

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS: PROGRAM FUNDING CYCLE STUDIES FALL 2014 THROUGH FALL 2015

INTRODUCTION

The New York State Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program has a April 1 through March 31 contract year. The program itself has a July 1 through June 30 funding cycle. For that reason, Research Works, Inc. prepares two types of annual reports. One report is of completion of the company's contracted tasks during each contract year and, in addition, addresses information necessary to validate local program and contractor compliance with program delivery requirements. The second report focuses on the program funding cycle period and addresses program operations at the local level as managed by local program personnel and supported by the NYSED managers. This second 'report' transitioned in 2015 into a series of evaluation briefs, prepared by the company to address some of the complex challenges facing the local programs in New York. The reason for dividing the evaluation report into topical briefs was to facilitate the NYSED managers' efficient comprehension of the rather complex information presented and thus supporting their utilization of that information.

THE NY EVALUATION NETWORK AND REGIONAL EVALUATOR MEETINGS

The New York State Education Department has been supportive of the contribution evaluation can make to achievement of program goals and objectives, and the measurement of performance outcomes for nearly a decade. Their engagement in the evaluation process began with the inclusion of an 'evaluation set-aside' in each program request for proposals, expansion of local evaluation requirements beyond compliance measurement and their adoption of the Research Works, Inc. *21st Century Community Learning Center Program Evaluation Manual*. NYSED continues to value evaluative information on this program collected from both a state and local level.

RWI plays a supporting role in this management strategy by NYSED. Beginning in the Fall of 2014 with a series of three Regional Evaluator Meetings convened by Research Works, Inc. (RWI) and again in the Spring of 2015. There are also evaluator meetings at the Statewide Meeting in November or December of each program year. For these meetings, RWI keeps the central agenda the same, but the discussion at each meeting is facilitated, not controlled. This introduction presents some of the points raised by local evaluators and, when possible, the reactions of local evaluators from different regions to those points. The issues and concerns raised in these local evaluator focus forums are the basis of the State evaluation studies described and discussed in the briefs following this Introduction.

DISCUSSION OF DATA ACCESS

One major purpose of the first series of meetings was to collect information from local evaluators on their use of the Evaluation Manual, and to seek recommendations for modifications to the manual through edits to the existing copy, deletions from the existing copy, or additions to the existing copy.

Overall the evaluators reported that the manual was somewhat helpful to them, and expressed an understanding that parts of the manual that were obviously 'instructional' were included for the benefit of colleagues who may not have had a solid background in evaluation. There were important points made regarding the requirements of local evaluators set out in the manual, many of which were linked to the issue of the evaluation budget.

Discussion of time to complete requirements, and time to analyze and input data into the present federal electronic data capture system took place at all three initial meetings. The time issue also included the extra time some evaluators are spending 'chasing' data, primarily student test data and report card data. This time pressure is influenced by the electronic data system deadline for data input set by NYSED. While the federal reporting requirements are not open to discussion and their modification is beyond the ability of anyone at the State level, the State evaluators do want to point out one or two things that should be shared with grantees.

Evaluators measure and analyze some data elements directly (through surveys, observations, and other instruments), and rely on the grantees for other data that they collect (such as student test data, attendance at school data, teacher assessment of certain student behaviors, etc.). The evaluators then combine grantee collected data with the data they collect, analyze the whole set, and report. Evaluators can and should be held responsible for collection of the data they promise to collect directly in the approved local evaluation plans. Grantees and their feeder schools can and should be held responsible for the provision, to the evaluator, of the data they promise to provide to the evaluation, generally free and reduced lunch data and specifically student test data and report card data in all cases. Grantees can be responsible for the provision of other 'regular school day' data such as attendance, discipline referrals, etc. when included in the grantee approved evaluation plan. While most feeder schools cooperate with these requirements, there are always some who do not. This lack of cooperation has far reaching effects, including an inability to complete the electronic data capture report on time and without error.

Recommendation: RWI will present and discuss the following recommendations with NYSED managers and advise the local evaluators of their decision. (1) Grantees should be reminded of their responsibility to provide the data required for program performance reporting. They should be specifically reminded that this responsibility is part of the grant contract between

NYSED and the grantee or feeder school, specifically here, the signed agreements by school principals and/or district administrators to cooperate with all requirements listed in the RFP. (2) Once evaluators have done due diligence in working with the data sources for this data they should be free to report if they are unsuccessful that the school or district did not cooperate in providing the data needed for these reports. (3) Please note: the last thing evaluators want to do is to ‘blow the whistle’ on these uncooperative data sources, but they also lack the authority to make the sources provide the data they need to complete the federal reporting requirements. (4) Thus this recommendation that as a matter of policy, NYSED managers will issue an annual reminder to feeder school principals regarding their agreement to cooperate with the local evaluation. In addition, that when they are made aware of seemingly uncooperative situations reported by grantee managers with support from their local evaluator, NYSED managers should remind these data sources (perhaps via the RCs?) that they agreed to provide this information to the grant managers in what is a binding contract document. This is one form of uncooperative behavior that is not part of the monitoring visits (nor should it be). In our discussions, the local evaluators asked: If there are no consequences for those not adhering to their agreement then what is the incentive for others to do so? And, their further point that those making every effort to provide the required data should be noted.

OPEN DISCUSSION 1: IS YOUR PROGRAM A PROGRAM

The State Evaluation Team (SET) operates through a definition of evaluation drawn from William R. Meyers¹ that says: “Evaluation is the effort to understand the functioning and effect of a program, which is a planned sequence of activities intended to achieve some goal”. Meyers sees programs as systems (that is, as complex interwoven structures or schemes) designed to attain a predetermined result most efficiently. So, evaluation is a measurement and feedback system to improve and control other systems (Ibid. p. 20). The purpose of this is to provide a succinct summary of a focused portion of the complex measurement and feedback system that is the New York State Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program.

The discussion begins by the State Evaluation Team (SET) asking the local program evaluators for their working definition of ‘program’. The evaluators provided thoughtful definitions, and through the discussions that followed, RWI summarized the group’s definition as:

A program is an organized system with a series of related and supportive activities planned to achieve a defined set of goals and objectives for a specific target population. This system includes an internal and external evaluation to ensure

¹ Meyers, William R., 1981. *The Evaluation Enterprise*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

service delivery, valid data, and that measureable outcomes are produced for exemplifying its purpose.

In a subsequent discussion of the programs they were evaluating, the local evaluators were asked to remember the definition of a program that they had just helped us to construct. When asked if their program(s) fit the session's definition, quite a few of the evaluators responded that theirs were not actually programs. In those cases, the local evaluators agreed that they were often evaluating either 'a set of loosely associated activities; at best, or 'a set of independent events' at worst.

As the discussion progressed, some required aspects of the program were dismissed as not part of their local program concerns. Parent Engagement was the one aspect most often dismissed as not a concern for local programs. As one of those required components, Parent Involvement or Engagement is important to the success of the Statewide program. The negative influence of a subset of local programs failing to successfully implement the Parent Involvement or Engagement component threatens the strength, and thereby the success of the program, at the local and State levels.

The evaluators' observation that many 'programs' were not actually programs at all begged the question for the State evaluators: Why is that the case? During the remainder of the State Evaluation Contract year, RWI kept those honest observations by the local evaluators in mind as they continued to execute the RWI Work Plan. During that work, data overlapped, as it can do in evaluation. RWI believes they have at least a start on an answer to this question.

Recommendation: RWI will present and discuss the following recommendations with NYSED managers and advise the local evaluators of their decision. After the local program evaluators and the SET came to an agreement of defining what a program is, there needs to be an operational definition or set parameter by the NYSED managers for 21CCLC programming. As local evaluators defined the term 'program', many of them concluded not observing or not being able to appropriately measure their programs. As a result, this makes it more difficult for evaluators to effectively measure program efficiency and effectiveness. In collaboration with the NYSED managers, Resource Center staff, and the Evaluation Network via RWI, regional meetings with the subgrantees and their local evaluators should be provided to assist local programs to operationalize their own 21CCLC programs. Although subgrantees have broadly conceptualized their local programs using logic models, many have not been able to systematically understand their programs' structure. This disconnection has led to subgrantees having difficulty with managing their 21CCLC programs with the exception of conducting their finances and managing personnel.

OPEN DISCUSSIONS 2: PROGRAM NEEDS AND EVALUATOR ROLES

The local evaluators all wanted to discuss their present and developing relationships with their clients, now that we have, as one evaluator pointed out, 'created a culture of evaluation in this program'. Some of the relationships reported are not comfortable for the RWI team, and include:

- The evaluator as a minor manager, working with the Advisory Board in some program environments has led to the evaluator functioning more like a type of data-based manager than an external evaluator. Others run the Advisory Board for their grant and report to the project administrator in that role.
- The evaluators as the providers of technical assistance because there is no budget for the technical assistance they recommend. One evaluator discussed the need for training in how to develop lesson plans, for example, to the point that their team ran some simple training in this area. Others noted multiple site grants that needed site-level program planning support which was identified by the evaluator and then provided by them as well.
- Some local evaluators described a relationship with programs that could be seen as less than comfortable. At least one evaluator at each meeting spoke of doing the required site visits to their programs with requirements from their clients that they follow a set schedule, and visit only classes they are 'approved' to see. One of those local evaluators noted that 'at least they care enough to make a fuss over the site visits'.

Recommendation: RWI will present and discuss the following recommendations with NYSED managers and advise the local evaluators of their decision. There has to be a more coordinated sharing of information among the NYSED managers, Resource Center staff, and the Evaluation Network via RWI in order to address the needs being uncovered by evaluators in the field. The set of circumstances reported here supports the RWI Needs Assessment data from June 2014 which showed high levels of need for professional development in program content planning and delivery, including basics such as timetabling of activities and lesson planning. Not all evaluators reported this as something they are experiencing, but enough are experiencing it to warrant this report. Evaluators are part of the program management team, but external evaluators should not fill administrative management positions. Evaluators advise and recommend, and if possible refer. Local evaluators need a conduit through which to connect what they know and their identified client needs in a non-judgmental environment while sustaining their relationship with their clients.

OPEN DISCUSSION 3: DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURING EFFECT

Most of the evaluators collect data beyond the Manual requirements. The discussion moved among several topics in each of the meetings. Some evaluators asked about good instruments

to measure various program aspects, how to calibrate instruments the feeder schools used for student assessment for use in the evaluation (to provide the ability to compare across contexts).

Many of the evaluators reported using matched comparison groups for measuring program effect, others that they compare the participants' performance to themselves in the year prior to their participation. The difficulty in getting the data they need to do these analyses was discussed in some detail earlier in this summary. RWI has considered these discussions and posed some questions to the local evaluators to see what other methods are now being used to measure effect, for example: Is anyone using Regression Discontinuity Analysis (which could compare the program attendees with their average performing classmates and track performance over time)? For multiple site grants, are any local evaluators using Data Envelopment Analysis to compare performance among the sites based on the (approved) standards set by the sites? How are mediators and moderators in regression being used to strengthen the validity and reliability of evaluation findings in the program? Presentations on these and other analyses techniques formed the content of further regional meetings.

USE OF SHORT-TERM AND INTERIM INDICATORS

The State evaluators presented a scenario asking "What if: 'Increased performance on Mathematics and ELA/Reading assessments' is considered a *policy outcome*, not a program outcome?" In the meetings the discussion went back to the roots of the GPRA legislation (passed under President Clinton and implemented under President Bush) and the different 'takes' on performance outcomes between the two administrations. Under President Clinton there were clear differences between *policy outcomes* and *program outcomes*, while under President Bush the two were combined. The discussion moved to the shift in the performance measures being implemented under President Obama seeming to more closely align with those under President Clinton (perhaps no surprise there). This shift may see a final move back to the articulation of *policy outcomes*, i.e., the results of multiple program implementations based on a single policy or set of closely related policies. In that framework, each of those multiple programs would have *program outcomes* that are defensible predictors of achievement of the policy outcome, but are not the policy outcomes themselves.

Working from the local level up, Research Works, Inc. asked local evaluators to consider and discuss if the NY 21st CCLC Evaluation Network has the will and ability to identify and work out a fair and efficient measurement strategy for a set of NY Indicators of Program Effectiveness. During the ensuing discussion, some local evaluators shared the assumed short-term and interim indicators being used in their local evaluation designs. RWI then asked if those present would consider working together to try to identify a set of short-term and interim indicators of acceptable performance by 21st CCLC programs in New York. This was introduced as an extension of discussions regarding the belief among most local evaluators that the present 21st CCLC

indicators (especially student test performance growth) do not fairly reflect the program's contributions to student academic and social emotional growth. As the local evaluators were 'ambushed' by these questions – [we did not give them any advance notice of these questions], RWI brought some possible indicators for their review and comment.

- Local evaluators were generally positive regarding the use of Student Engagement in School as an indicator of program effect. All attendees were given copies of a recent review of 21 instruments to measure student engagement, and asked if they chose to use one of the instruments to please tell RWI and be prepared to report back on their experience with the instrument in question.
- Another report on outcomes and indicators of STEM in after school programs was also included in the materials given to the local evaluators. A brief discussion of the STEM in their programs led to further discussion around 'what is a good STEM program' and 'how will I know it when I see it'. This is an area of interest to many of the local evaluators. RWI subsequently provided more research and evaluation based information to them.

One thing that did come up is an evaluation question RWI posed to the local evaluators: "In measuring the effect of after school programming, does STEM act as a (positive) modifier?" All promised to give it some thought ready for the next evaluator meeting.

[Modifiers are aspects of the intervention that 'turn-up or turn-down' the overall effect of other intervention components. The modifier can be measured as acting independently, but their true value to the program is in this modification they exert over all of the program inputs. In some analyses these are called 'co-variants', but in recent work on this analysis technique modifiers are analyzed in a Regression.]

IDENTIFICATION OF SOURCES OF CONCERN

On review of the information collected from these discussions, statewide surveys, interviews with staff at both Resource Centers, the following focused briefs were written for NYSED managers.

2014-2015 STATE EVALUATION BRIEF NO. 1

Define Key Terms

HOW CONNECTIONS ACROSS LOCAL PROGRAMS DEFINE THE STATE PROGRAM

The Research Works, Inc. contract is to evaluate the management and support provided by NYSED to the Statewide 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. Pulling back for a moment, one can see the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program in New York State as a system of local programs. One can also see that statewide system as a subsystem of the greater New York State Education Department program system in the PK-12 context.

It is important to understand not only what a *system* is, but also how perceiving social programs as systems provides a framework for interpretation of the findings of this evaluation regarding the Statewide 21st CCLC Program in New York.

First, to define what is meant here by ‘system’ RWI used the work of Ackoff (1973), who stated that a *system* comprises four characteristics:

1. A system has two or more parts: “It is a whole that has parts and may itself be part of a larger whole.”
2. Each part can have an effect on the behavior or properties of the whole.
3. The effect that each part can have on the whole depends on at least one other part (called interdependence).
4. Any subgrouping of parts yields *subsets* (which have the same properties as *parts*) and can affect the whole.

One thing the State evaluators noted was a set of patterns across the programs Statewide. These patterns fit Ackoff’s definition of *subsets*, some of which are having a negative effect. The focus of each evaluation brief is based on the argument that in order to improve the Statewide program NYSED’s attention has to be drawn to the interconnected negative functioning of a series of identified subsets of local programs. That attention should result in a set of reasoned, targeted, and efficient responses by NYSED managers to address triggers that influence the formation of these subsets.

This Evaluation Brief: Define Key Terms makes the argument that in order to improve the Statewide Program attention has to be given to the nature of all required program components. In the case of this brief, the lack of clear definitions of core program content has led to the growth of a subset of programs the evaluators are reporting on here that have:

- Incorrectly defined key terms in the program parameters and
- Then used that inaccurate definition to develop a new version of the program.

This attention should result in a set of reasoned, targeted, and efficient responses by NYSED managers.

STRENGTHENING THE STATEWIDE PROGRAM CONTENT

Over the past eighteen months there has been an ongoing conversation between the State evaluators and NYSED around tightening the NYSED Framework around the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program in New York. This is the first in a series of Evaluation Briefs prepared by Research Works, Inc. to address key components of that framework and to contribute evaluative information to this endeavor. This brief focuses on program subsets noted in one area of required program content.

RWI findings on categories of program content can be categorized in two areas. The simplest to address, is the clear definition of essential terms regarding program content (required by legislative regulation). A basic finding of the State evaluation is that many programs operate outside of these federal required parameters.

Both formal and informal data collection has indicated that there are discrepancies in the interpretation of key program terms across grantees. This brief summarizes observations from the work of RWI, including interviews and discussions with program management and delivery staff, local evaluators, resource center staff, and NYSED management team members on the implementation of program content in sync with federal requirements.

THE EFFECT OF THE UNSPECIFIED DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Leaving key terms as undefined has encouraged local programs to set their own definitions and thereby their own program parameters. The evaluation data indicates that this is often, but not always, unintentional. RWI evaluators have visited programs and been shown credit recovery activities in high schools and test preparation sessions across all school levels being paid for with grant funds as ‘enrichment’ activities. Most programs admitted to running ‘homework sessions’ every program day for example, either referring to them as ‘help with study skills’ or to students asking for help with their homework as ‘tutoring’. It is not uncommon for programs to note that “if we didn’t do homework the parents would not let the children come to the program”, a situation that they felt they have to work with because there is a perception that students finishing their homework is the primary function of the 21st CCLC program. Indeed, in one rural school district’s case we were told that after the required ninety minutes of homework time there was no time left for other programming due to the after-school busing schedule.

Clarification of these three terms, enrichment, study skills and tutoring, would clarify the link between these three expected types of program activity and federal and state program goals, thus having a high probability of strengthening the program.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Define NYSED's Expectations for Activities Labelled as Enrichment or Academic Enrichment

The funding legislation establishes three purposes for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, in Part B, Section 4201 of the EMSC Act. One of those purposes, as stated is:

(a) Purpose: the purpose of this part is to provide opportunities for communities to establish or expand activities in community learning centers that –

(1) provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet state and local academic standards in core subjects, such as reading and mathematics...

The State Evaluators ask: Is there a general definition of *enrichment* that could be used? Consider these traditional definitions of *enrichment in the school program*.

from: <http://www.learningpt.org/promisingpractices/whatis.htm>

Through the course of our work collecting examples of academic enrichment activities, we've (Learning Points, Inc.) noticed some confusion on the part of many programs as to what exactly we mean when we refer to "enrichment." Many programs seem to separate the concepts of "academics" and "enrichment" to such a degree that our references to "academic enrichment activities" have been met with confusion. ...Enrichment activities expand on students' learning in ways that differ from the methods used during the (traditional) school day. They often are interactive and project-focused. They enhance a student's education by bringing new concepts to light or by using old concepts in new ways. These activities are fun for the student, but they also impart knowledge. They allow the participants to apply knowledge and skills stressed in school to real-life experiences.

And from ASK.com <http://www.ask.com/education/enrichment-education-97b82e3ee6d27452#>

Enrichment in education refers to the climate and environment that a student experiences in a classroom or at a school. Enrichment is measurable, and there are several ways to further the enrichment of students. Some strategies in order to help students become better enriched include more physical activity to develop motor

skills, coherent complexity as opposed to chaotic complexity, social support in the school and home as well as the community and sufficient time to learn. Other factors include challenging learning, good nutrition at home and school and the ability to manage stress levels before they have the ability to become a problem. (emphasis added)

Using these, or other identified definitions, a clear **definition of the characteristics of enrichment activities** should be developed and thus those program parameters set. Enrichment activities have a specific academic and/or youth development purpose that should be expressed as specific learning and/or development outcomes. They have to be carefully planned. And while they should contribute to each student's preparation for assessment, however instruction in test-taking strategies or practice in answering past assessment items is not enrichment by any definition researched by the evaluators.

2. Define NYSED's Expectations for Activities Labelled as Providing Individual or Small Group Tutoring

The difference between tutoring a student and teaching a student is not subtle. One difference is the potential acceptable difference in the background of people who are teachers and those who are tutors. Teachers providing services in schools must have specified professional qualifications, however, tutors are not required by law to have qualifications in the subjects they teach.

The main differences between teaching and tutoring:

- When teaching, teachers are required to follow a standardized curriculum focused on specific academic standards. Their classroom should reach targets and this is done within a time limit. Tutors reinforce what is being done in the classroom. They provide individual one-to-one or small group tuition. Thus they can tailor the lessons to the students' (learning styles, present issues, etc.).
- Although often designed to be 'student centered' most modern classrooms are 'teacher led'. Students often lead the way in tutoring sessions, as they request help with specific tasks or assignments.

The underlying assumption of the legislation that funds the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program is that a shift in the instructional context for many of the program's target population (high need, high risk) students is a potential causal factor of the program's primary expected effect of improved academic performance. Transferring established instructional processes into the 21st CCLC program, therefore, has a potential negative or sustained non-positive effect on student growth outcomes in the program.

Thus, in the best case scenario, this implementation of more of the existing classroom instructional context under the label of emerging practices in learning structures in this program will maintain the present level of success of these students by ‘doing no harm’ (no improvement). In the worst case it will have a negative (reduced improvement) effect.

Clarification by NYSED of the difference between tutoring, especially the student led context and individual or small group (no more than six students, for example) focus is essential.

3. Do Not Confuse Supporting Study Skills Development with Test Prep

One site made the argument that ‘Regents’ Prep’ is a course in Study Skills. When asked about the course design (unavailable) and course content (past Regents’ tests, group work through how to answer the questions, independent practice) the regular school day teacher running that part of the 21st CCLC program noted that ‘time is running out’ and the students needed the practice as a final justification.

To be clear, teaching Study Skills as a content skill area, usually for middle school and high school students (and freshman in college) has specific components. This can be confirmed by reviewing the table of contents of any of the many workbooks, online study guides, etc. available. For clarity, most include the following from <http://studyandjobs.com/study-skills/> :



Teaching Study Skills as a content skill area has specific components. Therefore, the minimum areas of study required for a program activity classified as ‘Study Skills’ should be set.

The minimum areas of study required for a program activity classified as ‘Study Skills’ should be set. If required, program implementation plans should itemize the areas of study to be covered if Study Skills are included.

IN SUMMARY: DEFINING KEY TERMS

Clear definition of terms and acceptable program practice is essential to the success of any innovation. In the same vein, identification of necessary pre-conditions and capacities that have to be in place **before** the program is implemented is also necessary. Pre-conditions are many of

the things addressed by the NYSAN QSA. Capacities are also alluded to in that document, with less detail than required for their effective use. For example, capacities include a staff capable of delivering a complex and enriched program. Pre-conditions include things such as a program implementation plan specifying content and sequence; and program plan task-timelines that illustrate interaction among program components.

2014-2015 STATE EVALUATION BRIEF NO. 2

Looking Into Parent Involvement or Engagement

PROGRESSING TO SUCCESSFUL PARENT ENGAGEMENT

This Evaluation Brief on ***Looking Into Parent Involvement or Engagement in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program in New York*** makes the argument that in order to improve the Statewide Program attention has to be given to the interconnected nature of all required program components. The findings presented in this brief are the form and function of both parent involvement and parent engagement in 21st Century Community Learning Centers Programs in New York. To begin, the EMSC offers a definition of parent involvement, thus:

[As defined in the Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education Act, Title XI (General Provisions), Part A Definitions, Section 9101 Definitions:]

(32) **Parental Involvement** – The term parental involvement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:- (A) That parents play an integral part in assisting their child’s learning; (B) That parents are actively encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; (C) That parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; (D) The carrying out of other activities as those described in Section 1118.

The general move from reference to parent involvement to a focus on parent engagement begs the question: What is ‘engagement’ and why isn’t it ‘involvement’? ASCD offers the following explanation of the difference:

To create the kinds of school-family partnerships that raise student achievement, improve local communities, and increase public support, we need to understand the difference between family *involvement* and family *engagement*. One of the dictionary definitions of *involve* is "to enfold or envelope," whereas one of the meanings of *engage* is "to come together and interlock." Thus, involvement implies *doing to*; in contrast, engagement implies *doing with*. (Downloaded 6/22/15, Dr. Kathleen Toms, from: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may11/vol68/num08/Involvement-or-Engagement%C2%A2.aspx>)

So, engagement shifts parents from those whose inclusion is done to them, to those who are engaged in and responsible for their inclusion.

The SET found that most programs want to encourage parent involvement or engagement, and are aware of some of the recommended activities that are widely believed to facilitate at least involvement. However, all programs visited by the SET reported finding it difficult to answer questions when asked by RWI about the purpose of the inclusion or engagement activities further than to respond that the activities were to encourage involvement. Indeed, the majority of the effort they described was to encourage attendance at these involvement or engagement encouraging activities.

To the evaluators this meant that there are clearly established processes for parent involvement or engagement, but little clarity regarding the program theory of change which these processes support. There were sites visited where activities focused on increasing the levels of participation in parent involvement or engagement focused activities were the purpose of those activities. The transition from involvement to engagement seems to rely on achieving some level of involvement first. Without that first step, it seems, all progress ceases, so the focus on engagement is not criticized. However, activity without clear purpose is difficult to support.

IS ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT WORTH THE TROUBLE?

Most of the programs visited were unclear about exactly how parent engagement is supposed to effect the improvement of student learning outcomes, and thus unclear as to why a shift from involvement to engagement is considered to be important. In looking into research for any information on justifying a shift from the apparent easier concept of involvement to the more difficult, deeper level required by engagement, RWI found little help. While there have been quite a few studies of parent involvement and some more recent reports on parent engagement, none have provided clear information regarding mechanisms that cause parents to become involved, let alone engaged, in their child(ren)'s education. These studies more often document the activities around parent involvement with a shift in adult interaction foci for transition to engagement. This clarifies the situation in which the 21st CCLC Programs in NY now find themselves. Without information about the causal mechanisms, they have little to go on if their strategies are not successful and they want to modify them to encourage parent involvement or engagement with their program.

Discussions among program evaluators and program managers about parent engagement yielded parallel information to that found in the literature reviewed in the two areas and RWI observations. First, managers and program staff expressed a desire to engage parents in their program, however, they also focused their concern on identifying activities to attract 'attendance' rather than strategies to encourage engagement as a result of that attendance,

somehow equating coming to the program with being engaged in the program. Second, discussion of parent engagement with program managers and staff paralleled the education literature in that causal mechanisms are largely characterized by the assumption that to successfully facilitate parent participation, it is the parents who will have to change. In general, the observations of this evaluation indicate that when change of parent characteristic is part of the program engagement strategy, those efforts are unsuccessful. Parents do not change easily, which is no surprise. The question is: Do parents really have to change?

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Kagan sees the discussions in the research literature and the work of parent involvement (and latterly engagement) experts and educational consultants as questionable in that they begin from the assumption that the school has to help the parent to understand their potential to influence their child's future. He agrees that the truth is more empowering of the parent than the present strand of learned discussion might have one believe. He notes, for example, that parents clearly matter but parental influences are subtle, complex and very difficult to measure.

Rosalind Edwards and Pam Alldred take this one step further as they present a typology of parental involvement in the British Journal of Sociology of Education in terms of familialisation (that children are located in the home and dependent on their parents), institutionalization and individualization. Institutionalization refers to the historically recent phenomenon whereby children are increasingly compartmentalized into separate and protected organized settings which are supervised by professionals. Edwards and Alldred put forward a 'broad definition of learning', noting that within the trends of familialisation and institutionalization, ***parents and schools are regarded by policy makers and professionals as having 'similar functions in relation to children'. They use the broadest definition of learning, to denote these similar functions as: to help the child or young person to learn to be stable and productive adults.***

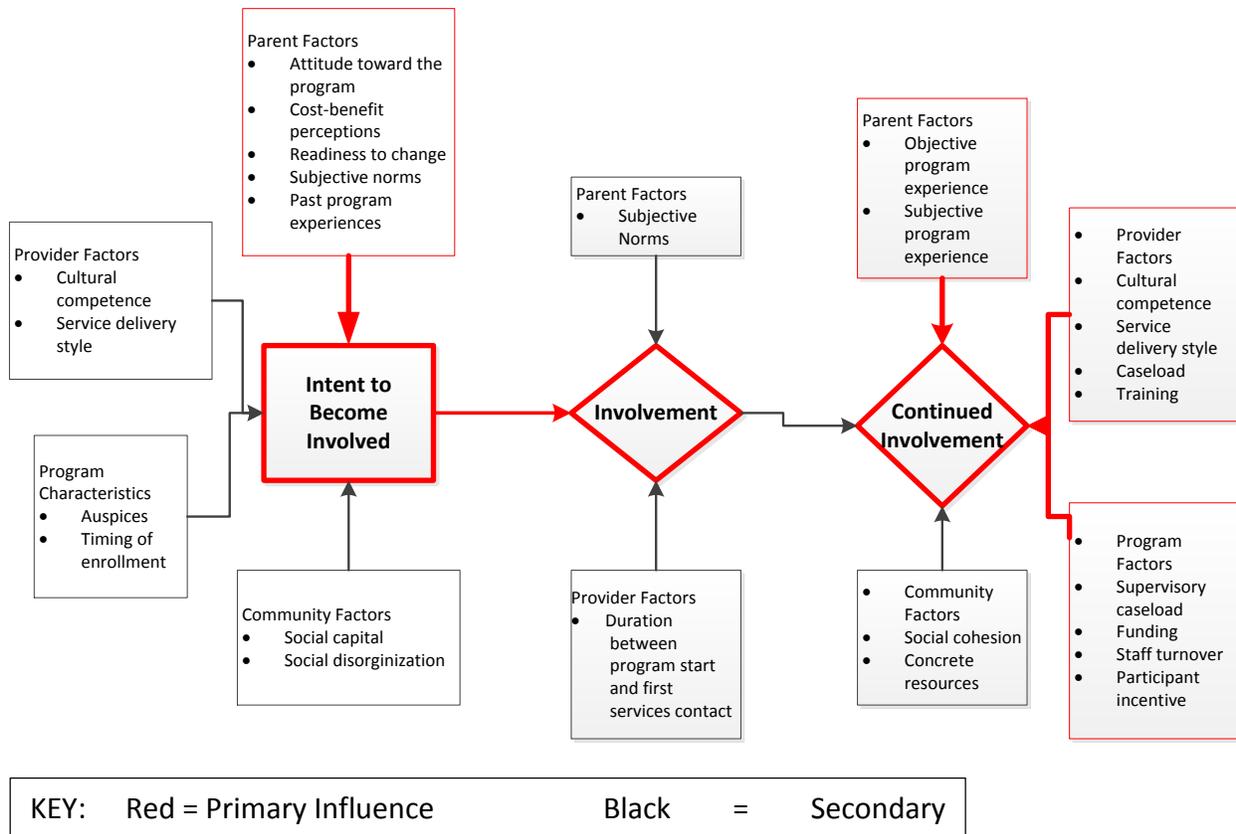
And one further expansion provides more detail to the broad definition that says "... the student learns through different learning systems with varying degrees of social mediation and collectivity at different moments, with their characteristic ways of providing information, generating feedback, and so forth. For the student ... these different systems are symbiotic. They benefit one another." (Saloman and Perkins, 1998, pp. 18-19) In other words, **the child learns in the learning system of the family and in the learning system of the school (among others), these systems support one another, but they do not teach the same things.** While they are not intended to teach the same things, Saloman and Perkins also note that **"Individual and social learning can interact over time to strengthen one another in what might be called a 'reciprocal spiral relationship'".**

However, it can be argued that through formal policy and process decisions, the definition of learning has been narrowed to a synonym for achievement¹. This narrowing of the definition has contributed to the narrowing of the role of the parent in this family-school partnership and to the emerging dominant definition of parent involvement as a support to student achievement. However, there were programs identified in this year of the evaluation (2014-2015) where parent engagement was conceptualized in relation to something like the ‘broad definition’, and where the role of parents in the achievement of program articulated student outcomes was reported in clearly defined terms. In these few programs the object of parent engagement was to support the role of the parents in the complex undertaking of positive youth development.

A START ON IDENTIFYING PARENT ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS

The State Evaluation continues to find little evidence of parent engagement in the 21st CCLC program. RWI has used the framework presented here illustrates how complex the interaction of trigger mechanisms are moving parents to become involved in public programs.

The evaluation did identify a set of process factors that are operating in the few programs that reported high levels of parent involvement and engagement. When looking for a framework in which to present these findings, a review of the research literature yielded a report of the work of Karen McCurdy and Deborah Daro, who provide a framework in which they believe an integrated theory for parent involvement and engagement could be developed. Their framework is grounded in community psychology research and concerns itself solely with process theory. They note that studies that look at interactions between characteristics of the service provider and the characteristics of participating parents have some promise for providing an understanding of what will support parent participation.



As can be seen, they establish four domains that are presumed to influence parent involvement in community based programming: characteristics of the individual; provider attributes; program characteristics, and, community context. If the model of parent involvement based in this integrated theory is correct, these factors indicate a set of domains for the mechanisms of change that will trigger effective parent involvement and engagement in the 21st CCLC Program.

Presented here is a modified schematic of the McCurdy-Daro model followed by a description of the domain factors contained in the model. Under each domain factor’s description is a report of findings from this evaluation that support its inclusion in the model.

PARENT FACTORS

Attitude towards the program, including modeling of the value of the program. Most program managers and staff interviewed indicated that they believe that parents who did not have a good experience with their own schooling are difficult to engage in their children’s education. As noted by Nakagawa (2000), some research suggests that lower income parents and some ethnic minority parents do not believe their role is to question the school and its programs. She further notes that parents often do not believe that their involvement in their child’s education is

necessary to their child's success. A further general contributor is the family's belief in or rejection of a perceived need for schooling to improve their child's future prospects at all.

Strategies drawing on parents' attitudes toward the program by successful parent participation programs include identifying the life-long outcomes of a successful education for students early in their involvement in the program. The belief that a good education opens doors, provides the opportunity for a good job, and thereby better life outcomes is presented to parents along with 'insider information' on how the K-16 system works and how to access the most from the system for their children. Parents are told often that they have to help the program if their children are to achieve success, and that their input is valuable.

Cost-benefit perceptions, meaning how much do parents believe they will get out of the involvement versus the cost (real and opportunity) of that involvement. Single parents and low income parents, for example, may have to lose pay to participate in some program activities, while most middle class parents can probably take time off without losing pay, thus emphasizing that the cost – benefit equation for middle class parents is more positive than for low income parents. The research also indicates that parents with a 'high density support network' may find it easier to participate, including sending a surrogate. The support network includes family and friends that will provide low or no-cost child care while the parent is at the program.

Strategies of successful parent participation programs which draw on cost benefit perceptions by parents include scheduling parent participation activities outside of the work day and 'home work packets' for parents who wanted to help with some of the repetitive tasks that program staff have to perform, but who could not get to the program to do those tasks on site. The few parent participation successful programs also indicated that they provide sibling and younger student minding services while parents are at the program, or are considering doing so. Critical to the success of these strategies is the construction of interactions that listen and to a two-way information flow, both of which add to the perception by parents that their input is honored by the program. One program director told a 21st CCLC meeting that this is a 'trust issue'. For example, she characterized the typical school discipline practice (mimicked by many 21st CCLC programs) of sending children home until a parent comes back with them as an insulting behavior to working parents. "I can call most parents and explain the situation and get their collaboration on a course of action over the phone," she told the meeting. There is no need to summon parents to the program. "They trust me to only call when it is absolutely necessary and I trust them to keep their side of any strategy we agree."

Readiness to change, meaning how ready is the parent to change non-participating behavior. Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) identified four stages of change: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, and, engagement. Programs should consider these and be able to

recognize that non-involved parents may have to pass through these stages. The overwhelming majority of programs included in this report viewed parent participation as a linear function of parent caring. If the parent cares about their child, their argument goes, s/he will come to the program when we indicate that we need to speak to them, or when we need their help with something, or when we want to give them some information. The four stages of change would indicate that the program might have to actively design their parent outreach to accommodate pre-contemplation and to encourage it to move to contemplation. The program would then have to address the barriers to participation which preparation would identify and then the program would be responsible for supporting and rewarding engagement.

Strategies that are sensitive to readiness to change of successful parent participation programs include consideration of the parents' readiness to change from non-participating to participating as important. The role of the 'early participators' was identified by some programs as critical to widespread parent engagement. Early participators bring the message back to the rest of the parents that participation is engaging and rewarding. The provision of a welcoming environment was seen as facilitative of the move from contemplation to preparation and then to engagement. This also has an impact on community factors (see below).

Subjective norms, meaning the match between the program's goals for their child and family, and parents' goals. This includes that the program meets the parents' expectations and provides program components consistent with these expectations. This puts the parents in a powerful position relative to the programs.

Subjective norms based strategies of successful parent participation programs are based in the belief that it is one of their primary responsibilities to make this match clear. This perception of being answerable to parents was an important characteristic of the few programs that were successful in encouraging parental involvement.

Past program experience, can dictate any expectations parents have that their participation will yield a positive result. It includes judgments of the smoothness of delivery of the program, and the stability of the program's delivery of the services relative to their child(ren). It was always hard to address the degree to which the programs visited felt they were answerable to the parents in their program for smoothness of program delivery and stability (including concerns about staff turnover) of the program. The move to a more customer centered program delivery environment has been difficult for some programs, impossible for most, perhaps especially those programs that have high need and low resources. The bi-directionality of this characteristic came as a surprise to many administrators and to some program staff. If parents are involved in the program but do not perceive that involvement is providing a positive outcome they will probably withdraw and not become involved again.

Strategies building on past program experience by successful parent participation schools

include an approach to parents that includes a level of accountability by the program to them and a reinforcement of the positive effect of their involvement in the program. One thing successful parent involvement and engagement programs had in common was their sensitivity to the amount of ‘in the program’ intelligence that parents have. This is information on what is really happening, through students as well as through support staff. It is a common pattern that, while the teachers and administrators in high risk/low income programs often do not live in the neighborhood their students come from, the aids, security officers, cafeteria staff, custodians and bus drivers often do. Ensuring a unified message from the program, therefore, includes making sure that this group of employees see the positive aspects of the program.

PROVIDER FACTORS

Cultural competence, which is defined as how able the provider is to accommodate the varying cultures operating within the parent population, and how well the provider manages to communicate with parents from other than the program staff’s natural culture. Many writers on this aspect of parental involvement cite Bourdieu’s (1977) construct of cultural capital which states that school-relevant environments represent and reproduce middle or upper class values and forms of communication. Thus, working class students and parents must adapt to the dominant culture of the school-relevant environment to meet provider, program and program staff expectationsⁱⁱ.

Cultural competence based strategies of successful parent participation programs include bridging this cultural divide, between the middle and working classes, most often through strategies implemented by an informed leadership at the provider level. More than one program director or coordinator described her/his struggle to encourage working class parents to become involved in the program, and that s/he saw the improvement of the physical space of the program as important because it would demonstrate to the parents and the community that the provider valued their children.

Service delivery style, meaning the organizational culture of the provider as it operates in program delivery and positive child development. This includes how the provider interacts, including its communication style, and its described focus of work in the community. It also includes the presentation to the public of the provider’s service goals as indicators of its service style. Most of the providers visited as part of this study did not present their service goals to their communities in any form. The role of these providers in the community was not clearly articulated by them, or when articulated the providers’ behaviors often seemed to disagree with the description. In some cases the evaluators found that providers were comfortable with this position because the provider could not be held accountable for unarticulated goals and any broad goal relationships with the community. In a few provider cases the link between the

program level behavior of the coordinators and program delivery staff was clearly linked to provider mission, vision, director leadership, and board approval for unified actions.

Service delivery style strategies of successful parent participation programs include a provider that sees the program as part of a broader human service delivery system.

PROGRAM FACTORS

Auspices, in other words, under whose blessing does this entity operate. It is seldom enough that it operates by mandate and at the dictum of a state education department. If the program is traditionally seen as part of the community, as important, and as successful, then encouraging parent involvement in the program is easier than if this is not the case. One barrier is the selection of 'Vendor Advisory Boards' rather than Community Advisory Boards.

Auspices based strategies of successful parent participation programs include identification by the project director of key community members and encouragement of their involvement in the program. Subsequent approval of the program by these key community members was a characteristic of those few programs that had good parent participation.

Timing of parent outreach, meaning that attempts to encourage parent involvement have to take place as soon as possible after the student begins at the program. Having a long range schedule for the program helps in this area.

Strategies using timing of parent outreach by successful parent participation programs include an openness to parent overtures to become involved. Successful program directors responded to parents expressing their opinions by listening to what they wanted to say, and then making it their business to research what they were told, and reporting back to parents about proposed strategies to address their issues. Pre- scheduling events, both formal and informal, to which parents are invited say giving about six weeks' notice makes it easier for parents to make their schedule fit the program. Parents can become involved through formal organizations, parent volunteering, and support for program activities. Parents should be part of an ongoing participation partnership. Our findings would indicate that programs should invest the energy and time in encouraging parent involvement from the very beginning of the child's attendance in order to maximize the impact of those efforts on increased parental involvement at all levels.

Smoothness of delivery of the program, including perceived stability. Parents want stability, including the days of programming, and the hours each day.

Strategies of successful parent participation programs drawing on smoothness of service delivery considerations includes an awareness by the program of the ability of parents to receive feedback from students, older siblings, and other parents on activities within the program. This

awareness should make the programs particularly sensitive to the need to communicate with parents about many aspects of the day to day operation of the program in order to minimize misinterpretation of the effect of any real or constructed 'issues' within the program. Also, forward planning is important for stability.

Caseload, or how much attention any program staff member can give to each individual child, is important to consider if you want participation to continue, as is staff turnover. Parents develop relationships with staff which they do not want to have to replicate too often. This includes issues of training in parent and family development and facilitating parent involvement.

Strategies of successful parent participation programs including caseload considerations include the identification of parent engagement and involvement as important to the program, not a part of most programs.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT FACTORS

Social capital (Coleman) refers to networks available to parents that enhance a student's ability to profit from educational opportunity. One of the greatest arguments for parent involvement in school is the network that parents can then build which should provide a safety net of support for students.

Strategies using the building of social capital by successful parent participation programs include situating the program in the center of the services delivery structures that serve the children in the program. In the most successful parent participation and engagement programs this is extended to include their families. This in turn seems to facilitate the parent networking that is referred to by social capital, including establishing information sharing networks, support networks and future seeking networks by parents on behalf of their children. As the parents come to understand the system, they become able to access networking among themselves as an asset in their interactions with the system.

Social disorganization or organization, a culture of being served and of taking part in the service delivery system will make it easier to participate. This becomes social cohesion. In neighborhoods where this is not the norm, then participation will probably be difficult to encourage. If parents already use other community agency services, the argument goes, then they will take to participating in the 21st CCLC program if the program is part of that agency system.

Strategies successful parent participation programs use that includes social cohesion: RWI has no specific information on this.

IN SUMMARY: PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

The SET has identified a number of pre-conditions that probably have to be in place before the Statewide program can attempt to achieve suitable levels of Parent Involvement or Engagement. For example, planning, or rather the lack of planning by programs in New York most probably has a negative effect on parent engagement or involvement. Parents have to respect the program, approve of its values, and note aspects of efficiency and effectiveness among the staff and managers. Appearance of being disorganized, unfocused, or disinterested is not lost on students, their parents and members of the community. Programs, therefore, should have not only the appearance of being organized but the observed profile of that fact.

Although the State Evaluators may find the McCurdy and Daro schematic to be completely correct as the evaluation proceeds, we do believe that it provides a common framework for discussion. Its use will shift the Statewide focus from getting parents to attend 'parent events' to identification of the results programs expect to achieve through parent attendance at program events and activities.

2014-2015 STATE EVALUATION BRIEF NO. 3

21st Century Community Learning Centers and the School Day

PROGRESSING TO IMPROVING THE STATEWIDE PROGRAM

This brief reports data-based information for two distinct relationships between the local programs and the school day: program alignment with the regular school day, and the use of 21st CCLC resources during the regular school day. RWI findings reported here and in the other 2014-2015 Evaluation Briefs have led to the conclusion that the lack of clear definitions of terms related to program content has led to non-compliant programs as implemented. This lack of coordination with the legislative intent across multiple local programs undermines the strength of the Statewide program. Both formal and informal data collection by the State evaluators has indicated that there are discrepancies in the interpretation of key program terms across grantees, leading to some grantee discrepancies in program structure and content across sufficient numbers of local programs to be of concern. The State Evaluation Team (SET) presents this information because the overall quality and thereby effectiveness of the Statewide program cannot improve while there is a lack of clear definition of all aspects of the required program components and fundamental program structures. This brief summarizes observations from the work of RWI, including interviews and discussions with program management and delivery staff, local evaluators, resource center staff, and NYSED management team members.

THE EFFECT OF UNDEFINED PARAMETERS OF PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The State evaluators found that the strongest measured effect of undefined parameters of local program structure is that programs define these parameters independent of any interaction with NYSED managers, and often without NYSED's knowledge. The 'new' definition is then operationalized in program activity and/or program focus. It is interesting to note that many of the parameters defined thus by local programs are duplicated throughout the State. The evaluators believe that because many of these 'new' definitions have gone unchecked over a considerable period of time, the programs believe that they are using the definition required by NYSED. In the case of local programs visited by the RWI evaluators most recently, they often offered their non-compliant program components as examples of their programs' finest work. This has led to a number of negative *subsets* in this area. Two of these **subsets** are in the areas of the required alignment between the 21st CCLC program and the students' regular school day program, and in the use of 21st CCLC resources during the school day Expanded Learning Time (ELT).

A PROGRAM **ALIGNED WITH** THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY

Policymakers, educators, business leaders, parents and community members have put a premium on developing and supporting students' ability to learn continuously, apply their knowledge to new situations and solve complex problems. The most basic reason for this emphasis is the realization that the future of today's students will be as members of a creative and adaptable workforce. In the legislation that funds it, and through the federal and NY State goals for it, the 21st CCLC Program, expectation is that these programs will increase the probability of achievement of this outcome for our students. Reports and research results indicate a belief that these programs have the potential to provide students with opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge, resiliency, and self-esteem that will help them succeed in the 21st century². This belief fortifies a confidence that the 21st CCLC Program, when effectively aligned with learning opportunities provided during the school day can provide an ideal setting to support successful youth development.

The program legislation and accompanying regulation requires that this program align itself with the regular school day. An initial confusion arises because there are no details about how NYSED believes that alignment should be formatted and, perhaps more important, how it should operate. **Align** is an interesting verb, in that it has two distinct definitions. When used alone (align your ducks in a row) it means 'lining up, usually of four or more parts'. When used as '**align + (with) + (something)**' it means: 'To bring into agreement or close cooperation'. In neither case does it imply a continuation or extension of something.

IMPEDIMENTS TO ALIGNMENT

The SET noted that there are a number of impediments to the alignment of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs and the regular school day program their students attend.

First, there is a surprising confusion regarding what the term 'align with' means. ***In the majority of sites visited, the RWI evaluators found that in the absence of any definitions or guidelines from NYSED, programs had assumed a definition of 'align with the school day' and took it to mean 'continue the regular school day in form and in fact'.*** In this report, those programs are referred to as ***regular school day stretch programs.***

The majority of programs (10 of the 12) visited by the State Evaluation Team (SET) were regular school day stretch programs. Further references to their programs by local evaluators during evaluator meetings supported the SET estimate of a high rate programs evidencing this behavior. Programs categorized as regular school day stretch programs ranged from 21st CCLC programs

² See, for example, Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Putman, 2003.

that reported only having time to supervise homework completion by their participants each day and thus could not deliver any further programming, to programs that used only regular school day teachers from participating student classes to work with those students to ‘continue their work with the students begun during the regular school day’. This was most often the case for programs using 21st CCLC funds as all or part of the required ELT for priority schools. When explored in detail by the State evaluators, three clear facts emerged:

- a) School day stretch programs had little, if any, formal planning of program delivery (neither a general Implementation Plan nor a time-span specific Periodic Plan).
- b) School day stretch programs relied on the school day plans and saw their role as continuing the execution of those plans.
- c) For this reason, school day stretch programs had **reactive content and mirrored instructional process** for the most part.

This leads to the **second** impediment to alignment: in order to be able to align with the regular school day program, the 21st CCLC programs have to have an executable implementation plan and detailed periodic plans. There has to be a program implementation plan, including a timeline for execution of component activities to reach program content goals and instructional strategies to deliver them. In terms of day-to-day program operations, the 21st CCLC program has to have more detailed periodic plans (weekly or monthly, for example) which include the details of needs addressed for target students for each of the program component activities. ***The point is that to align a program with another, as in the case of the 21st CCLC program and the school day program, both programs have to have formal, concrete plans.*** Without those plans there really is no 21st CCLC program, and you cannot align something (the school curriculum and instructional plans) with nothing.

The **third** related reason for confusion about alignment is that, at its core, this is a consideration of efficiency, i.e., that the 21st CCLC program does not duplicate school services, the much quoted ‘supplement, do not supplant’³ requirement of competitive grants. ***By misunderstanding what alignment with the regular school day means in terms of 21st CCLC program planning and delivery, local programs are at significant risk of supplanting local service delivery responsibilities.***

Finally, perhaps the greatest impediment is that ***alignment of school programs with the complex and interwoven components of the 21st CCLC program is both multifaceted and intricate.*** A review of the research in the area of out-of-school time programming bears this out. Studies of

³ That is that funds are used to supplement and not supplant other federal, state and local funds. 21st CCLC program is a supplementary program which can be used to enhance state or local reform efforts. And you can, of course, merge funds to support these enhancements.

21st CCLC programming have produced a number of models for aligning them with the regular school day and they, too, are complicated.

For example, the Y4Y website provides a model detailing six elements necessary to successfully align out of school time programming with the regular school day (either traditional or expanded). Of interest here, the ‘Practitioner Tips’ from the same website note the following as necessary to **support program alignment with paid planning and preparation time**, emphasizing the need for paid planning and preparation time for program staff.

The State evaluators found that the processes described in the following three bullets from those ‘Tips’ are seldom present in local 21st Century Community Learning Centers Programs in New York. When asked about them, program managers pointed out the lack of funds to support the time to do these things because their budgets were written to provide staff pay only for direct service to participants. [Full document in Appendix I of this Brief]:

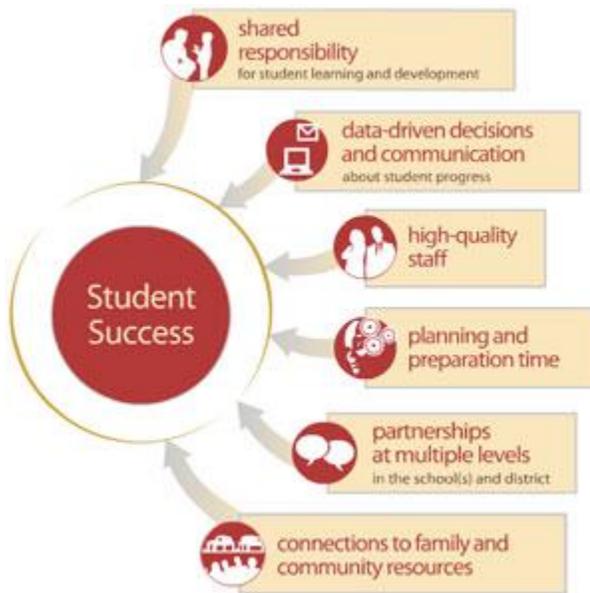
“Planning and Preparation Time

- Make sure the 21st CCLC program director oversees such “big picture” planning elements as curriculum and instructional approaches, and supports the site coordinator in implementing these approaches.
- Ensure that staff has paid time to participate in professional development and get hands-on practice in using curriculum and instructional approaches.
- Schedule paid time for program staff to plan and prepare for student activities. The program director can participate in and contribute to professional development for colleagues and for students’ family members. The program director can also review student progress to provide individualized support.”

The RWI evaluators visited few programs that are closely aligned with the regular school day of their participants in the sense of ‘aligned with’ described in this discussion. In those cases visited where **alignment-with** is operating, however, the 21st CCLC program knows what is going on in the regular school day of their participants, and works to support (but does not supplant) the curriculum being delivered there. In the case of these programs, the feedback from both program personnel and school administrators at those sites was positive regarding the amount of effort necessary to establish and maintain the active alignment and the level of student outcomes they were witnessing.

AN IDEAL ALIGNMENT FORMAT

The model below was downloaded from the Y4Y website as an example of the typical alignment process model. This model identifies six core elements of that process: shared responsibility, data-driven decisions and communication, high quality staff, planning and preparation time, partnerships at multiple levels, and connections to family and community resources. As the model illustrates, all are necessary, and all contribute simultaneously to student success.



THE SIX CORE ELEMENTS OF ALIGNING WITH THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY

From:

<https://www.y4y.ed.gov/learn/alignment/introduction/the-six-core-elements/>

This model of alignment demonstrates and supports the core values of the program as expressed in the legislation: that the child is the responsibility of the community, and the community should recognize that shared responsibility and act upon it. Of interest here is that this alignment is supported by high quality staff in the 21st CCLC program. None of these core elements are necessary if the purpose of the 21st CCLC program is to function as a means to stretch the regular school day program.

IN SUMMARY ON ALIGNMENT WITH THE SCHOOL DAY

In the findings of this evaluation, it was more often the case that no attempts at true alignment with the regular school day were operating in **regular school day stretch** programs. However, most programs discussed the success of their alignment with the regular school day in terms of strategies such as hiring most or all of the program staff from the program's feeder schools. This was found to be widely perceived as a form of 'alignment'.

Program personnel were delivering services. The non-alignment of the programs was not a predictor of the program activity, but influenced program effect. The point is that the **regular school day stretch** programs did not include critical components of a 21st CCLC program. For

example, there is an expected influence on the students that should be contributed by a coordinated commitment to the children and young adults in the program by the adults in their community. This was undermined because the program components that would have provided this were weak or missing. Statewide this has a potential negative influence on overall program effect, especially in the areas of social emotional development and maturation.

Programs that draw all or most of their staff from the faculty of feeder schools also had wide ranging program instructional quality. Again, this choice of the 'staff of convenience' may have an overall negative impact on the depth of effect in academic areas of the program. For example, the **stretch** programs often did not have the time or staff to offer a variety of high quality activities and provide academic content through real-world examples, applications and experiences, as recommended by a number of studies⁴ at least partially because of the expense of paying teacher contracted hourly rates.

⁴ See, for example, Youth Policy Forum, 2006; C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005; Westmoreland & Little, 2006.

THE 21ST CCLC PROGRAM, PRIORITY SCHOOLS & EXPANDED LEARNING TIME

AT ISSUE

The State evaluators found levels of confusion among program managers and staff, and, in a number of cases, the principals of schools participating in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program in New York State. The evaluators feel strongly that clarification and enforcement of the regulations regarding the use of 21st CCLC funds to support Expanded Learning Time requirements is necessary to settle the field.

21ST CCLC PROGRAMMING DURING ‘NORMAL’ SCHOOL HOURS

The regulations are clear:

- I. All programs may offer services to students during normal school hours on days when school is not in session, e.g., school holidays or teacher professional development days. In addition, activities targeting pre-kindergarten children and adult family members may take place during regular school hours in any program, as these times may be the most suitable for serving these populations.
- II. In addition, with specific permission from the New York State Education Department applied for through their application for 21st CCLC funds, a grant program in New York State can provide 21st Century Community Learning Center programming in priority schools during the regular school day **in addition to out of school time programming.**
- III. If a program did not stipulate use of 21st CCLC Program funds during the school day in their original proposal, under certain conditions, as established by the New York State Education Department and with their approval, an existing 21st CCLC sub-grantee may implement the flexibility afforded by the 21st CCLC waiver under ESEA flexibility.

The use of 21st CCLC funds by an existing sub-grantee to support ELT -

- Must be approved by the New York State Education Department; and
- May not involve a substantial change in the scope or objectives of the original funded project.

While a change in the time when services are provided is permissible, the activities conducted using 21st CCLC funds, the partners committed to the project, and, other conditions (such as funding level and qualifications or skills of key staff) **must** remain the same as those identified in the existing State-approved application.

In the Round 6 RFP, NYSED clearly stated the following review and approval process for modification of an approved out-of-school time program for operations during the school day.

1. To use 21st CCLC funds to support within school day ELT, an existing sub-grantee must submit a written request to the New York State Education Department for approval to amend its 21st CCLC sub-grant application.
2. If approval is appropriate, the State Education Department must approve the sub-grantee's request to amend its application to use 21st CCLC program funds to support ELT prior to implementation of the amendment.
3. Absent inclusion in their original approved proposal or subsequent NYSED approval of a change, 21st CCLC services must be provided outside the regular school day.

The evaluators found that there is some confusion in the field regarding the third program scenario described here. A number of programs were unaware of the requirement to seek and wait for NYSED approval before moving out-of-school time programming into the expanded school day. The evaluators (both State and local) are satisfied that this was an oversight on the part of the program managers. One explanation provided through a discussion with local evaluators is the issue of 'rules and regulations' about the program are included in the RFP, but not repeated anywhere else, including the program websites, or any letters or documents sent to the program as part of the notification of funding, for example.

REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS RELATED TO EXPANDED LEARNING TIME (ELT)

Priority School is a national level designation for schools identified as among the lowest performing 5% of Title I Schools in each state. **Focus School** is a national level designation for the Title I schools with the largest gaps between high performing and low performing students or, in the case of high schools, those with the largest gaps between graduation rates.

“As outlined in New York's Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver, **schools designated as Priority Schools are required to expand learning time.**” Expanded Learning Time (ELT) is a term specific to the ESEA Title I legislation, and a general term for adding additional instructional time to the traditional school day. Here it is used specifically relative to the Title I regulation, because the RFP required that 21st CCLC programs work with Priority Schools. The requirement is that Priority Schools have to add a minimum of 200 student contact hours per year, beyond the current mandated length of 900 hours per year of instruction in elementary school and 990 of instruction per year in high school (Kindergarten and Grades 1-6 = 5 hours, Grades 7-12 = 5.5 hours x 180 days of instruction per year). (Source: NYSED RFP for Round 6 Funding, 21st CCLC Program)

In general, **Priority schools** may opt to satisfy this ELT requirement by utilizing 21st CCLC funds before school, after school, weekends, holidays, or during summer recess.

Within specific parameters, grant funds may be used during the school day in addition to (but not in replacement of) out of school time programming. If a Priority School opts to use 21st CCLC support to expand learning time by extending the regular school day it must meet all of the Program Requirements for these funds, and in addition:

- Deliver instruction and enrichment activities in active partnership with a community partner, with a goal of serving 50% of the target population;
- Ensure that instruction in any core academic subject is delivered under the direction and/or supervision of a teacher who is certified in that particular subject area.” (Source: Ibid.)

The **21st CCLC waiver**, as requested by NYSED under ESEA flexibility, **only affects when services provided with 21st CCLC funds may be delivered**. Therefore, in New York, only authorized activities under the 21st CCLC program may be implemented during the school day using these funds as support, as well as before school, after school, on weekends, and during the summer.

To reiterate:

When granted approval to use 21st CCLC program funds to support ELT during the school day, the activities that are allowable under the 21st CCLC program do not change; only the time at which they may be offered changes (see Section 4205(a) of the ESEA).

ELT AND SUPPLEMENT – NOT SUPPLANT

Federal regulations state that the 21st CCLC “supplement, not supplant” provision applies to the use of 21st CCLC funds to support ELT under ESEA flexibility. Thus, NYSED must ensure that the 21st CCLC funds are used to supplement, and not supplant, Federal, State, local, or other non-Federal funds that, in the absence of the 21st CCLC funds, would be made available for programs and activities authorized under the 21st CCLC program (see Sections 4203(a)(9) and 4204(b)(2)(G) of the ESEA).

During the Evaluator Meetings held by the State Evaluators some points were made that focused the SET site visits during 2014-2015 program year. A number of local evaluators asked for guidance about how to respond to the use of 21st CCLC funds to support what are regular school day curriculum delivery activities. When asked if those activities appear in the original grant application, the response was largely that they do not. Again, this does not imply any willful ‘breaking of the rules’ as we are not sure if the programs in question know what the rules are.

IN SUMMARY ON 21ST CCLC PROGRAMS WITHIN SCHOOL HOURS

Again we repeat that there is a strong need for clear specification of program definitions, parameters, rules and administrative processes (in addition to budget maintenance processes) for this program. We recommend that these are worked on immediately and rolled out to programs in September 2015. This can be characterized as a 'pilot' by the NYSED, thus allowing a system-wide trial.

APPENDIX ONE: FROM THE ROUND 6 RFP

Appendix 10

New York State 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Round 6

Priority School Certification Form

School Name _____

BEDS Code _____

Grade levels served _____ # of children to be served _____

School Principal _____

Email address _____

The Lead Applicant agrees to ensure that the Priority school named above will comply with the following, if utilizing 21st CCLC funds to meet expanded learning requirements:

- support the school’s overall academic focus and ensure the integration of academic support, social and emotional outcomes including enrichment in music and art, and skill development of participants;
- accelerate and enrich learning in core academic subjects by making meaningful improvements to the quality of instruction and programming in support of school-wide achievement goals through hands-on experiences that make learning relevant and engaging;
- develop a meaningful partnership between the school and high-quality community partner who will interact directly with students and staff to offer a range of activities and enrichment opportunities that align with state standards, build student skills and interests, and deepen student engagement in school and learning in support of school-wide achievement goals, which promote higher attendance, reduce risk for retention or drop out, and promote graduation;

- actively address the unique learning needs and interests of all types of students, especially those who may benefit from approaches and experiences not offered in the traditional classroom setting;
- build a professional culture of leadership and collaboration (e.g., designated collaborative planning time for teachers, program staff and community partners), offering on-site targeted professional development focused on strengthening instructional practice and enrichment opportunities and meeting school-wide achievement goals;
- deliver instruction and enrichment activities in partnership with a community partner, with a goal of serving 50% of the target population;
- ensure that instruction in any core academic subject is delivered under the direction and/or supervision of a teacher who is certified in that particular subject area;
- use 21st CCLC funds to supplement, not supplant regular school day staffing and/or activities.

ⁱ According to the *International Dictionary of Education*, the term **achievement** is used both in reference to tests, where it refers to performance in a set of standardized tests, and in general, where it describes performance in the subjects of the curriculum. Where performance on a test designed as an achievement test is of and by itself an achievement measure, this use is defined by Anastasi as measuring the effects of relatively standardized sets of experiences. Therefore, in either the more specific use of the term regarding standardized test scores and the more general use regarding performance in curricular content, achievement is a concept which describes an effect of curriculum delivery. However, a more recent use of the term has been as a synonym for **learning**. This is at odds with the definition of learning widely used in the established education literature where it is defined as a term used ‘...in educational psychology to refer to a relatively permanent change in behavior that is the **result of past experience, either produced incidentally or through institutional learning through teaching.**’ (Ibid, p. 202)

ⁱⁱ Lareau (1987) used Bourdieu and related cultural capital to parent involvement. Indicators of cultural capital here include, amount of interaction a parent has with other parents, parents’ understanding of program processes, amount of contract between parents and program personnel, and, parent’s communication skills.