

Mississippi Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program Annual Evaluation

Executive Summary Prepared by: Integrated Academics

The current evaluation report provides a detailed overview of data extracted from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Data Profiles developed by the state's 21st CCLC staff. The profile along with the 21st CCLC Continuation application collects information related to program characteristics, services and performance that is used for monitoring, evaluation and program improvement purposes.

During the 2015 program year, data was collected from 84 Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) 21st CCLC sub grantees which operated a total of 243 active centers across the state. The anticipated number of students expected to be actively participating in the learning centers per year was 32,612 across the state. The anticipated number of parents expected to be actively participating in the learning centers per year was 8,974 across the state.

As a whole, the 2015 evaluation findings show that MS 21st CCLCs have a number of assets that benefit thousands of youth, their respective families and communities across the state. The data also suggests that sub grantees are making progress in building their partnerships and overall capacity to achieve long-term sustainability of their programs. The key findings generated from the evaluation are summarized below and are provided in details in the current report.

Mississippi 21st CCLC Student Demographics:

- The majority (89%) of MDE 21st CCLCs youth participants came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Eighty-two percent of program participants are African American, 15 percent are White, 2 percent American Indian and 1 percent Hispanic.
- MDE 21st CCLCs recruited and enrolled youth across all grade levels, with the highest percentages of student participants in elementary and middle schools.
- Fifty-five percent of MDE 21st CCLCs served Elementary School students, followed by 31 percent of centers serving Middle School, and 14 percent serving High School youth. It is worth noting that Mississippi had a higher percentage of learning centers serving older youth (middle and high school students) compared to other learning centers across the country.

Mississippi 21st CCLC Sub grantee & Site Characteristics:

- The majority of Mississippi 21st CCLC sub grantees (715) were school districts which was higher than the national average (59%). The vast majority of centers were based on school sites both within the state (84%) and nationally (87%).
- 21st CCLCs in Mississippi partnered and subcontracted with multiple types of organizations within their respective communities. Community-based organizations account for the largest

percentage (27%) of subcontractors. Organizations within the “other” category account for the largest percentage (30%) of community partners.

- Community partners and subcontractors provided a large array of services and support for Mississippi 21st CCLCs. Community partners provided resources such as programming (73%), paid staffing (15%), volunteer staffing (41%), and goods (38%). Subcontractors also provide different levels of related afterschool programming (89%), paid staffing (47%), volunteer staffing (42%), and goods (38%).
- Most 21st CCLCs operated 3-5 days a week. Mississippi had their highest percentage (37%) of learning centers open 4 days a week. For the US, the highest percentage of learning centers open was 5 days (56%), on average.
- Grantees are currently utilizing a variety of funding streams to operate this programs. A large majority of the funding stem from internal sources from government entities at the federal, state, and local levels. A small percentage (9%) of sub grantees is currently using funding from private foundations.

Mississippi 21st CCLC Program Activities & Services:

- Literacy (97%) and mathematics (94%) activities represented the highest percentages of academic activities offered across Mississippi’s 21st CCLCs.
- Programs offered a number of enrichment activities to youth with the majority providing remedial services (89%), tutoring (79%) and general enrichment (73%) activities.

Mississippi 21st CCLC Staffing Patterns:

- Mississippi 21st CCLCs have a strong tie with the school day as over half of program employees (58%) are also teachers during the regular school day. This rate is higher than that of the U.S. percentage of 44 percent.

Reported Improvement in Homework Completion, Classroom Participation and Student Behavior:

- Regardless of grade level, teachers in Mississippi reported homework completion and classroom participation rates (84%) as higher compared to the U.S. average teacher reported rates (73%).
- The majority of teachers (80%) in the state reported improvements in student behavior across all regular program participants. This finding was also a higher than that of the national average of 68 percent.
- A large percentage (94%) of Mississippi programs reported an emphasis in at least one core academic area, which is similar to the U.S. average (97%).

Reported Improvement in Academic Achievement:

- Among all Mississippi 21st CCLC regular program participants, it is reported that 33% improved in Math from Fall to Spring semester.
- Among all Mississippi 21st CCLC regular program participants, 29% improved in English from Fall to Spring semester.
- Among elementary students, 21% of regular participating students improved from in Reading on state assessments. This percent is in line with US average of this particular indicator.

Afterschool programming provides children and youth with opportunities to engage in activities that help develop their social and behavioral skills, as well as to help improve their achievement and performance in schools. However, ironically, those children who are lacking in afterschool resources and are most “at

need” for afterschool programming are the children who are most vulnerable to academic risk. Many of these children also attend low-performing schools. It has, therefore, become a mission for MDE to target and enroll children and youth – (especially those who are most academically at-risk and attending low-performing schools) – into its 21st CCLC programs across the state.

Based on the 2015 evaluation findings, MDE’s 21st CCLC has been successful at recruiting and enrolling its targeted participants. Research has demonstrated again and again that providing youth with opportunities and resources that has the potential to enhance the overall quality of their educational experience can and will improve students’ academic achievement irrespective of their environment and/or socio-demographic characteristics.

Given the number of academically at-risk youth who are struggling in schools, the current finding of MDE’s 21st CCLC enrolling academically at-risk youth into its afterschool program is extremely encouraging; and shows how 21st CCLCs are providing these youth with increased opportunities and resources to further enhance their overall educational experience.

Preliminary findings suggest that Mississippi’s 21st CCLC statewide initiative is showing signs of having positive effects on students’ behavior and academic achievement. Specifically, the overwhelming majority of teachers reported improvements in homework completion, classroom participation, and school behaviors among regularly participating 21st CCLC youth. There are also reports that students are making improvements in both English and Math grades, and on state standardized assessments. These findings are extremely promising.

The data collected provides a snapshot of student achievement and behavior, but more robust method of collecting data can be established. Therefore, the following recommendation is provided:

Collect evaluation data at the student level. The collection and analyses of students’ actual grades, standardized test scores and school behaviors (e.g. suspension and expulsion rates, detention, etc.) among 21st CCLC participants will provide a more accurate assessment and evaluation of how the 21st CCLC program is impacting student’s achievement and behavior in school. In addition, dosage effects can be assessed by correlating the rate at which students are participating in 21st CCLC and how their level of participation is impacting their achievement, attitudes and behaviors. Lastly, students’ retention in 21st CCLCs can be assessed by student level data.

It is recommended that data continues to be collected accurately and regularly. It is important that data is complete and accurate so as to correctly reflect what is taking place with 21st CCLC in Mississippi. Moreover, it is recommended that local evaluation conducted by an outside party be very *strongly* recommended to Mississippi’s 21st CCLC sub grantees. About 61% of Mississippi’s sub grantees reported that their evaluations are conducted by personnel currently working with the 21st CCLC program. This is a critical missing link. Having a quality evaluation team improves accountability and helps programs sustain and grow.