Connecticut's 21st Century Community Learning Centers 2010-11 Evaluation Report

Report Prepared for the State of Connecticut
Department of Education

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Executive Summary

Overview of Site Characteristics

The total budget for Connecticut 21st CCLC programming in 2010-11 was **$7,717,137**.These 21st CCLC funds supported **57 grantees** operating **95 sites** throughout the state. The average grantee budget was **$148,725, with an average per pupil allocation of $1,370.**

Based on attendance information, 21st CCLC sites served 7,291 youth during 2010-11. Individual sites served anywhere from 15 to 400 students over the course of the year, with an average of **131 students.** The largest number of sites served students from **elementary schools (43 sites); smaller numbers of sites served students from K-8 schools (28 sites), middle schools (20 sites), and high school (10 sites).**

Site Availability and Participant Attendance

The average site was **open slightly less than 12 hours per week, 30 weeks total, and a total of 122 days.** March and May were the months when the most programs achieved full availability. From November to May, at least 66 sites (73%) met the Connecticut State Department of Education's minimum requirement that programs serve, on average, at least 60% of their target number of students.

Programming for Youth Participants

Most programs reported practices that are sensitive to cultural differences, as evidenced by the environment reflecting participants and their families, program materials being available in languages other than English, and most programs having interpreters available when necessary. In addition, staff at a majority of sites greeted children and families in their native languages.

Youth were able to spend more time on projects of particular interest to them and assume specific jobs and responsibilities related to particular activities. Youth-based methods of involvement, such as initiating projects and being involved in program planning, were less common, although sites serving older youth used them more frequently.

On average, sites devoted about 49 percent of programming time to academics, 28 percent to enrichment, and 23 percent to recreation. However, only slightly more than half of sites (57.8%) had designated personnel responsible for organizing academic programming. Homework help was offered daily at the vast majority of sites (90.5%). Most sites also offered remedial assistance to students who needed it (93%), and a variety of different strategies were used to provide such assistance. At least half of sites reported using specific curricula for academic programming: 60 sites (63%) for reading, 56 sites (59%) for math, and 43 sites (45%) for science.

Parent and Family Involvement

Most sites indicated that they were very focused on engaging parents and families. Over half (61%) reported having a parent/ family coordinator. The most frequently used strategies to communicate with parents were relaying information through the student (98%), speaking with parents in person (95%), talking with parents over the telephone (85%), and mailing information home (62%).

Programs offered a variety of planned events for parents and families. The most frequently offered included social events, cultural events, parents serving as volunteers, and field trips. The least common parent engagement activities were parents serving on advisory councils, adult education programs, and parent involvement in community service projects.

Relationships with Schools

Most programs reported that they had regular contact with their partner schools, most often through communication with school day teachers, academic support staff such as guidance counselors, and school principals. Most programs (91%) reported that they had a designated person who was in charge of communication with their partner school.

Most sites reported positive relationships with their partner schools. Some coordinators, however, shared challenges they had encountered in this area, including difficulty maintaining regular communication with school staff, teacher concerns regarding classrooms use, and lack of support from school day staff.

Staffing and Professional Development

Connecticut's 21st CCLCs reported very little staff turnover during 2010-11. Of the 95 sites, 79 (83%) indicated that less than 10 percent of their staff turned over during the course of the year. Only 8 sites (8%) indicated that more than 20 percent of their staff turned over during the course of the year. A majority of sites reported that regular staff meetings were a part of their program operations. Nearly 80 sites (84%) met at least monthly.

Program Improvement Initiatives

To inform improvement efforts, programs relied most heavily on staff feedback and feedback from their partner school's principal. They were less likely to rely on quality advising or parent feedback to inform program improvement. **Parent and family involvement was the most common area identified as being in need of improvement,** with the vast majority of programs indicating that it was their first priority (25 sites, 28.7%) or second priority (18 sites, 20.7%). Academic programming was the second most commonly listed area identified as in need of improvement.

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Introduction

This report presents the results of an evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs) operating in Connecticut during the 2010-11 academic year (July 2010 to June 2011). The 21st CCLC program was established by Title IV of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* and in 2001 was expanded through the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The purpose of the 21st CCLC program is to fund centers that provide students with academic enrichment and other activities designed to complement learning. The centers also are expected to serve students' families by providing a safe place for children during out-of-school hours and by offering families literacy and related educational development activities. The specific purposes of 21st CCLCs are to:

> (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 student academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics;
>
> (2) Offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs, that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students; and
>
> (3) Offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for literacy and related educational development.
>
> *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, Part B, Sec 4201

Beginning in 2002, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has funded nine cohorts of 21st CCLC programs. The CSDE awards 21st CCLC funding to local educational agencies, regional educational service centers, and community-based organizations, as well as combinations of these entities. To reach the intended target population for the 21st CCLC initiative, the CSDE requires that 21st CCLC grants serve students attending schools with a high concentration of low-income students, defined as schools where at least 40% of the student population qualifies for free or reduced priced lunch. Grants support five years of operation, and annual grant amounts range from $50,000 to $200,000.

To evaluate 21st CCLC programs operating in 2010-11, the CSDE contracted with the University of Connecticut's Center for Applied Research in Human Development (CARHD). The purposes of CARHD's evaluation were to describe 21st CCLC services delivered in Connecticut during 2010-11, as well as to assist the CSDE with monitoring and improving the quality of 21st CCLC programs. As part of their grant requirements, 2010-11 sites were required to report program-wide and individual participant data to CSDE through an online data management system (*AfterSchool21*) and an End of Year Report (EYR). The present evaluation makes use of both sources of data.

The EYR, developed in consultation with CARHD, was designed to collect detailed information about how 21st CCLC services were delivered during 2010-11. Grantees were instructed to select someone who was "on the ground" *at each site* to complete the EYR. Although sites operated by the same grantee may have shared certain characteristics, such sites still may have differed in the activities they offered and also in the attendance patterns of their participants. Furthermore, the CSDE required that both ongoing and year-end data reporting be carried out separately for each site. The remainder of this evaluation report describes Connecticut 21st CCLC operations at the site level.

This evaluation report contains nine sections. The first two describe Connecticut's 21st CCLC sites and their youth participants. The third section describes the programming sites provided to student participants. Sections four, five, and six focus on sites' partnerships with parents, schools, and community organizations, and the seventh section summarizes 21st CCLC sites' staffing practices and professional development activities. The eighth section addresses programs' quality monitoring and improvement activities. The report concludes with a discussion of the evaluation results and provides recommendations based on evaluation findings.

Section One:

Overview of CT's 21st Century Community Learning Centers

During the 2010-11 grant period, the Connecticut State Department of Education funded 57 grantees operating 95 sites throughout the state. Table 1 (right) lists the grantees and sites funded in each district. Figure 1 (bottom of page) shows grantee locations across the state.

Grantees spanned five cohorts, with cohort 5 programs in their fifth and final year of funding and cohort 9 programs in their first year of funding. Yearly grantee budgets ranged from the minimum funding amount of $50,000 to the maximum of $200,000 with an average of $148,725. The average per pupil allocation was $1,370 (with a range from $316 to $2297).

Among the 95 sites, 71 (74.7%) were run by a school district, and the remaining 24 were operated by a community-based organization (20) or a municipal agency (4). A majority of sites (n= 85, 89.5%) were located at a school.

Forty-three sites (45.3%) reported serving elementary school students, 28 sites reported serving K-8 students (29.5%), 20 sites reported serving middle school students (21.1%), and 10 sites reported serving high school students (10.5%). (Site coordinators were allowed to choose all categories that applied, so percentages can sum to more than 100).

During 2010-11, 21st CCLC grantees served a total of 7,291 students. The total number of students served per site ranged from 15 to 400, with an average of 131.

Table 1. 2010-11 grantees and sites by district

District	Grantees	Sites
Ansonia	1	3
Bridgeport	7	14
Danbury	1	2
E. Hartford	2	4
Enfield	1	1
Groton	1	1
Hartford	10	10
Meriden	3	4
Middletown	2	2
New Britain	4	7
New Haven	7	14
New London	1	2
Norwalk	1	1
Norwich	3	5
Stamford	4	4
Waterbury	6	14
W. Hartford	1	2
Windham	2	5
TOTAL	57	95

Note regarding terminology: *For the purposes of this report, physically separate locations are referred as* ***'sites,'*** *and the term* ***'grantee'*** *is used to refer to the entity that is responsible for the management of the grant. The terms* ***'program'*** *and* ***'center'*** *are used interchangeably with the term '****site****.' Later sections of this report use the term* ***'site coordinator'*** *to describe the staff person who completed the site's EYR. The* ***'target number'*** *refers to the number of youth to be served daily. The expectation is that the number of youth who attend consistently will approach or exceed this target number. CT 21st CCLC grant guidelines state that 21st CCLCs should not operate as drop-in programs.*

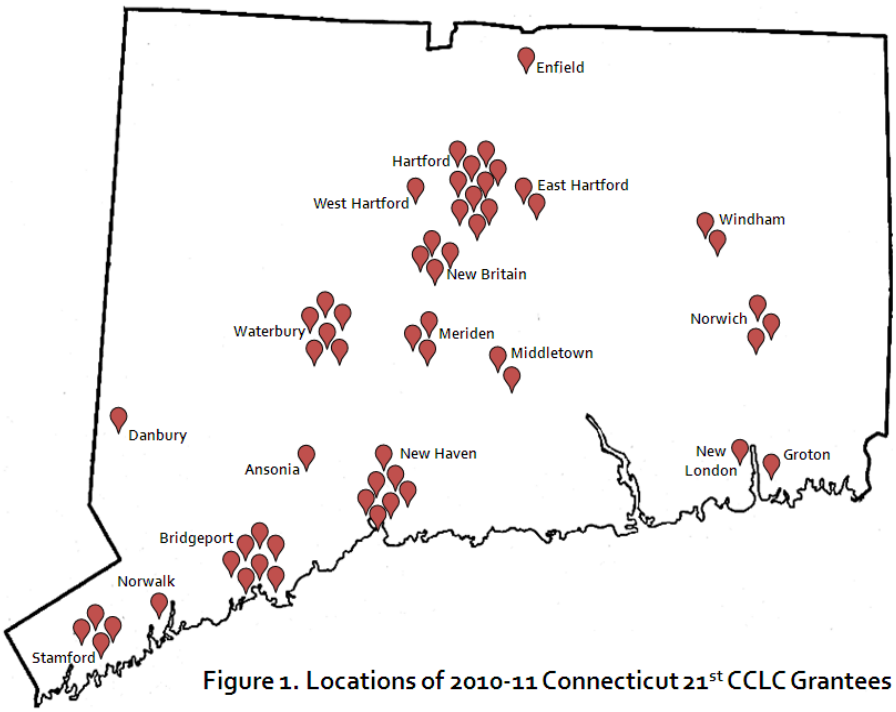
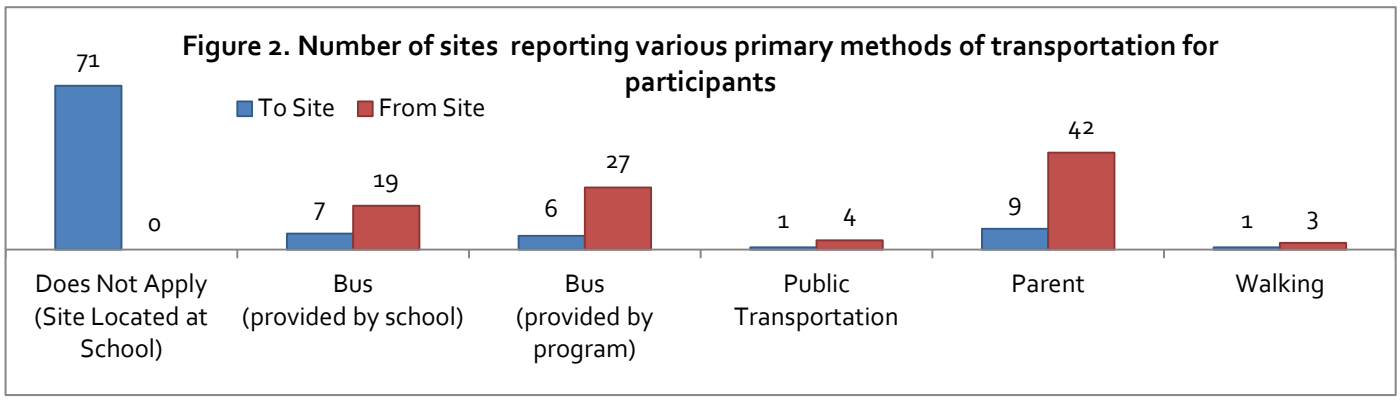


Figure 1. Locations of 2010-11 Connecticut 21st CCLC Grantees

General Site Operations

Transportation to and from the Site

Site coordinators were asked how **most** participants traveled to and from the site. Figure 2 (below) summarizes their responses. Most sites did not provide transportation to the site because the site was located at the primary school it served. For transportation home, at most sites parents picked up the participating child or participants went home by bus.



Fee Structure

Twenty-nine (30%) site coordinators reported that their site charged some type of fee for participation. Over half of these sites (n=19) offered scholarships to participants, and 16 sites used a sliding scale based on income to determine fees (in some cases, students' eligibility for free or reduced price school lunch was used to determine scholarships). Smaller numbers of site coordinators mentioned that they provided discounts for siblings (n=5), allowed payment in installments (n=2), or assisted families in completing Care 4 Kids applications (n=2).

Snacks

Nutrition is an important component of after school participants' overall wellness, and offering snacks to participants is one way to promote wellness. **Eighty-four sites (91%) offered snacks for participants**. Fifty-two sites (56%) received federal reimbursement, whereas 28 sites (30%) used their own funds for snacks. Four sites (4%) funded snacks through donations, and 4 other sites used school funds. These numbers add up to more than 84 because sites could select more than one funding source for snacks.

Site Availability during the Academic Year

All programs reported that they were available at least three days a week, with the majority of sites (n=52, 54.7%) operating five days a week. The average site reported being open slightly less than 12 hours per week (with a range from 2 to 20 hours). All sites were open after school; ten sites (10.5%) reported also being open before school and five sites (5.3%) reported also being open on weekends.

According to data available in the *AfterSchool21* database, the average site was open for a total of 122 days over the course of the year, but programs varied widely in how many total days they were open (range: 61 to 192 days). The average number of weeks open across all sites was 30, but once again, this varied considerably (range: 16 to 45 weeks).

Figure 3. Site availability by month during 2010-11

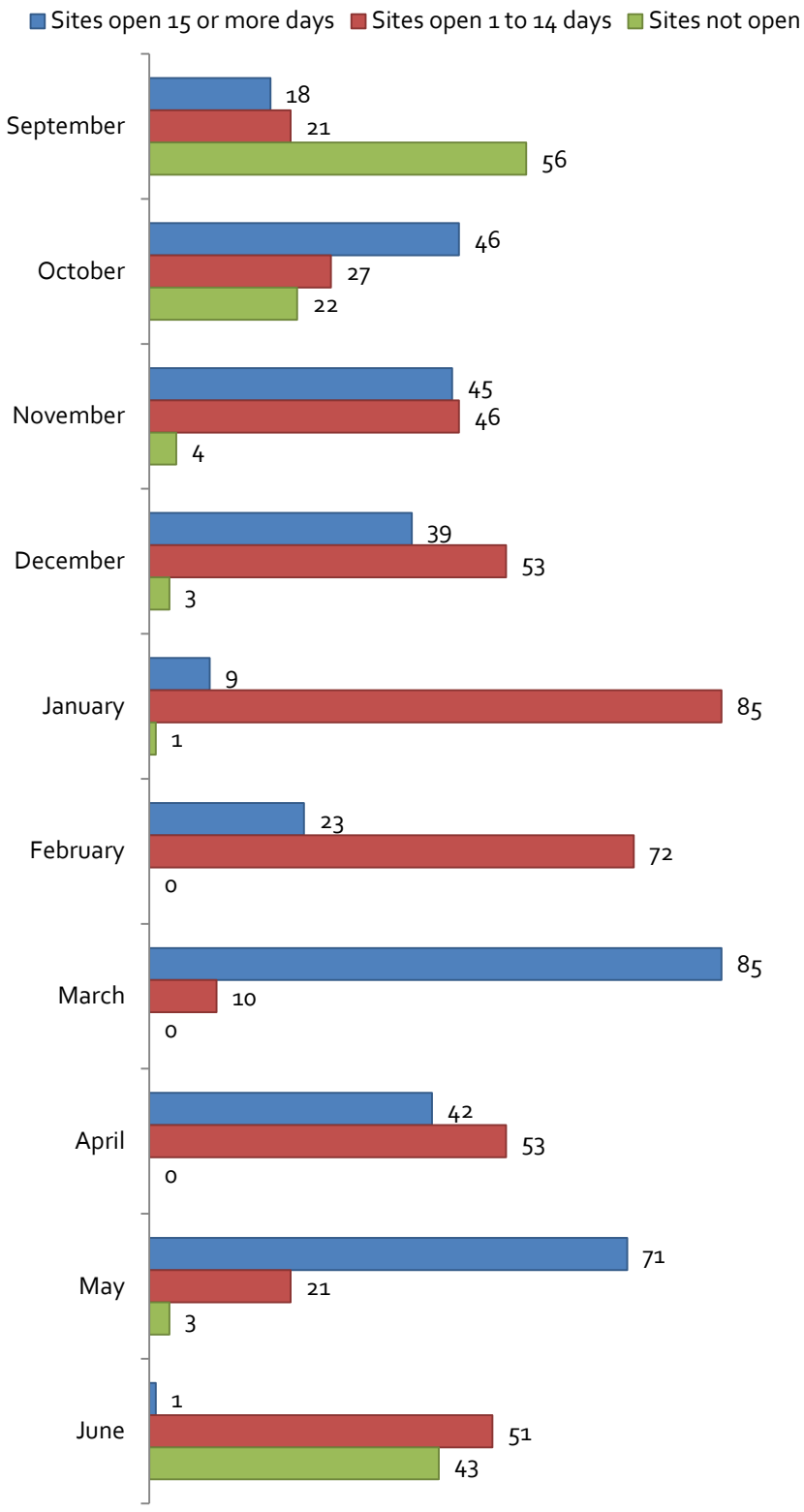


Figure 3 (right) shows the availability of Connecticut 21st CCLC sites over the course of the 2010-11 school year. Slightly less than half of sites (n=39, 41%) were open in September. Most (n=73, 77%) were open by October. From December through May, most programs were open at least eight days (which amounts to about half time). The large percentage of programs operating 1-15 days during December, January, and February may due in part to the weather-related school closures experienced in Connecticut during that time. March and May were the months when the most programs achieved full availability. At least 75% of programs (71 or more sites) were open 15 days or more during both of those months.

Summer Programming

Forty-five sites (47%) offered programming during the summer of 2010, compared to 34 sites in 2009. Of these, the average site was open 4.6 weeks (range: 2 to 10) and for 5.8 hours per day (range 2 to 9). These averages are very comparable to summer 2009 programming, during which the average site was open 4.5 weeks for 5.5 hours per day. Most sites offering summer programming served a participant group of both students who attended during the school year and other students (n=24, 53%). Fewer sites served mostly the same participants (n=12, 27%), the same participants (n=5, 11%), or mostly different participants (n=4, 8%).

Site coordinators described the ways in which their sites incorporated academics, enrichment, and recreation into summer programming. One third (n=15) reported that their summer programming operated on a split-day schedule where the morning portion was spent on academics and the afternoon on recreation.

The most common academic focus in summer programming was literacy (n=25); it was less common for summer programming to include activities relating to math (n=18), science (n=9), or language (n=2). Five sites utilized established curricula for academic activities (e.g., Lexia), whereas other sites embedded academics into activities such as cooking or finance (n=7) or brought in outside agencies to provide academic programming (n=5).

In terms of enrichment and recreation, over half of sites (n=28; 62%) offered activities focused on crafts (e.g., posters for the site) or arts (e.g., music, dance, theater). Sports or other types of physical activities (e.g., Zumba! classes) also were commonly offered, with 23 sites (51%) providing them. Fifteen site coordinators (33%) reported that students played games (e.g., board games or team building exercises), and 10 sites offered programming focused on cooking or nutrition. Some sites incorporated field trips into their programming (n=10), whereas others brought in outside providers or programs such as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts (n=9). Smaller numbers of sites integrated enrichment and recreation into science activities (n=6) or specifically mentioned computer time (n=2). Finally, seven site coordinators reported that their recreation and enrichment programming was organized around themes that changed each week.

> "Every day we had one academic group, called PODs. The students switched their POD every week. Some were poetry, art history, and engineering. Every week there was a state that we focused on and learned about. At the end of the week some type of game would call upon the students' recognition of the information we learned about the state."
>
> (Elementary Site in Norwich)

> "Our afternoon sessions included cooking, arts and crafts, gym, and water games. All activities were geared around a weekly theme, and field trips supported the theme. During Junior Chefs Week, students went to an orchard, picked blueberries, and baked with the berries the next day."
>
> (Elementary Site in Bridgeport)

> "Field trips were incorporated to supplement the summer school program. Trips included a trip to Jacobs Pillow which helped supplement the music, dance, theater, and video classes. The program also culminated in a final presentation with invited guests and parents."
>
> (High School Site in Waterbury)

Vacation Programming

Eight sites (8.4%) offered vacation programming during 2010-11, compared to six sites during 2009-10. Half offered four days of vacation programming, with the others reporting two, three, six, and eight days. The number of hours open each vacation day ranged from 3 to 24 (the 24 hour day was an overnight trip).

Academics were incorporated into vacation programming through educational field trips (e.g., to museums, three sites), providing academic activities in the morning (two sites), and using computer programs. Sites included enrichment and recreation in vacation programming through one-day field trips (five sites), team sports (two sites), and trips of longer duration (one site took an overnight trip to a ski lodge in New Hampshire).

Participant Attendance Patterns across Sites

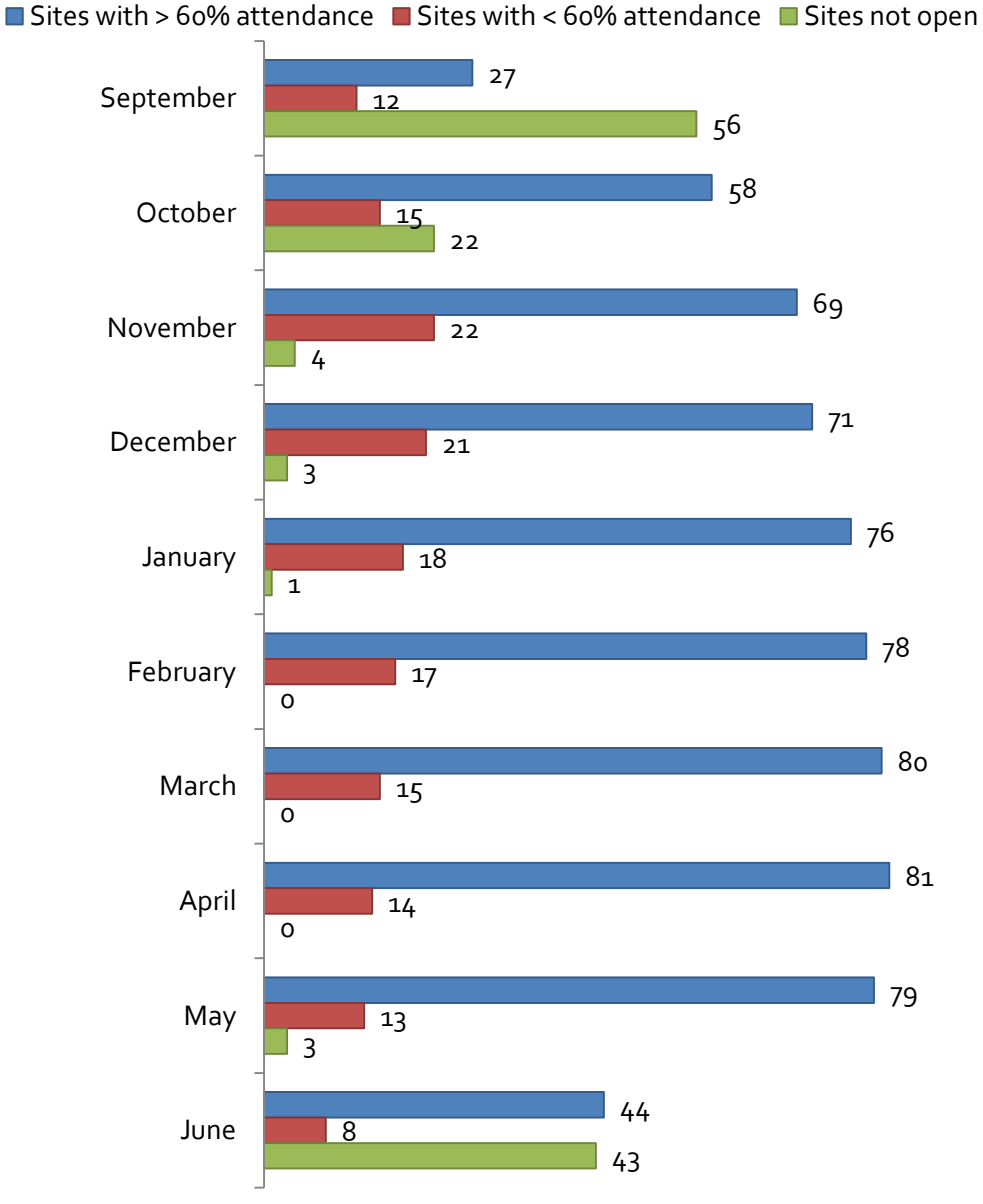
Federal 21st CCLC guidelines have established that individuals who attend 30 days or more of programming during a school year are considered participants. During 2010-11, 7,291 students met this criterion. The site-level attendance patterns presented in this section are based on this group of students. Three metrics were used to assess the degree to which ASP sites were operating at capacity: average daily attendance, average individual attendance rates at the site, and percent of participants attending at least 60 percent of the site's available days. All of these metrics reflect site-level attendance patterns. Individual student attendance rates are discussed in Section Two of this report.

Average Daily Attendance

The first metric, "average daily attendance" (ADA), compares the number of youth attending a site on a given day with that site's target number.[1] The CSDE has established a threshold of 60 percent ADA as the minimum that 21st CCLC sites are expected to maintain. **Across all sites, the average ADA was 83.6 percent, meaning that on average sites exceeded the 60 percent target and were serving the number of students they intended to serve.** The ADA ranged from 33 to 175 percent, however, indicating substantial variability in attendance patterns.

Figure 4 (right) shows the number of sites meeting or not meeting the 60 percent threshold in each month. As shown, fewer sites met the threshold during the beginning and ending months of the year. Between November and May, at least 73 percent (69 or more sites) had ADA rates above the threshold. The best month was April, when 81 sites (85%) met or exceeded 60 percent ADA.

Figure 4. Average daily attendance by month during 2010-11



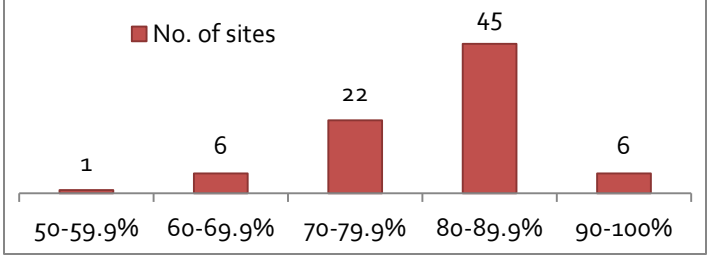
[1] The "average daily attendance" value for each site was calculated using the following formula: (Total Number of Individual Attendances) / (Target Number of Youth to Be Served * Days Open in the Month). An 'individual attendance' refers to one student attending on one day.

Average Participant Attendance Rate

ADA is a useful metric for examining how successful sites are at serving their targeted number of participants on a daily basis. Sites differ in the number of days they are open, however, and at many sites, participants are able to register for only a portion of program days. Because of this, it is important to examine how often participants attended relative to the number of days for which they were registered. **That is, how successful were sites in having participants attend every day for which they were registered?**

This was computed individually for each participant by dividing the number of days he or she attended the site by the total number of days he or she was registered for during 2010-11. This percentage was then averaged across all participants at each site to obtain a site-level figure of average participant attendance rate. **At the site level, the average participant attendance rate was 83 percent, and it ranged from 52 to 97 percent.** Figure 5 (right) shows the distribution of sites in terms of their average participant attendance rate.

Figure 5. Distribution of sites according to average participant attendance rate



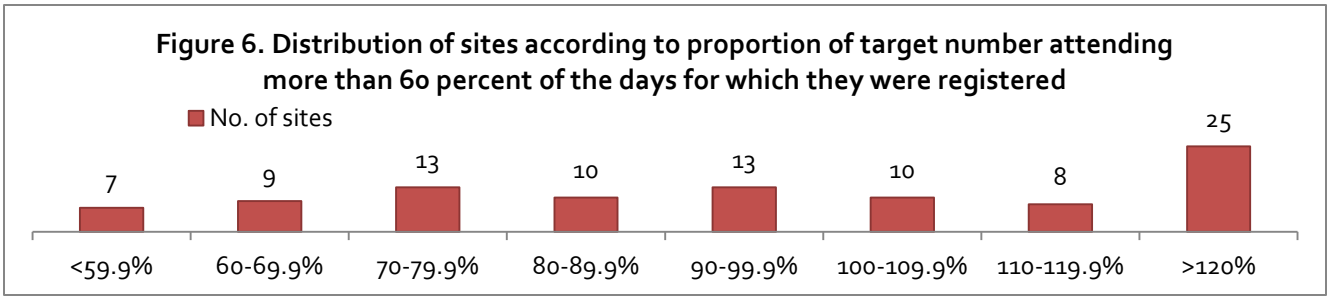
Similar to ADA, the CSDE has established a target of 60 percent; that is, sites should strive to have students attend at least 60 percent of the days for which they were registered. All sites but one attained or exceeded this target. **The majority of sites had average participant rates between 80 and 90 percent. This suggests that most sites are succeeding in having participants attend most of the days for which they are registered.**

Proportion of Target Number of Students Attending at Least 60 Percent of Registered Days

The final metric used to examine site-level attendance was the proportion of participants at each site, relative to that site's target number, that attended at least 60 percent of days (the target set by the CSDE). **That is, how successful were sites in having their target number of students attend at least 60 percent of the days for which they were registered?** This shows not only whether students are attending regularly, but also if the number of students attending regularly is comparable to the site's target number.

This was calculated by first computing, for each site, the total number of students whose individual rate of attendance was over 60 percent. This number was then divided by the site's target number. **Across all sites, the average was 98 percent, and it ranged from 9 to 204 percent**. Figure 6 (below) shows the distribution of sites in terms of this percentage.

Figure 6. Distribution of sites according to proportion of target number attending more than 60 percent of the days for which they were registered



Most sites appear to be doing extremely well in having their target number of students attend regularly. Indeed, 43 sites had considerably more than their target number of students attending over 60 percent of the time. Some sites were not doing as well, however, and they may benefit from target quality advising and technical assistance around issues of regular attendance.

Section Two:
Overview of Participants and Individual Attendance Rates

Federal 21st CCLC guidelines have established that individuals who attend 30 days or more of programming during a school year are considered participants. During 2010-11, 7,291 students attended a 21st CCLC for at least 30 days. Records are not consistently retained for students who attended fewer than 30 days of programming during the school year. Thus, the demographic and attendance information presented in this section pertains only to those students who attended their after school program site 30 or more days during 2010-11.

Demographic Information about Participants

Gender

During 2010-11, 50.7 percent of 21st CCLC participants were female. This is similar to the percentage of female participants during 2009-2010 (52%).

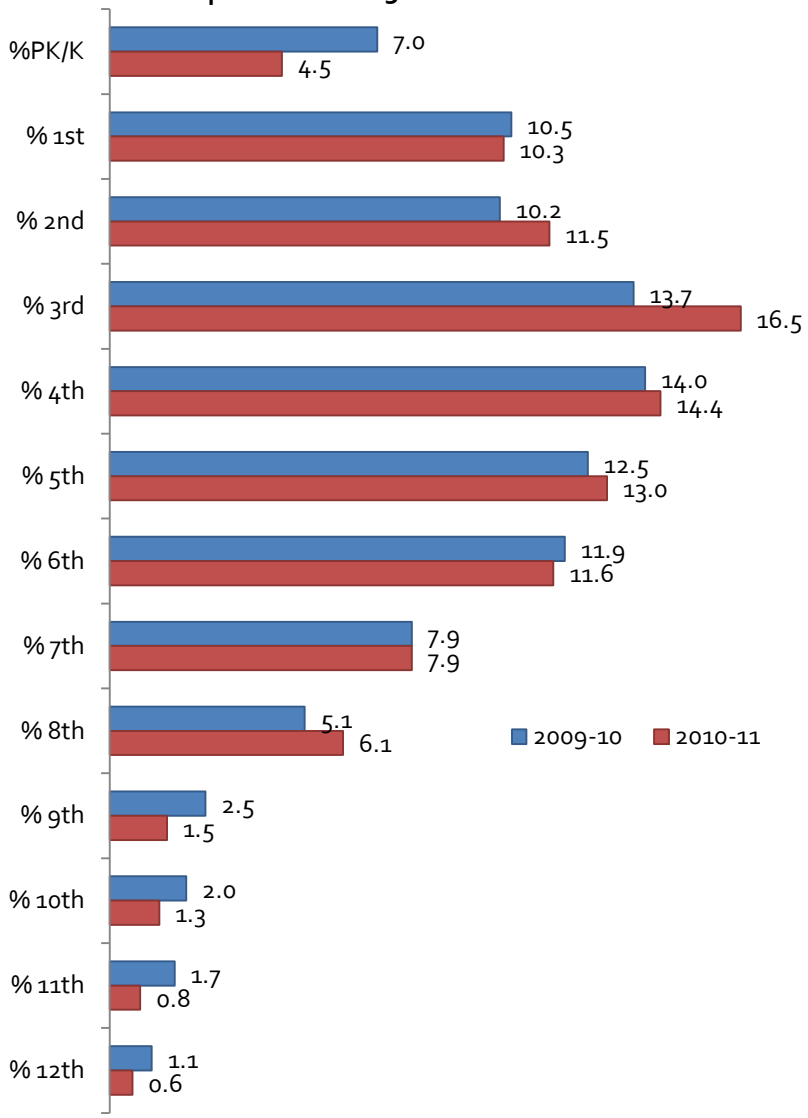
Grade Level

Twenty-first CCLCs served students from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, and information about grade level was available for 5,924 of the participants (81.3%). Figure 7 (right) shows the distribution of participants by grade. As the figure indicates, the highest numbers of participants were in grades 3, 4, and 5. The 21st CCLC participant group included fewer older students. Compared with 2009-10, there is an overall trend of serving more elementary school students and fewer high school students.

Free/Reduced Lunch Status

Information about students' eligibility for free/reduced lunch was available for 6,038 participants (82.8%). The percentage of 21st CCLC students who were eligible for free/reduced lunch was 90.6 percent. This number is slightly higher than the 85 percent of students who were eligible for free/reduced lunch in 2009-10.

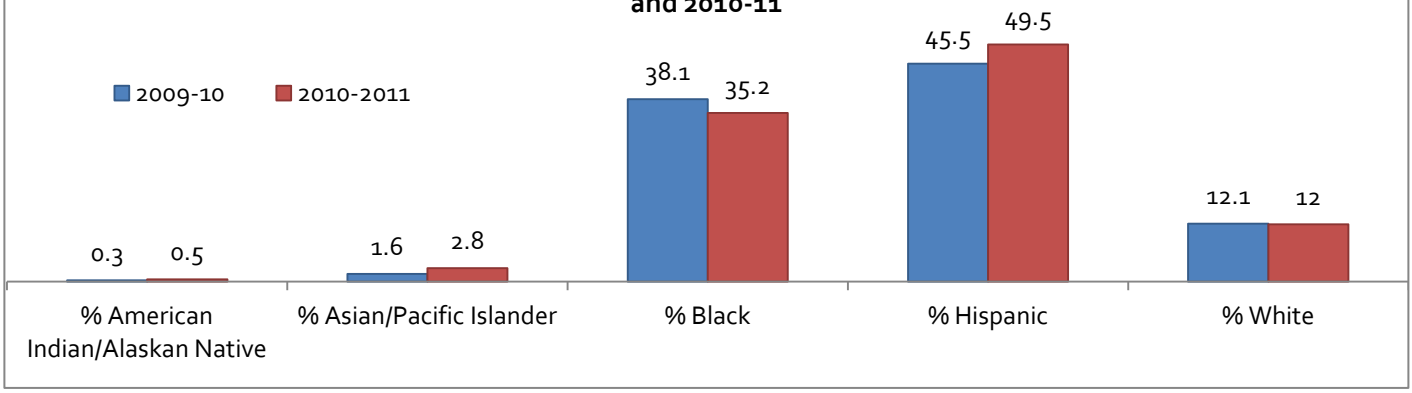
Figure 7. 21st CCLC participants by grade in school: Comparison of 2009-10 and 2010-11



Racial/Ethnic Background

Information about students' racial/ethnic background was available for 6,591 participants (90.4%). Figure 8 (below) shows the racial/ethnic background of 21st CCLC participants. The majority of students were Hispanic (49.5%), followed by Black (35.2%) and White (12.0%). The remaining 3.3 percent were American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, or Pacific Islander. Compared to 2009-10, more Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic students were served this year. Fewer Black students were served in 2010-11 compared to 2009-10.

Figure 8. Racial/ethnic background of 21st CCLC participants: Comparison of 2009-10 and 2010-11



Individual Rates of Attendance

To investigate whether individual attendance differed by students' demographic characteristics, the rate of attendance was computed for each participant through dividing the number of days he or she attended the site by the total number of days for which he or she was registered. During 2010-11, individual rates of attendance varied considerably, from 20 to 100 percent. **The average participant attended 82.5 percent of the total number of days for which he or she was registered.**

Girls had a slightly higher attendance rate (83.4%) compared to boys (82%). This difference was statistically significant, most likely due to the large sample size. The difference may not be as practically significant, however, as it translates to a difference of slightly under two days at a site that was open for the 122 days, the average across all sites.

Individual rates of attendance also differed based on whether the participant received free or reduced price lunch, **with non-eligible participants attending at a significantly higher rate of 86.2 percent as compared to eligible students (82.9%)**. This difference was statistically significant and translates practically into a difference of approximately four program days (at an average site, open for 122 days).

Finally, individual attendance rates differed based on participants' racial/ethnic background. **Hispanic/Latino students attended at a higher rate (83.5%) as compared to Black and White students, whose rates were 82.4 and 82.3 percent, respectively.** Similar to the difference between male and female participants, this translates to a difference in program attendance of approximately one day.

When interpreting these results, it is important to keep in mind not only the practical significance of the findings but also that most students, regardless of demographic characteristics, are attending their ASP at high rates.

Section Three:
Description of Programming for Student Participants

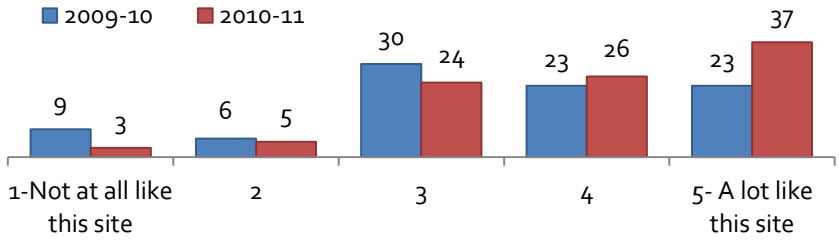
A primary purpose of the End of Year Reports (EYRs) required by CSDE was to collect rich information about how 21st CCLC activities and services were implemented. These activities and services—which provide youth with opportunities for academics, enrichment, and recreation—are central to the mission of the 21st Century program.

The first part of this section focuses on two areas that, in last year's evaluation, were identified as in need of additional investigation: how sites connect with participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds and how sites involve and engage youth participants in the design and implementation of their programming. The second part includes information about site's academic, enrichment, and recreation programming.

Connecting with Participants from a Variety of Cultural Backgrounds

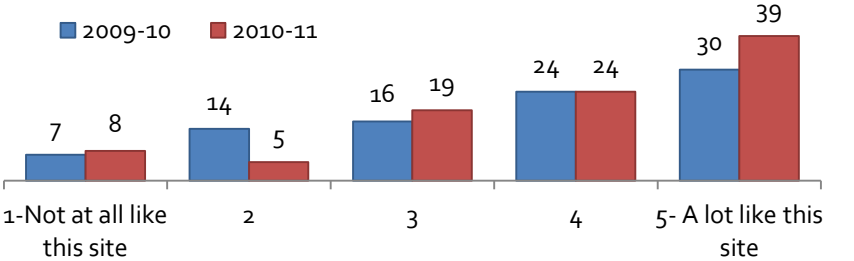
The EYR included a series of statements about ways in which sites can engage with participants from a variety of backgrounds. Site coordinators evaluated the degree to which the statements characterized programming at their site, on a 5-point scale. Figures 9 through 11 summarize site coordinators' responses to each statement in 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Figure 9. "The physical space included pictures and other materials that reflect the participants and families served by the program"



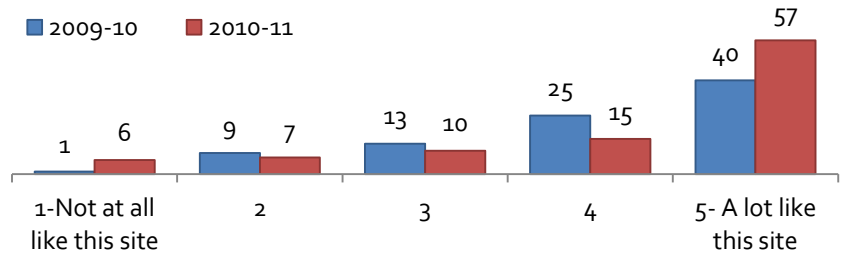
The 2010-11 EYR also included a new statement, in regards to whether staff spoke with families and children in their own language. About a quarter of site coordinators (24) were neutral on this statement, whereas a majority (60) stated that this was common at their site.

Figure 10. "Written materials related to the program were available in languages other than English"



Overall, the results suggest that some sites have made efforts to improve their ability to connect with participants from a variety of backgrounds. Site coordinators in 2010-11 were more likely to report that the strategies were "a lot like this site." This pattern of results may indicate that professional development and quality advising efforts targeting cultural connectedness are having an effect.

Figure 11. "When necessary, interpreters were available to communicate with students and family members who spoke languages other than English"

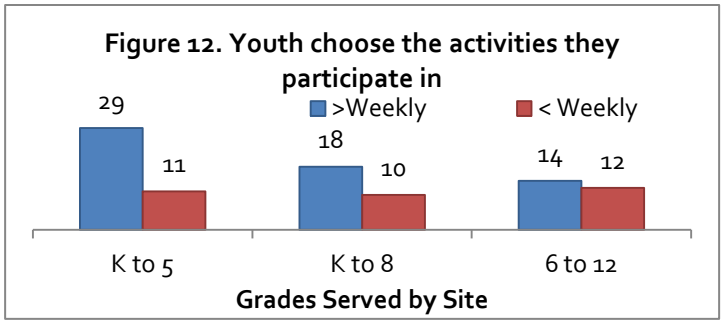


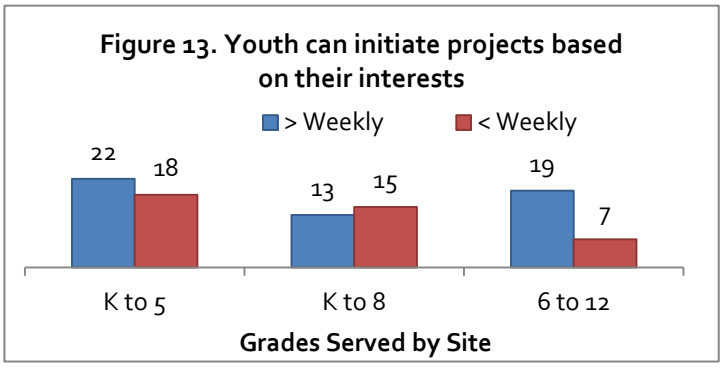
Involving Youth in Program Planning and Implementation

Results from the 2009-10 evaluation indicated that sites provided forms of youth involvement that were primarily adult-driven rather than youth-driven. The 2010-11 EYR included five additional questions about various forms of youth involvement, in order to assist professional development and quality advising processes more effectively. Figures 12 through 14 (below) show site coordinators' responses to these questions. Because youth involvement strategies are likely to differ based on the developmental needs of the youth who attend the program, results are presented based on the primary grades served at the site. This enables analysis of whether programs serving younger or older participants are using different strategies to involve participants.

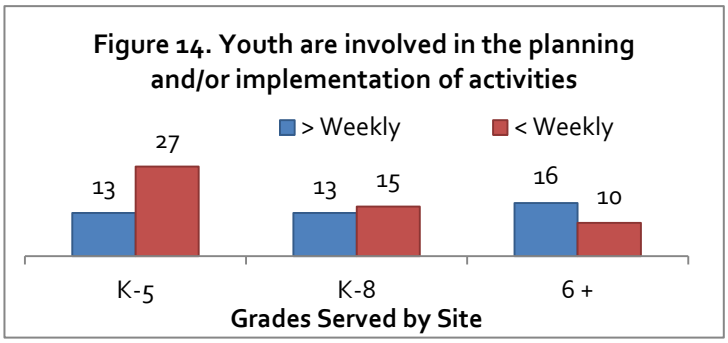
At most sites (n=80), regardless of the primary age group of youth served, participants were able to spend more time in 2010-11 on projects they were particularly interested in, on at least a weekly basis. A majority, though somewhat fewer sites (63), consistently offered youth opportunities to assume specific jobs and responsibilities during activities.

A majority of sites also offered participants the chance to choose the activities in which they participated on at least a weekly basis (Figure 12, right); however, substantial numbers of sites offered this opportunity much less often (monthly or a few times a year). It is notable that sites serving grades 6 and above were approximately equally divided between sites where youth could choose their activities weekly and sites where youth chose activities only a few times a month or year. Given the importance that older youth may place on choice within after school programs, this is an area of potential consideration for sites serving participants in middle and high school.





The two most youth-driven strategies covered in this year's EYR were youth initiation of projects based on their own interests and youth involvement in the planning/implementation of activities. As Figures 13 and 14 indicate, sites serving older youth (grades 6 and above) were more likely to incorporate these opportunities into their programming on at least a weekly basis. A clear majority of sites serving older youth (16 of 26) offered these opportunities at least weekly.



These findings are consistent with expectations that sites would vary in their youth involvement strategies based on the age range of youth participants they served. However, it is important to note that although many programs serving older participants offer frequent opportunities for significant youth involvement, a substantial number of programs do not do so on a regular basis. This may be an important consideration for sites targeting older youth in considering the factors that attract these youth to attend programs and encourage them to attend consistently.

Academic, Enrichment, and Recreation Programming

Staff Oversight of Academics

Table 2 (right) summarizes site coordinators' responses regarding the staff members who planned and supervised academic activities. The largest number of sites reported having an education specialist. This was followed in frequency by master teacher or education consultant. Seven site coordinators said that they were responsible for academic programming at their site. Other titles written in as "other" included academic coordinator, math/literacy coach, or education coordinator.

At 52 of the 55 sites, the person in charge of academic programming was a certified teacher or had other teaching credentials (such as being certified in a state other than Connecticut). Credentials at the other three sites were a Masters degree in education, having attended several workshops on providing academic programming, and holding a School Administration/Supervision Certification.

Table 3 (right) shows the duties of personnel responsible for education programming. At most sites, the person's responsibilities included planning the curricula to be used and evaluating student data, either to determine curriculum needs or decide how well it was working.

Table 2. Personnel responsible for educational programming

Personnel	# of sites (% of sites)
Education Specialist	31 (32.6%)
Master Teacher	26 (27.4%)
Education Consultant	19 (20%)
*Site Coordinator	7 (7%)
*Academic Coordinator	3 (3%)
*Math/Literacy Coach	3 (3%)
*Education Coordinator	3 (3%)
Note. *Written in the "other" category.	

Table 3. Duties of personnel responsible for educational programming

Responsibility of Personnel	# of sites (% of sites)
Curriculum Planning	43 (45.2%)
Student data evaluation	34 (35.8%)
Coaching site staff	31 (32.6%)
Co-teaching with the site staff	21 (22.1%)
Evaluation of site staff	17 (17.9%)
*Directing Activities or Instructing	5 (5.2%)
Note. *Written in the "other" category.	

General Academic Programming

Information about the amount of time sites devoted to different aspects of programming was obtained through the activity-based information that sites were required to enter into the *AfterSchool21* system. In this system, sites must enter each activity and designate whether the **primary** focus of the activity is academic, enrichment, or recreation. It must be acknowledged that some activities may have more than one focus[2].

Based on data from the *AfterSchool21* database, **sites designated an average of about 49 percent of their programming as having an academic focus (range: 0%-100%); this percentage is the same as what site coordinators self-reported last year.** The following sections describe academic programming in further detail, including curriculums that were used for academic programming. In addition, sites had the option of describing highlights from their academic programming; examples of these responses are provided throughout this section.

Sites' Use of Academic Curricula

Sites may choose to use pre-packaged or developed programs/curricula to deliver parts of their academic programming in reading/literacy, math, or science. Last year's (2009-10) evaluation included a recommendation to focus more attention on the types of curricula sites used and the extent to which they were used. That is, did sites use manualized curriculums, sequenced activities, or activities and games that adjust their level of difficulty (i.e., computer programs) to target children's specific needs?

[2] Data from two sites were eliminated because some of the sites' activities were listed under multiple foci, and there was not enough information to determine the primary focus of these activities. Therefore, activity data were available for 93 sites.

Reading and Literacy Programming

Thirty-eight 21st CCLC sites (40%) identified a reading curriculum. The most common are shown in Table 4. Seventeen other reading curriculums were identified by one site each. In addition, 17 site coordinators reported that their district framework was used to inform their programming, and 5 sites identified Connecticut state standards. However, these options did not meet the original definition because there was no specific sequencing, manualization, or automatic adjustment to challenge students based on their individual strengthens and weaknesses.

Table 4. Most commonly mentioned reading curricula

Name	#of sites
Kids-Lit	11
Avenues	4
Readers Theater	4
Read 180	3
Study Island	3
Lexia	3
IXL.com	2
My Access!	2

Math Programming

Thirty-three sites (35%) identified using a math curriculum. The most common are shown in Table 5. Twelve other math curriculums were used by one site each. As with reading curriculums, many sites identified their district framework (21 sites) or the CT state standards (8 sites). In addition, 4 sites identified the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets as their math curriculum. However, these were interpreted to be guidelines rather than a standard curriculum.

Table 5. Most commonly mentioned math curricula

Name	#of sites
Kidz-Math	9
Fastt Math	6
Mathletics	5
Study Island	4
IXL.com	3
Fantasy Sports Math	2
Dimension M/Tabula Digita	2

Science Programming

Eighteen sites (19%) used a science curriculum. The most common are shown in Table 6. The remaining four curriculums were identified by one site each. The most popular responses that did not meet the original definition of curriculum were district standards (16 sites), Connecticut frameworks (6 sites), Nutrition Detectives (3 sites), 4H- University of Connecticut (2 sites), 40 Developmental Assets (2 sites), and the Connecticut science bowl (2 sites).

Table 6. Most commonly mentioned science curricula

Name	#of sites
Science Explorer	10
Little Scientists	4
CT Invention Convention	4

Academic Support Programming

A primary aim of the 21st CCLC programs is to provide academic opportunities that assist students attending low-performing schools with meeting academic achievement standards in core academic subject areas. As part of this aim, 21st CCLCs are expected to provide tutorial services in the form of homework help and remedial assistance. Programs' approaches to providing these essential academic services are described below.

Homework Help

Research has demonstrated that students' homework completion plays a critical role in their academic success (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006). At most sites (n=86, 90.5%), homework help was required for all participants and was offered either four (43 sites) or five (38 sites) days per week. The average homework help session lasted 45 minutes (range: 20 minutes to 3 hours).

Table 7 (right) summarizes the detailed information coordinators provided about the homework help setting. At the average site, the homework help room had about 18 students supervised by one to two staff members. The most commonly used settings were classrooms (n=84), computer labs (n=41), and cafeterias (n=37).

Table 7. Student, staff, and teacher participation and rooms used for homework help

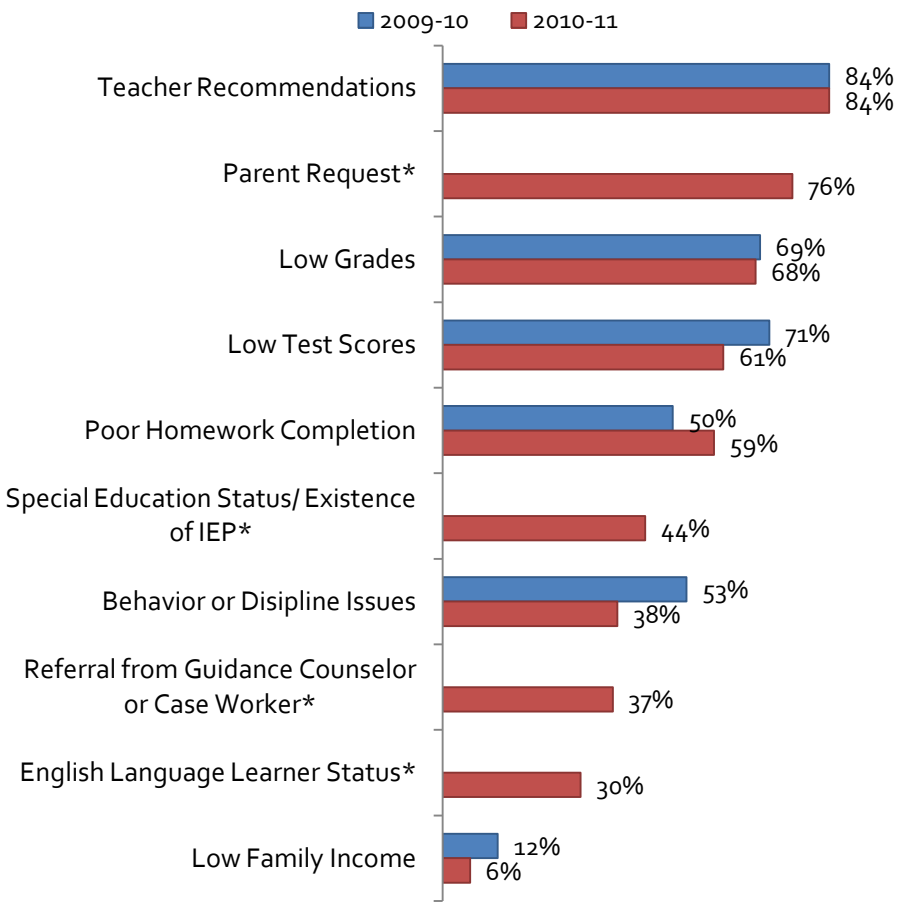
Component	Range	Average
Students Participating	12 - 165	64
Rooms Used	1 - 10	4.26
Students Per Room	5 - 60	17.74
Staff	1 - 12	6.32
Ratio of Students: Staff	2 - 80	11.11
Certified Teachers	0 - 10	3
Ratio of Students: Teachers	0-165	27.89

Remedial Assistance

Eighty-eight sites (93%) indicated that they offered remedial assistance; this percentage is the same as reported for the 2009-10 year. On average, 30 percent of students received remedial assistance; however, this varied considerably across sites (range: 0 to 100%).

Site coordinators identified the methods used at their site to identify students in need of remedial assistance. Figure 15 (right) shows the percentage of sites using each strategy during 2009-10 and 2010-11. Strategies listed with an asterisk (*) were only included as options for the 2010-2011 report. The use of most strategies remained consistent; teacher recommendations, low grades, and low test scores were the most common identification methods both years. Notably, there was a decrease in the use of behavior or discipline issues to identify students in need of remedial assistance, and an increase in the percentage of sites identifying students via poor homework completion rates.

Figure 15. Percentage of sites using strategies to identify students in need of remedial assistance



Site coordinators also reported whether their site used any of nine strategies to address students' needs for remedial assistance. Table 8 (below) shows the percentage of sites using each strategy. Small group tutoring was more common than one-on-one instruction, and these services were more commonly provided by certified teachers or paid staff members than volunteers. Strategies mentioned in the "other" category included specific activities (n=5), peer tutoring (n=3), mentoring (n=2), communicating with other agencies such as DCF (n=1), and instruction in study strategies (n=1).

Table 8. Strategies used to address students' needs for remedial assistance

Strategy	# of sites (% of total)
Communicating with school staff (for example, teachers) regarding student needs and progress	76 (80%)
Small group tutoring with a certified teacher	69 (73%)
Use of data (for example, grades or CMT scores) to identify student needs	59 (62%)
Small group tutoring with other paid staff	56 (59%)
One-on-one tutoring with a certified teacher	52 (55%)
One-on-one tutoring with other paid staff	47 (50%)
One-on-one tutoring with volunteers	28 (30%)
Small group tutoring with volunteers	27 (28%)
Referral to other services (for example, Supplemental Education Services)	15 (16%)
None of these	4 (4%)

Enrichment and Recreation Programming

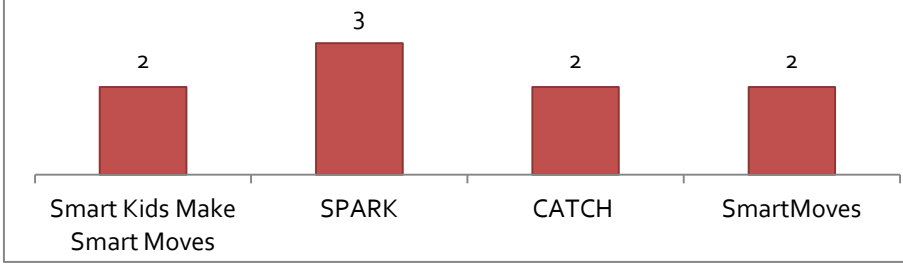
Enrichment

In addition to academic programming, 21st CCLC grantees must provide a broad array of additional activities and services. Enrichment activities may include arts-related programming, entrepreneurial education, and character education, such as programming focused on participants' social and emotional development. These activities should be designed to reinforce and compliment the regular academic program of participating students. **According to the data from the *AfterSchool21* system, sites designated about 27 percent of their programming as enrichment (range: 0%-80%).**

Recreation

Data from the AfterSchool21 system showed that sites designated about 22 percent of their programming as recreation (range: 0%-82%). Of the 95 21st CCLC sites, only 14 (15%) reported using a specific recreation curriculum. A total of 17 curricula were mentioned. The most popular responses are displayed in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Most commonly mentioned recreation curricula



Section Four:

Parent and Family Programming

In addition to providing student-focused activities, 21st CCLC sites are required to involve students' parents and families in their programs. The parent/family involvement component includes providing direct services to parents (e.g., family literacy activities, opportunities for parent educational development), as well as promoting parents' involvement in both their child's school and the after school program. The 21st CCLC legislation explicitly requires centers to provide families with "opportunities for literacy and related educational development" (Elementary and Secondary Education Act). The importance of parent and family involvement is reflected in the fact that Connecticut 21st CCLCs are required to allocate a portion of their budget for this purpose.

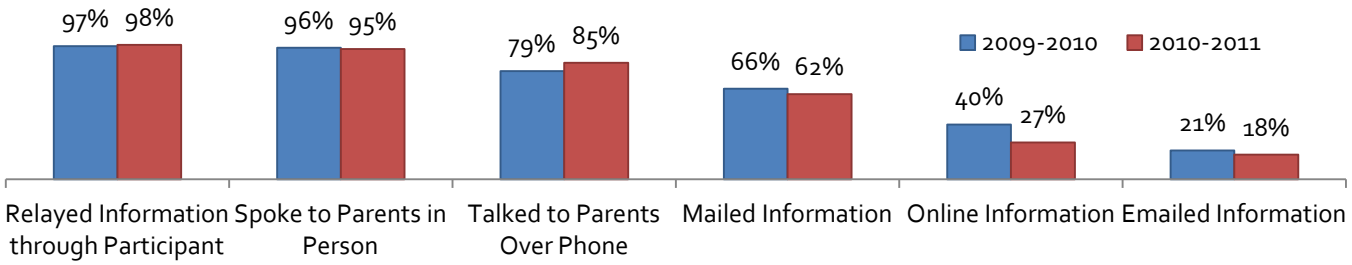
Parent and Family Coordinators

Fifty-eight sites (61%) had a designated person responsible for parent and family involvement ("parent/family coordinator"), an increase over 52 sites during 2009-10. At most of these 58 sites (n= 32, 33.7%), the duties were assigned to a staff member who also had other regular responsibilities such as site coordinator (n=14), building leader (n=6), teacher or lead teacher (n=8), parent educator (n=5), parent (n=6), other staff member (n=10), principal (n=1), and social worker (n=1).

Communicating with Parents and Families

Site coordinators indicated whether their site used any of six listed strategies used to reach parents in order to develop relationships, share information about the participating child, and provide information about programming. Figure 17 below shows the percentage of sites that used each of the strategies during 2010-11 and 2009-10. At most sites, staff relayed information through the participating child and spoke to parents in person; the percent of sites using these strategies was consistent across the two time periods. In 2010-2011, there was an increase in the number of sites that reported talking to parents over the phone. Less commonly used strategies included making information available online (e.g., through a website) or emailing information.

Figure 17. Percentage of sites using certain types of communication with parents/families



Under the "other" option for 2010-11, six site coordinators reported using a phone system such as ConnectEd or Parent Link, six displayed information at the site (e.g., at the sign out table or hanging posters), five mentioned advertisements on public television and/or in newspapers, and five presented information to parents at PTO meetings or other events. One site sent home an informational DVD.

Figure 18 (right) shows the percentage of sites in 2009-10 and 2010-11 that used each strategy for communicating with parents on at least a monthly basis. It appears that sites were moving toward individual meetings with parents rather than group meetings or events as a common method of communication. Percentages of sites using the other methods at least monthly were similar during 2009-10 and 2010-11.

This year's EYR also included several new questions regarding strategies for involving parents and families, based on last year's responses and suggestions for evaluation (Figure 19). The most frequently used strategy was having a liaison between parents and the school. Asking parents for feedback and involving them in decision making occurred less frequently.

Figure 18. Percentage of sites using methods to communicate with parents at least monthly

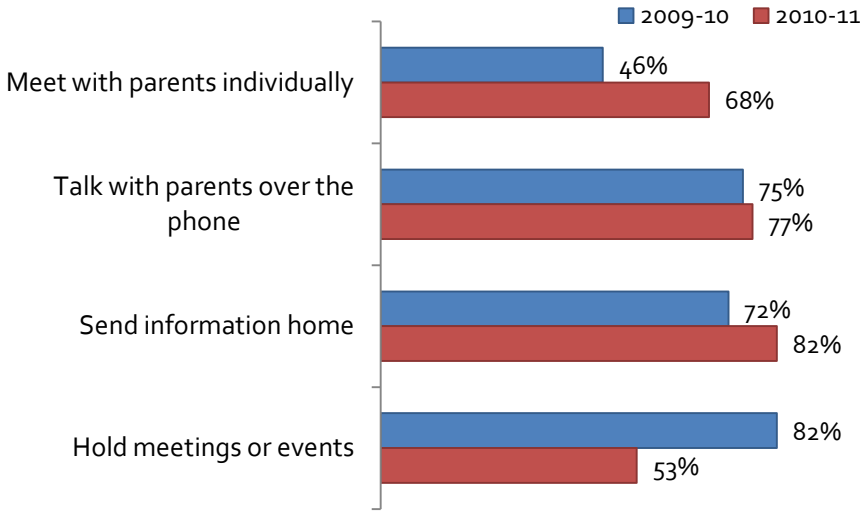
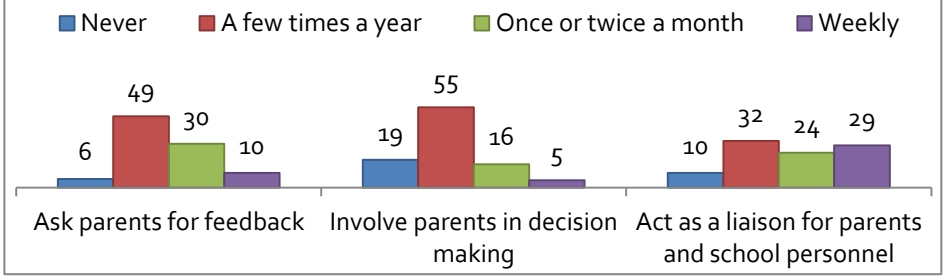


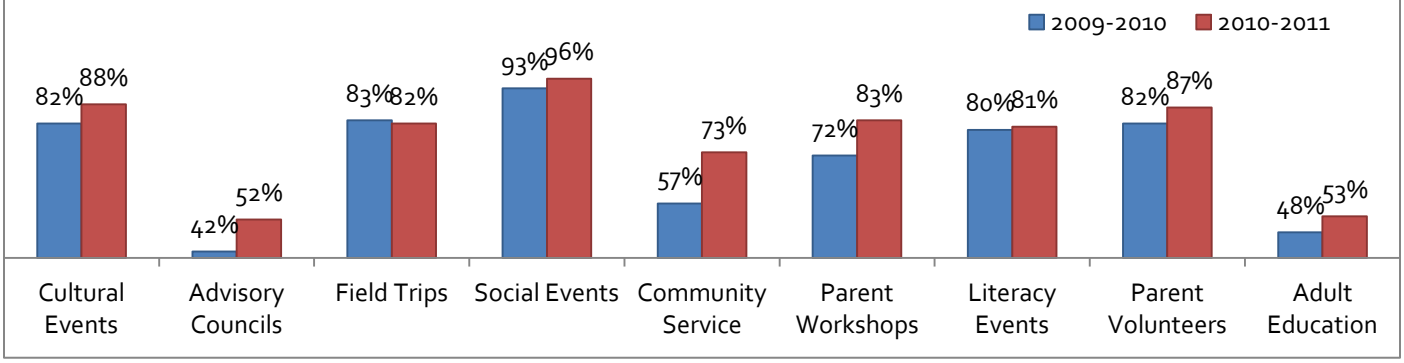
Figure 19. Frequency of sites' use of parent communication strategies (number of sites)



Events for Parents and Families

The 2009-10 report included a recommendation to strengthen parent/family involvement, and most sites expressed a desire to do so. Thus, it is important to examine whether any such changes occurred. Figure 20 (below) compares the percentages of sites in each of the past two years that reported holding each type of event at least once during the school year. As shown, the percentages of sites offering most activities increased, most notably in community service, parent workshops, and parent advisory councils.

Figure 20. Percentage of sites offering parent and family events



Parent and Family Funding from the 21st CCLC Grant

Each site is provided funding specifically for parent involvement, and in both the 2009-10 and 2010-11 EYRs, site coordinators described how these funds were used. **Grant-funded activities for parents and families fell into four broad categories** listed in Table 9 (right). The table summarizes the number of sites reporting each type of funded activity during the past two years. **Five coordinators reported either not using or not being aware of the funding.**

Table 9. Sites' use of parent and family funds from the 21st CCLC grant: Comparison of 2009-10 and 2010-11

	2010-2011 # of sites (% of total)	2009-2010 # of sites (% of total)
On-site events for families	66 (69.5%)	58 (64%)
Parent-only events	36 (37.9%)	34 (37%)
Off-site events for families	20 (21.1%)	25 (27%)
Materials and supplies	18 (18.9%)	10 (11%)

On-site events for families

A majority of sites used grant funds to provide activities and events for families at the site. Often, these funds were used to purchase materials and supplies specifically for these events, such as food, raffle prizes, and books for literacy nights.

"We ran monthly parent/family fun activity nights where parents and children engaged in various team-building activities. Guest speakers ran workshops and food was provided at each event."

Off-site events for families

Twenty sites used funds for off-site activities, such as field trips or events held at local venues such as parks. Sites were able to pay parents as chaperones on field trips or provide tickets to events and locations, such as museums, for parents and children to attend or visit.

"Parents accompanied students to Invention Convention; we provided transportation to and from UConn."

"We offered educational and cultural field trips; this year we went to Boston and learned about Colonial times."

Parent-only events

Thirty-six sites provided events for parents only. Funds were used to pay speakers and presenters and provide food, transportation, childcare, and materials such as notebooks and handouts. Some parent-only events focused on parents' roles in their children's lives, whereas other sites hosted events that focused on the development and needs of the parents themselves.

"We brought in bankers from Wells Fargo to teach financial literacy skills to our families. The bankers were bilingual and able to teach and translate the class into Spanish. Over 50 percent of our parents attended!"

Materials and supplies

At 18 sites (18.9%), these funds were used for general materials and supplies (rather than for supplies for specific events). This included **supplies for communications to parents** (such as for the production of a parent newsletter or informational DVD), or books for general distribution.

"Money allocated was used to buy books and subscription magazines such as Time, Time for Kids, and Family Circle. The magazines are used each day with students in the program, they took them home, and magazines were offered to parents at pick up time."

"Our site put together a family cookbook."

"Parents were given a DVD of the program and showcase to take home with them."

Section Five:

Relationships with Partner Schools

A primary goal of 21st CCLC program is to provide students in under-resourced schools with academic programming that is aligned with learning objectives in core academic subjects and enrichment opportunities that complement school day learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Communication between after school staff and participants' schools is important to ensure high quality after school programming. Thus, grantees are required to submit their grant with at least one partner school, although some have more.

This year's EYR included a question about the number of partner schools the site had. Only eighty sites reported having a partner school. This may reflect confusion about the meaning of the question (e.g., for some sites located at a school, the site coordinator may not have realized that the site school should be included as a partner school). The analyses reported below are based only on information collected from sites that reported having a partner school. Out of these 80 sites, the number of partner schools ranged from one to seven. Most sites (62) reported having one partner school.

Liaison to the School

Most sites (n=73, 91.2%) had a designated person in charge of communication with the partner school. Most commonly, this was the site coordinator (n=34, 46.5%). Others included building leader (n=8), grant coordinator (n=12), head teacher (n=10), or program administrator (n=4). Common duties of the liaison included communicating with school staff via email or phone and attending school staff meetings or Individual Education Plan meetings.

Communication with the Partner School

The EYR also included questions about how often someone at the site communicated with the partner school(s) concerning select topics (Figure 21, right). Most site coordinators reported that every topic was discussed with the partner school on at least a weekly basis. Homework and individual student needs appeared to be the most frequently discussed topics.

Site coordinators also specified the person from the partner school with whom they or someone from their site communicated most often (Figure 22). Most commonly, sites identified either the principal of their partner school or a teacher at that school as the regular point of contact.

Figure 21. Frequency of communication with partner school about certain topics

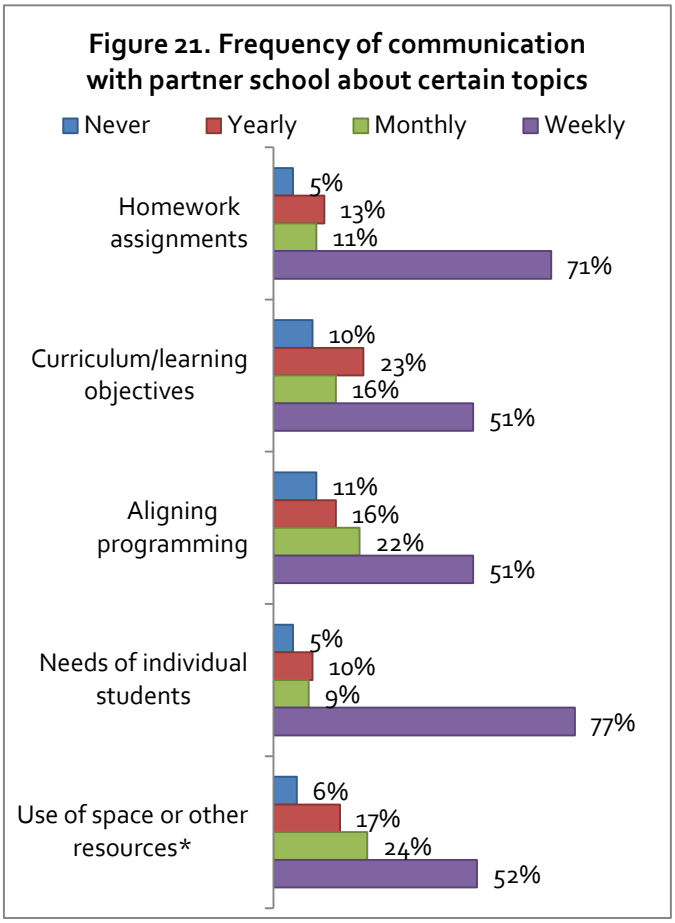
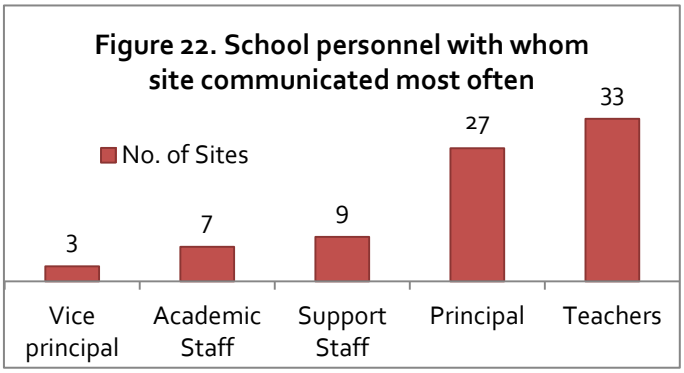


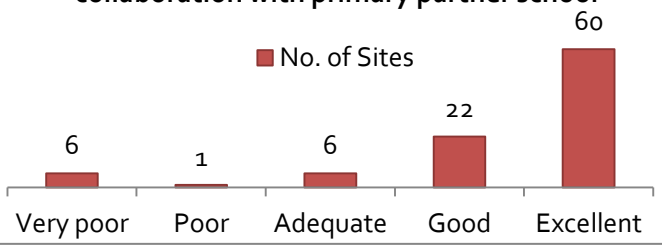
Figure 22. School personnel with whom site communicated most often



Quality of Collaboration with the Partner School

All 95 site coordinators rated the quality of their site's relationship with their primary partner school (Figure 23). A majority (n=82, 86.3%) rated their collaboration as excellent or good. Only a small percentage of site coordinators seemed dissatisfied with the relationship.

Figure 23. Ratings of the quality of site's collaboration with primary partner school



Challenges to Maintaining Positive Relationships with the School

Site coordinators also described challenges that their site faced in maintaining a positive relationship with their partner school(s). Overall, 36 coordinators (37.9%) provided a response to this question. Table 10 (right) summarizes these challenges.

Table 10. Challenges described by coordinators

	# of sites
Communication with school day staff	12
Teacher concerns regarding classroom use	9
Conflicting schedules/ Finding space	7
Lack of support from school day staff	5

Communication with School Day Staff

One difficulty mentioned was in communicating about closures due to weather. In other cases pertinent information, such discipline incidents that happened during the school day, was not shared with site staff. Other coordinators mentioned the busy schedules of school day staff (e.g., teachers) as an obstacle to maintaining contact. Communication seemed to be especially difficult for sites not located at their partner school.

Teacher Concerns Regarding Classroom Use

Some teachers expressed concerns about use of their classrooms for after school activities.

Conflicting Schedules /Finding Space

At some sites, space and scheduling issues were a challenge. Many schools have limited space for activities, and these already limited spaces need to be used for several afterschool groups. Other site coordinators reported that limited storage space kept the staff members from feeling like they were really a part of the partner school.

Lack of Support from School Day Staff

Some coordinators reported a lack of support for the program from school day staff. One site coordinator, quoted at right, expressed the difficulties in getting staff to understand the purpose and goals of the afterschool program.

> "We constantly need to reaffirm that we were not a 'babysitter/daycare' that we offer academic support, social emotional growth, and motivate students to gain a hobby and stick to it. Teachers needed reminding that we are more than just a 'drop in center'."

Despite the challenges noted above, the majority of sites reported having relatively frequent contact with school personnel and rated the quality of these collaborations as either excellent or good. The challenges reported by some sites may provide a starting point for supporting all programs in achieving even stronger collaborations with their partner schools. Overall, the challenges mentioned by coordinators this year were consistent with those reported in 2009-10.

Section Six:

Community Partnerships

In addition to creating partnerships with parents, families, and schools, relationships with community partners are also critical to the success of 21st CCLC sites. In this year's EYR, site coordinators were asked to describe the most meaningful community partnership that their site had during the 2010-11 academic year. Eighty-nine sites (93.6%) provided a response; one coordinator reported not being aware of any community partnerships.

The majority of coordinators described their site's most meaningful partnership as being with a community-based national organization (e.g., Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers Big Sisters) or a state, regional, or local organization (e.g., Whitney Museum).

> "The most meaningful partnership we had this year was with a music organization called KEYS (Kids Empowered by Your Support). Ten students were provided violin lessons and 15 students received guitar lessons. There were also creative movement/music appreciation classes. In December, a recital was held for parents to watch/hear their children perform pieces they learned during the year. Over 60 students participated in this recital."

The second most common type of partnership identified as most meaningful was with a school or university. Many sites reporting working with local high schools or universities; common arrangements included older students providing mentoring or activities for the after school program.

> "The most meaningful and substantial partnership we have is with the High School VoAg Program. For the sixth graders, they are able to make connections with older youth and benefit from their help with academics. For the older youth, they are kept actively involved in their community and given leadership opportunities. A strength of this program lies in the curriculum, which aligns directly with grade 6 standards for science. Not only is this sharpening student science skills, but it is also exposing them to possible areas of career interest."

Less common were partnerships with a government agency (e.g., local police department) or a business located in the local community (e.g., Stop N Shop).

> "We had a partnership with the local police department to provide education and information on cyber-bullying. This presentation provided an informal way of introducing parents to local detectives and allowed them a voice to have their questions and concerns addressed. "

Regardless of the type of organization, partnerships provided a wide variety of services and supports for sites. Many community partnerships provided students with additional academic help or enrichment activities, whereas others contributed to sites' social and emotional development or health and wellness programming.

Section Seven:

Staffing & Professional Development

The services provided by ASPs are driven by having well-trained, stable, and supported staff. The importance of having high quality staff is consistently emphasized throughout the after school literature. Interactions between program staff and participants are considered to be the primary mechanism through which young people benefit from after school programs (e.g., Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Huang *et al.*, 2008).

General Staffing Characteristics

- The average site had **18 (17.56) total staff members** (range: 2 -80).
- The average site had **10 (10.33) staff members present on a typical day** (range: 2 to 38). This includes administrators, direct service staff, and volunteers or interns.
- At a typical site, **47 percent** of staff were **paid employees who were not certified teachers**.
- On average, **23 percent** of staff members were **certified teachers who were also school day staff**.
- On average, about **12 percent** of staff were **certified teachers who were not on staff at the school**.

Ratio of Participants to Staff Members

An important consideration with regard to quality programming is the ratio of staff to students. To examine this factor at each site, the number of staff present on a typical day was compared with the number of students present on a typical day (by multiplying the Average Daily Attendance by the site's target number). **The average site had a ratio of 7:1 (youth versus staff present), with a minimum of 2:1 and maximum of 15:1.**

Staffing Stability

Another significant consideration with regard to quality programming is the stability and consistency of staffing. Table 11 (right) summarizes staff tenure at the average site. As shown, the proportions of staff members heavily favored those who had worked at their sites longer. **At a substantial number of sites (n=37, 39%), at least half of staff had worked at the site for over two years**.

Table 11. Staff tenure at the average site

Staff length of employment	% of staff
Fewer than six months	11
Six months to one year	30
Between one and two years	25
Over two years	34

Based on coordinators' EYR responses, it appears that most Connecticut 21st CCLCs had very little staff turnover. **Seventy-nine (83%) indicated that less than 10 percent of their staff turned over during the year**. Just eight sites (8%) indicated that more than 20 percent of their staff turned over during 2010-11.

Staff Meetings

Site coordinators were asked a variety of questions about occasions when staff members came together for meetings, trainings, and professional development events. **A majority of sites reported regular staff meetings: 80 sites (84%) met at least monthly (Figure 24).**

Figure 24. Frequency of staff meetings

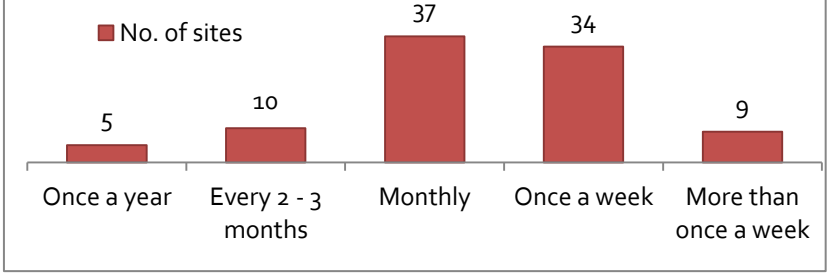
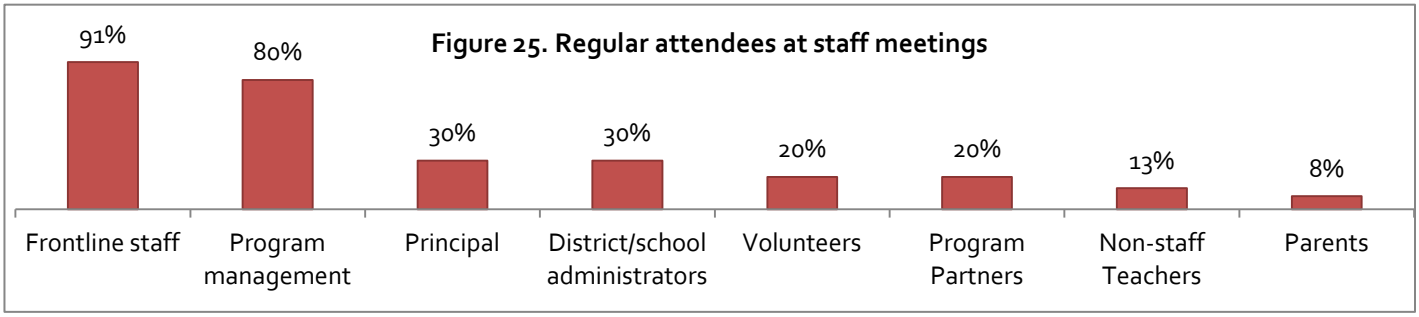


Figure 25 (below) shows the percentage of sites reporting that certain stakeholder groups attended meetings. Frontline staff (91%) and program management (80%) attended most meetings. Other stakeholder groups such as parents and non-staff teachers were less likely to attend meetings.

Figure 25. Regular attendees at staff meetings



Nearly all sites indicated that meetings consistently (often or at almost every meeting) addressed general programming considerations (93%) and planning for specific program activities (87%). **Additionally, many sites (n=78, 82%) consistently used staff meetings to discuss the needs of individual students.** Fewer sites incorporated training or professional development into their staff meetings, but some sites (n=41, 43%) said that the staff meetings sometimes included such training.

Staff Support

This year's EYR contained an open-ended question about the types of individualized support provided to staff members. Due to the open-ended nature of the question, the length and detail of responses varied considerably from site to site. Seventy-four coordinators provided responses that could be analyzed. Table 12 (right) shows the most commonly mentioned types of support.

Table 12. Strategies for providing individualized support for staff

Strategy	# of sites
Evaluations	36
Formal (18)	
Informal (10)	
Self (8)	
Staff Meetings	28
Coaching or mentoring	19
Professional development	17
Individual meetings	12

The most commonly mentioned type of support was evaluations, including formal, informal and self varieties. Formal evaluations included observations with feedback sessions. Informal evaluations included administrative staff doing "walk throughs." Self evaluations generally involved asking staff to evaluate what was working and what changes were needed to their own individual activities to assist in planning for the next cycle.

The second most common type of support mentioned was group meetings. Site coordinators described these meetings as opportunities to hear from staff about issues and to receive feedback on program operations. Professional development opportunities or special trainings were sometimes described broadly (e.g., "staff receive training on curriculum and group management") and others mentioned specific providers (e.g., University of Connecticut's National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented).

Another set of responses focused on coaching or mentoring. An example of this was when more experienced staff members provided mentoring- in both formal and informal ways- to newer staff members. **Finally, some site coordinators mentioned having one-on-one meetings with staff members to provide support or listen to staff needs.** One coordinator explained: "I would meet often with staff on one-to-one to evaluate and coach. At meetings, we would bring up ideas for improvement and would suggest alternatives".

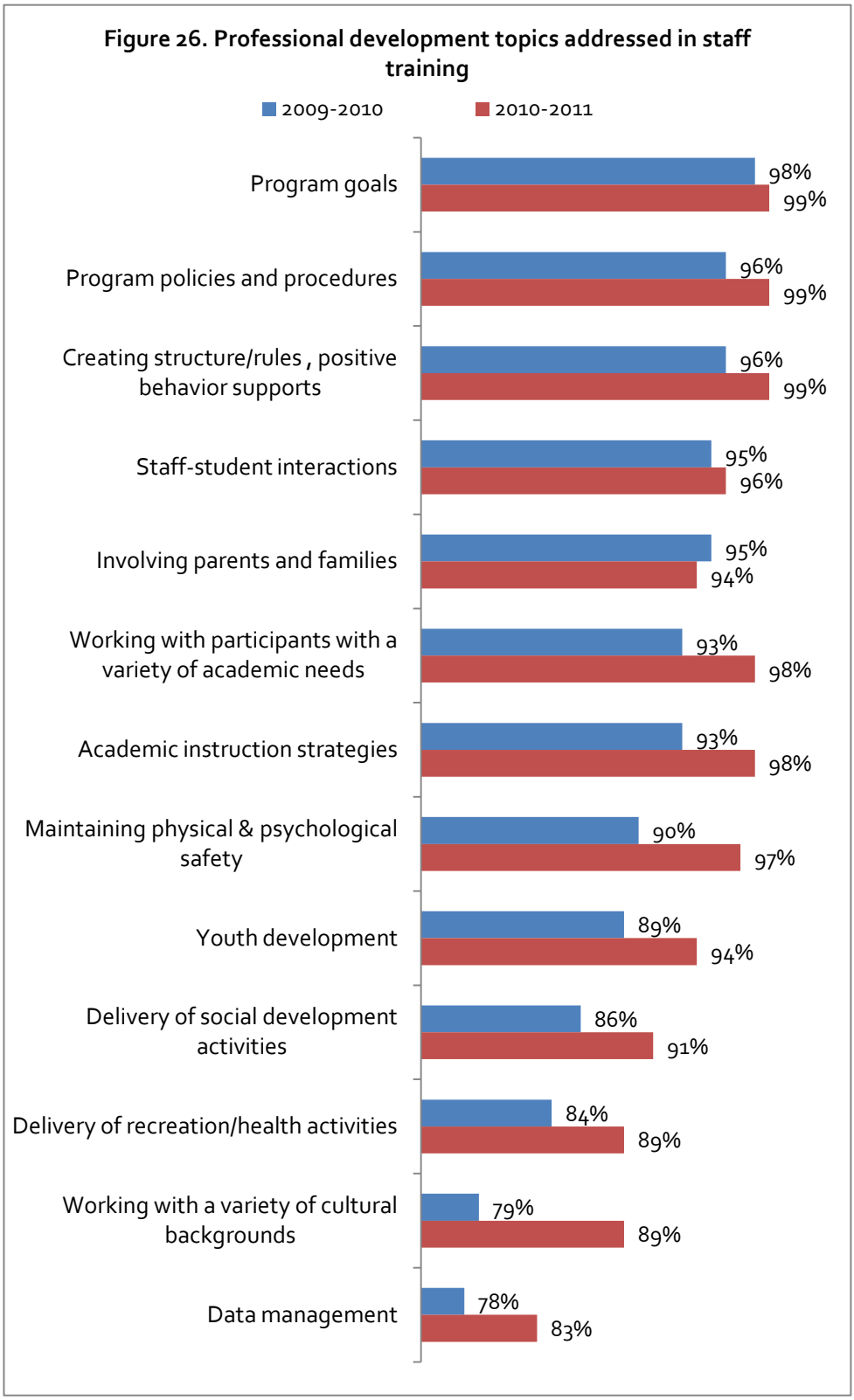
Staff Training and Professional Development

The content of site's training and professional development activities also were examined. Figure 26 (right) summarizes and contrasts the topics covered in 2009-10 and 2010-11. All 13 topics were covered by a large percentage of the programs (over 80%).

As shown in the figure, for nearly every area there was an increase the percentage of sites covering that professional development topic. The largest increase was for topics related to working with participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Given that network-wide professional development opportunities offered by the SDE during 2010-11 focused specifically on this topic, it is encouraging to see an increase in the number of sites specifically addressing it during their own professional development activities. Increases were also observed for several other focus areas such as academics and youth development-related programming.

During 2010-11, "developing connections with schools" was added as a potential topic to the EYR survey. Ninety-one percent of coordinators indicated that they provided training to staff on this topic.

Figure 26. Professional development topics addressed in staff training



Section Eight:

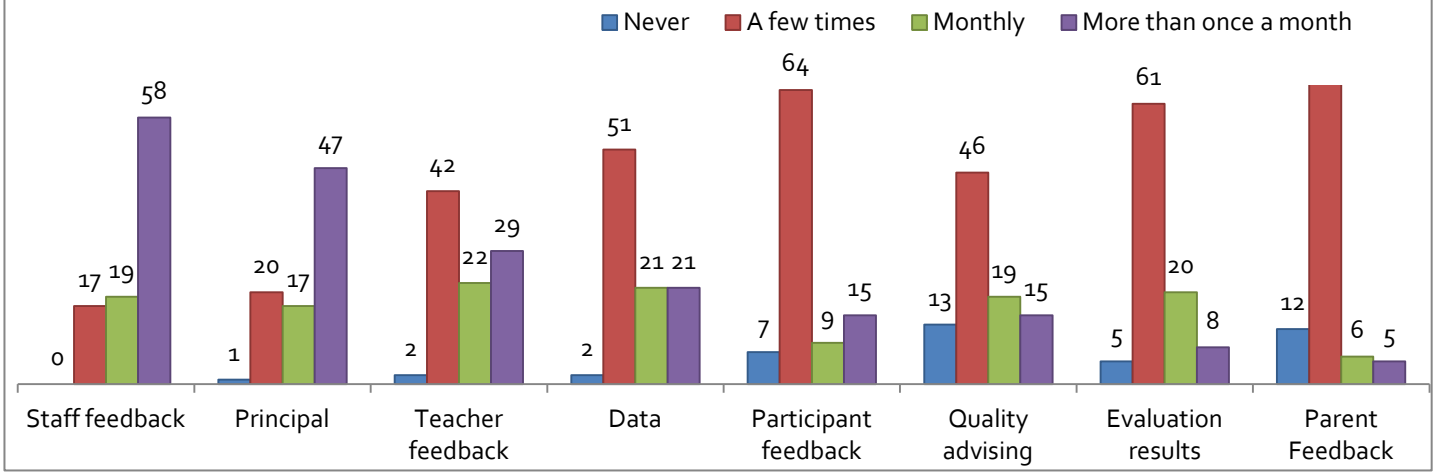
Program Improvement and Evaluation Activities

Applicants for Connecticut 21st CCLCs are required to develop a data-driven evaluation plan as part of their grant proposal. A strong evaluation plan includes identifying the program's specific goals and developing a data management process that enables assessment of progress toward those goals. In 2010-11 EYR, site coordinators provided information about their site's program improvement and evaluation activities, including what sources of information the site used to assess its performance and what aspects of programming the site planned to target in its program improvement efforts.

Sources of Information Used for Program Improvement

Site coordinators reported how often their site used any of eight sources of information that could be used for planning, designing, and evaluating programming (Figure 27). Sites appeared to rely most heavily on staff feedback for program improvement purposes. All sites used this source of information. Sites were also likely to use feedback from their partner school's principal. The other sources were most commonly used a few times over the course of the year.

Figure 27. How often sources of information were used for program improvement



It is notable that, collectively, all types of information seemed to be used to some degree by most sites. For any particular source of information, less than 15 percent of sites reported never using that source. Quality advising and parent feedback were the most likely to never be used (n= 13 and 12, respectively).

Specific Areas Targeted for Program Improvement

This year's EYR included questions about program improvement that were different than those that have been asked in prior years. In the past, site coordinators were asked whether they were likely to focus their program improvement efforts on any of seven areas. This year, the questions were made open ended so site coordinators could be more specific about areas that were relevant for their particular site. They could list up to three priorities for improvement and also had the option to describe the strategies they planned to use to address the areas they listed. Table 13 (next page) lists all the topics that were described, the total number of site coordinators who mentioned them, and how often the area was listed as a first, second, or third priority.

Similar to last year's results, by far the most commonly mentioned priority for improvement was *parent and family programming*. It was listed by the largest number of coordinators and also was the most likely to be listed as a first priority. Although many coordinators did not provide specific information about the strategies they planned to use to address these areas, those that did mentioned wanting to expand offerings for parents and families or develop strategies to increase attendance at events that were already being offered.

Table 13. Site coordinators' reported first, second, and third priorities for program improvement

Area	Total	First	Second	Third
Parent and Family Programming	57	29	18	10
Academic Programming	52	16	16	20
Recruitment, Retention, & Attendance	33	17	10	5
Variety of Activities	22	5	7	10
Staffing (e.g., Recruitment, Retention)	15	3	7	5
Relationships with Schools	14	3	7	4
Social/Youth Development	14	3	1	10
Youth Involvement & Leadership	9	1	5	3
Behavior	8	1	4	3
Organization/Planning	8	5	2	1
Community Partnerships	6	0	3	3
Data Management	3	1	1	1

A large number of coordinators also identified *academic programming* as an area in need of improvement. Coordinators mentioned wanting to target certain types of academics (e.g., literacy or science), and a number also described a desire to improve students' engagement in and use of homework help time. The **third most common target for program improvement was *recruitment, retention, and attendance*.** Many site coordinators reported wanting to attract more students and to encourage enrolled participants to come more often. Planned strategies to address this issue included having current participants give presentations during the school day, parent or student contracts to emphasize the importance of attendance, and providing incentives such as field trips for meeting recruitment and attendance goals.

A moderate number of coordinators identified offering a ***greater variety of activities*** as a priority for improvement, although this was most likely to be mentioned as a third priority. Some coordinators wanted to increase activities provided for specific age groups (such as middle school youth), whereas others described a desire to increase the ability for students to choose activities. An additional topic not asked about in last year's report but mentioned by many coordinators was related to staff, particularly the ability to ***recruit and retain high quality staff***. Other coordinators mentioned the two closely aligned areas of ***social development*** and ***youth involvement/leadership***. Social development priorities included areas such as conflict resolution, whereas coordinators who listed youth involvement were likely to mention that they wanted to build in more opportunities for participants to take on leadership roles in the planning and design of activities.

It is clear from site coordinators' responses that although there are certain areas that are challenging for most sites (e.g., parent and family involvement), sites vary quite a bit in terms of where they believe they need to focus their program improvement efforts.

Section Nine:

Discussion and Recommendations

The results of the 2010-2011 evaluation of Connecticut 21st CCLCs suggest that, collectively, programs are operating in a manner that is consistent with both federal and state guidelines for 21st CCLCs.
A majority of Connecticut sites indicated that they are offering a combination of academic programming, enrichment activities, and recreation programming. Most programs provided homework help at least four days per week and had services in place for students demonstrating the need for remedial assistance. Most sites indicated that they were very focused on engaging parents and families in their programs. Parent and family involvement was also consistently identified as a place where programs wanted to improve.

The results of the 2010-11 evaluation are relevant to several themes identified during the previous two years' evaluations, including: program availability and attendance patterns, engaging participants from a variety of backgrounds, providing youth with age-appropriate ways to be involved at their site, parent engagement, and program-school partnerships. The 2010-11 evaluation results also indicate new developments with regard to academic programming and support and training for staff in 21st CCLC programs.

Program Availability and Attendance Trends

The extent to which sites are able to meet their targets for number of days open and participants served has received particular attention in the past several years. Over the past two years, 21st CCLC sites have made significant improvements in their availability and participant attendance, and the results from this evaluation suggest further gains during 2010-11.

Program Availability

During 2009-10, the number of days open ranged from 52 to over 200, with an average of 123 days. This suggested that although most programs were open for a good portion of the year, some sites had difficulty in this regard. During 2010-11, the average number of days open was 122, which is nearly identical to the number from the previous year. The lowest end of the range was 61. Although these results do not initially seem to represent much of an improvement, it is important to interpret them in light of the significant weather-related school closures that sites faced during January and February 2011.

Another observation from 2009-10 was that "many 21st CCLC programs started the year slowly and wound down early" (p. 41), with significant numbers of sites not being open during the beginning and end months of the school year. The 2010-11 data show that considerably more sites were open earlier in the year (e.g., the number of sites open by October increased from 61 to 73). Earlier start dates reflect an increased ability of sites to meet participants' (and their families') needs from the start of the school year and may improve sites' ability to recruit participants and operate at capacity.

Participant Attendance Patterns across Sites

During 2010-11, sites had higher average daily attendance (ADA) at both the starting and ending months of the school year compared to the previous year. During October 2010, 58 sites had over 60 percent ADA, compared to 42 sites in 2009. In May 2011, 79 sites met the 60 percent target, compared to 66 in 2010. This increase may reflect, in part, more consistent data entry and ability to accurate estimate target numbers, but it also suggests that sites are experiencing more success in reaching their target number of students. Overall, average participant attendance rates were high. A small portion of sites, however, seem to be particularly struggling in regards to attendance. These programs may benefit from targeted assistance related to retaining participants and encouraging regular attendance.

Connecting with Participants from a Variety of Backgrounds

Collectively, 21st CCLC sites reported practices that indicate sensitivity to the racial, ethnic, and cultural make up of their participant population. These practices included having program materials available in languages other than English and having interpreters available when necessary. Compared to 2009-10, more sites reported using these types of practices, which suggests that programs are devoting attention to this aspect of their programming. Future evaluations could look specifically at the populations served by 21st CCLCs, including African American youth and Spanish-speaking youth. Evaluation activities could assess the specific needs of these youth, investigate how sites are responding specifically to these needs, and provide resources for professional development that could guide sites' improvement in this area.

Age-Appropriate Youth Involvement Opportunities

In the after school literature, there is evidence to support a link between young peoples' level of involvement in their organizations and their positive outcomes. These outcomes include leadership skills, teamwork skills, communication skills, strategic thinking, self-confidence, personal wellness, enhanced sociopolitical awareness, social capital, social responsibility, and hopefulness (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). The 2009-10 evaluation included a recommendation to focus additional attention, in terms of both evaluation and technical assistance, on helping programs to balance clearly defined academic objectives with strategies for promoting youth involvement. Thus, this year's evaluation included several new questions designed to elicit more specific information about sites' practices in this area.

Generally speaking, this year's results suggest that many sites are providing participants with regular opportunities for meaningful involvement in their after school program. These include having more time to work on projects youth are interested in, opportunities to take on specific responsibilities in the site's activities, and being able to choose activities in which to participate. Other youth-driven involvement strategies, such as opportunities for youth to initiate projects based on their interests and involvement in planning and administration of site activities, were less common. Although sites serving older participants were more likely to use these strategies, even among this group not all utilized these methods. Sites may benefit from additional professional development and quality advising focused on age-appropriate strategies for promoting youth involvement. Future evaluations could investigate the connection between sites' youth involvement practices and participant attendance and outcomes.

Promoting Parent and Family Engagement

Over the past three years, 21st CCLC sites have expressed a strong interest in improving their parent and family engagement efforts. This year's results suggest that many sites have changed the strategies they use to encourage parent and family involvement or began using new strategies. For example, this year 58 coordinators reported that their site had a parent/family coordinator, compared to 52 sites during 2009-10. There were noticeable increases in the number of sites offering parent advisory councils, community service opportunities, and adult education programming. Even with these positive trends, site coordinators were still most likely to list parent and family involvement as their first priority for improvement. Taken together, these results suggest that sites are making changes but have not yet reached their desired level of parent and family involvement.

One approach to addressing this issue was suggested in last year's evaluation report: the collection and use of parent and family feedback to inform program design. Coordinators' responses in both 2009-10 and 2010-11 indicate that programs do not rely heavily on parents as a source of information about how the program is doing. This suggests that sites may benefit from technical assistance (i.e., professional development and quality advising) specifically focused on gathering and making the most of parent feedback.

Another approach would be to encourage programs to collect more detailed information about the parent and family programming that they provide. This could include recording attendance rates and administering feedback questionnaires to parents. On a site level, this could help programs identify more systematically the successful aspects of their programming. Pooled across sites, this could provide valuable feedback about overall trends in parent and family programming and potentially identify strategies that seem to work at many sites or at sites serving specific populations.

Partnerships between 21st CCLC Programs and Schools

The 2010-11 evaluation results suggest that, similar to 2009-10, sites are generally well connected to their partner schools. About half of site coordinators reported that they, or someone from their site, communicated weekly with their partner school about a variety of topics, most commonly homework and the needs of individual student participants. Principals and teachers continued to be the most common points of contact at the partner school, as in 2009-10. Furthermore, most coordinators rated the quality of their collaboration with their partner schools as good or excellent. About a third of sites, however, did report facing some sort of challenge in their partnership with the school. The number of sites reporting a challenge was the same as in 2009-10, and the types of challenges coordinators described were also quite similar (e.g., communicating with school day staff, teacher concerns regarding use of classrooms). Moving forward, program-school communication strategies may be an area on which to focus quality advising and program improvement efforts. Additionally, it may prove useful in future evaluations to collect more information about the alignment between 21st CCLC curricula and the school day curriculum.

Attention to Academic Programming

The topics described above have all been given considerable attention in prior evaluations of CT's 21st CCLCs. This year's evaluation results also suggest a need for increased attention to academics and the academically focused programming that sites provide. Several findings presented earlier in this report point to many sites' desires to improve their academic programming and the strategies they are already using to do this. Other findings suggest further areas that could be targeted to help sites address their academic programming needs.

In the open-ended question regarding targets for program improvement, over half of coordinators mentioned academic programming. Some coordinators mentioned wanting to focus on specific academic areas, such as literacy or science, whereas others described a desire to increase participants' engagement in homework help sessions. Compared to 2009-10, sites reported having a greater percentage of certified teachers among their staff members, and more sites indicated providing professional development related to serving participants with a variety of academic needs and implementing academic instruction strategies. All of these results suggest that some sites are actively engaged in implementing strategies to improve their academic programming.

On the other hand, a large proportion of sites do not appear to have someone who has extensive training in administering such activities in charge of academic programming. Slightly less than 60 percent of sites reported having someone who functioned as an education specialist, master teacher, or a similar type of position. Because hiring or retaining this type of staff member may not be financially feasible for all sites, it may be productive to provide technical assistance, quality advising, and/or professional development activities around the management and administration of academic programming. In particular, the choice and use of research-based academic curricula may be an especially important area to target in these activities. Results from this year's evaluation suggest that only a small proportion of sites are using academic curricula (in literacy, math, or science) that can be considered research- or evidence-based.

Examining Staff Support Systems

Questions regarding staff support systems were new for the 2010-11 EYR. Results from this open-ended question indicate that although some sites provide extensive individual support for staff members, many others do not. A large portion of coordinators reported using evaluations as the primary method for support staff members. Such evaluations, which included formal, informal, and self-evaluation procedures, can provide valuable information for staff members that they can use to improve their performance. However, most coordinators who listed this strategy did not fully explain how the results of the evaluations were used. For example, individual meetings could be scheduled to discuss the results and provide staff members with suggestions and materials to address areas identified as being in need of improvement.

The second most commonly identified strategy was staff meetings, where staff members could air their concerns and receive feedback from the group. Staff meetings are certainly a necessary component of quality after school programs, and the group feedback component can provide staff with helpful suggestions. However, group meetings may not provide the most appropriate context for individualized discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of individual staff members. One-on-one meetings and coaching or mentoring, which were the least commonly mentioned strategies, may be more effective in that area. The results suggest that sites could benefit from further information, technical assistance, or quality advising related to implementing staff support systems. For example, one site coordinator described a proactive and strengths-based approach, where individual meetings were held at the beginning of the year to identify individual staff member's goals for the year, and periodic check-ins were conducted to address progress towards these goals.

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