context of Michigan 21st CCLC programs, **the purpose of this study was to examine whether youths' social emotional learning experiences that naturally occurred through their afterschool program participation may be associated with improved school behaviors.** The study aimed to answer the research question: "Do students experiencing more social emotional learning in Michigan 21st CCLC afterschool programs show better behavioral improvement at school?" Unlike the schools and programs examined in previous studies, the majority of these afterschool programs do not have a formal SEL curriculum in place. Rather, programs may vary widely in prioritizing SEL as their goals and adopt different levels of high quality standards to put forth practices that support youths' SEL experiences (Smith et al., 2010).

Samples

The sample for this study was drawn from the state evaluation of the Michigan 21st CCLC project. The 21st CCLC programs give priority to serving students from low-performing schools in high poverty areas. The sample for the analyses consisted of 3,474 student participants in 4th – 12th grades from 247 afterschool programs, representing 60% of the total number of students surveyed across Michigan 21st CCLC programs. The majority of the programs were located in low-performing schools and low-income neighborhoods. They were included in the study because of the availability of complete data from four different sources: (1) teacher surveys from the student's school-day reading or math teacher indicating the student's performance changes during the past year; (2) program satisfaction

survey completed by the student; (3) complete school records on the student's free or reduced price meal status, English as Second Language (ESL)/ Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status, and whether the student was academically low-performing defined by having the year-end average or fall grade below 3.0; and (4) student demographic and program attendance records retrieved from an online attendance tracking system. Student gender was about equally split between males (52%) and females. The majority were low-income (84%) and academically low-performing (78%).

Measures

Change in school behavior was measured in the spring of the school year by a survey completed by the student's math or English teacher. School-day teachers rated the student's change in school behavior from fall to spring on a 7-point scale (1 significant decline ~ 7 significant improvement). Ten questions captured the student's school-day behaviors such as turning in homework on time, participating in class, volunteering, being motivated to learn, and getting along with other students (Cronbach's alpha=.97).

Social emotional learning was assessed by students completing an end-of-year survey about how much they had experienced SEL in the afterschool programs. The 4-point Likert rating scale ranged from "not at all" to "a lot", with 16 items covering some of the key aspects of SEL (Smith et al., 2016). These questions were related to: emotional management (i.e., "learned about controlling my temper," "became better at dealing with fear and anxiety," and "learned that my emotions affect how I perform,"); empathy and prosocial behaviors (i.e., "learned about helping others," and "we discussed morals and values"); teamwork (i.e., "learned that working together requires some compromising," and "learned that it is not necessary to like people in order to work with them"); and responsibility and leadership (i.e., "others in this program counted on me," and "had an opportunity to be in charge of a group of peers"). Results from an exploratory factor analysis suggested these 16 questions are all in one domain, capturing the overall experiences of SEL (Cronbach's alpha = 0.95). Mean SEL scores were computed based on these items.

Methods

Because students were located in different programs, HLM 6.02 was employed to account for nesting of individuals within programs and to address variations across program contexts (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The first step was to calculate the intraclass correlation coefficient score; the result suggested that 20% of the variation among teacher ratings was due to school- or program-level characteristics and warranted the use of multi-level modeling. The second step was to get a baseline understanding of how factors other than SEL experiences might be related to teacher ratings. Control variables in the analysis included student factors, such as demographics (i.e., gender, grade level, races/ethnicity, whether the student receiving free or reduced price meal, ESL/LEP services, academically low-performing), total days of program attendance, and students' general satisfaction with the program. Several program-level factors were also used, including percent served who were low-income, percent served who were academically low-performing, and whether the program was an elementary, middle or high-school site. At the last step, students' self-report of SEL experiences in afterschool programs were introduced into the model.

Results

Data showed female students, students with limited English proficiency, and students who were not low performing received better teacher ratings of their improvement in school performance. Students' grade level and whether the program was an elementary, middle or high school site were not significant factors; neither were students' low-income status or the percent of low-income students that were served by the program. Youths' program satisfaction was not related to their school behavioral changes as perceived by teachers, although more days of program attendance was, suggesting sustained participation in afterschool programs in general is associated with improved student behaviors at school. After controlling for the significant factors, students' SEL experience in afterschool programs was positively related to improved teacher ratings on school behaviors. This suggests students who reported gaining more SEL experiences through their afterschool program participation showed greater improvement at

school as perceived by their teachers (See Table A-1 for a summary of factors examined and significant effect sizes).

Discussion and Implications for Practice

In this study we examined whether students' social and emotional learning (SEL) experiences that naturally occurred through participation in afterschool programs were associated with improved teacher-rated school behavior. The study sample included 247 afterschool programs whose SEL instruction varied in degree and scope; many did not follow any specific curricula. The students in these programs who tended to have higher academic outcomes were more likely to be female, non-native English speakers, those who had a prior history of low academic achievement, and those who participated in the program longer. After taking into account the factors that were associated with better school behaviors, we found that students who reported more SEL experiences through their afterschool participation showed greater improvement in school behaviors. This suggests that even for students who are males, academically low-performing, native English-speakers, and participate in fewer days in afterschool programs, if they're able to get more SEL experiences, we may anticipate a greater improvement in school behaviors compared to those who had limited SEL experiences. The previous meta-analysis of 73 afterschool programs (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007) found that formal SEL curricula had a positive impact on youths' academic outcomes.

Within the contexts of 247 Michigan 21st CCLC afterschool programs, which vary in the degree of SEL focus and in which youth participants receive varying levels of SEL experiences, our study expanded the understanding on the importance of SEL instruction for improving academic success. Although 21st CCLC afterschool programs can be much different from other types of youth programs, given their offering of various types of activities and their focus on extended learning in addition to childcare, findings from this study using a relatively large sample from Michigan 21st CCLC programs can still provide implications for youth program professionals to start thinking about what SEL is and what forms of SEL can be adapted in their programs to promote better school behaviors.

Limitations

The primary limitation of the study is its lack of control group for making casual references. It would be beneficial to replicate these results in a randomized experimental study. Additionally, observations of the factors Durlak et al. (2011) noted as critical to successful SEL activity provision would be a positive contribution to future research. Nonetheless, this study employed students' program satisfaction as a controlling factor to the results. Program satisfaction can be an important aspect of perceived program quality, but it is a global measure that lacks details on the variety of quality aspects. Future studies are encouraged to collect more information on program quality and investigate the impacts of different aspects of program quality standards on SEL experiences.

Table A-1. Factors Examined and the Significant Effect Sizes on Improved Teacher Rating

<i>MEASURES</i>	<i>DEFINITION</i>	<i>IMPROVED SCHOOL BEHAVIORS RATED BY TEACHER</i>
Level 1 (individual level)		
Female	Youth's gender	0.08***
Total program attended days	Number of program participation days	0.06**
Academically not at-risk	Year-end average or fall grade not below 3.0	0.09***
Students with limited English proficiency	Receive English as Second Language (ESL)/Limited English Proficiency (LEP) services	0.06**
Program Social Emotional Learning (SEL) experiences	Youth's reports on 16 questions regarding their afterschool program SEL experiences, including: emotional regulation, prosocial skills, teamwork and leadership.	0.04*
Racial Minority	Youth identified as non-White, including: Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian or Others	0.00
Grade level	Youth's grade level	0.02
Poverty level	Youth receive free or reduced price meal	0.01
Program satisfaction	Youth program satisfaction rating	0.00
Level 2 (program level)		
Grade level served: Elementary school	Whether the site is serving primarily elementary school students	0.01
Grade level served: Middle school	Whether the site is serving primarily middle school students	0.01
% of academically low-performing students served	Percent of students who had year-end average or fall grade below 3.0	0.03
% of low income students	Percent of students who receive free or reduced price meal	0.01
<p><i>NOTE.</i> Effect size <i>r</i> interpretation: 0.1 = small, 0.30 = median, 0.50 = large. The negative effect size indicates an inverse relationship, in which higher levels of the factor are associated with lower scores. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .000$.</p>		

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