



Education

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# **Rhode Island 21st Century Community Learning Center Program Evaluation: Evaluation Report 2011-12**

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June 2013

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## I. Executive Summary

American Institutes for Research (AIR), on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), has undertaken an evaluation of Rhode Island's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program. This evaluation aimed to address the following questions:

1. To what extent is there evidence that students participating in services and activities funded by 21st CCLC demonstrated better performance on the outcomes of interest as *compared* with similar students *not participating* in the program?
2. To what extent is there evidence that students participating in services and activities funded by 21st CCLC grants *more frequently* demonstrated better performance on the outcomes of interest?
3. To what extent is there evidence of a relationship between center and student characteristics and the likelihood that students demonstrated better performance on desired program outcomes?

This evaluation report addresses these questions using data associated with the 2011-12 school year.

It is important to first understand the characteristics of the 21st CCLC program in Rhode Island in order to describe and assess program impact. In terms of descriptive information, analysis of data from the Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS) shows that there were 38 subgrantees active during the 2012 Annual Performance Report (APR) period (summer 2011, school year 2011–12). These subgrantees operated a total of 56 centers, nearly all of which were school based (93 percent) and 22 of which served elementary grades only (39 percent). Across all centers, a total of 12,388 students were served, for an average of 221 students per center. Of these students, 4,532 (37 percent) were regular attendees, attending 30 days or more during the reporting period. Of all regular attendees, 39 percent were identified as Hispanic, and 33 percent as white. Nearly all centers served students during the school year (98 percent of programs), and most also operated during the summer (79 percent). Compared with the nation, centers in Rhode Island tended to offer more enrichment activities as a proportion of their overall hours: 34 percent of Rhode Island centers were identified as offering *Mostly Enrichment* activities, as opposed to 21 percent of centers nationally. This was also true for recreation: 32 percent of Rhode Island centers were identified as offering *Mostly Recreation*, compared with 24 percent nationally.

Sound organizational processes support program quality and ultimately youth outcomes. In order to describe common organizational practices across Rhode Island's 21st CCLC program, site managers working in the state's centers completed a survey during the 2011–12 academic year. A total of 56 surveys were distributed to site managers, with the term *site manager* being defined as the individual at a given center responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program. A total of 46 surveys (88 percent response rate) were completed and returned.

The survey covered organizational processes (i.e., indicators of program quality) related to: partnership and collaboration, professional development, quality improvement processes, and intentionality in program content and activities. In terms of partnership and collaboration, most site managers reported that partners/collaborators (67 percent of total responses) and certified teachers (85 percent) lead program activities that likely enhance the quality and breadth of activities offered to participating youth. A little more than a quarter of respondents (28 percent) indicated that attended professional development was insufficient. Asked about the Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment (RIPQA) process, site managers reported working an average of eight hours with Quality Advisors, and generally included two program staff in work with Quality Advisors. Major topics of work with Quality Advisors included training staff and setting program goals. Most site managers (58 percent) reported a moderate impact of RIPQA participation on various aspects of programming.

In terms of intentional program content and activities, 63 percent of site managers reported conducting a formal needs assessment, and less than one half (44 percent) completed a structured planning process. About one third of site managers (30 percent) reported developing an action plan, and slightly less than one fourth (22 percent) assessed participants' social-emotional competencies. With respect to data use, site managers generally (60 percent) reported only occasional use of student data to plan program activities. Roughly one fifth (21 percent) of site managers reported no use of or access to various types of student data to plan program activities.

To assess program impact on student outcomes, 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participants were matched with a group of non-participants (attending the same schools during the school day) using propensity score matching (PSM). PSM is a technique that approximates, as best as possible, a random assignment to treatment and non-treatment groups: Based on demographic and school characteristics, students' propensity to attend 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC is first given a score, and then students with similar propensity scores from the non-participant pool of students are selected to create a comparison group. While not as rigorous as a random-assignment model, this method of comparison controls for student or school characteristics that could skew the results via selection bias.

The outcomes assessed in the comparison study were: 1) Changes in reading and mathematics assessment scale scores from one year to the next; 2) unexcused absence rates; and 3) the number of disciplinary incidents.

In terms of state assessment results, little to no significant impact was observed. There was a statistically significant, positive impact of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC on reading achievement for students attending 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programming for 30 days or more, but the effect size was small (.055 standard deviation units higher than the comparison group), and no other significant effects were observed (for reading or mathematics).

The effects of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participation on unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents were more pronounced. Statistically significant, negative effects of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participation were found for both unexcused absences and the number of disciplinary incidents at both the 30 days or more and 60 days or more treatment levels (i.e., students participating in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC at these levels had fewer unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents than did students in the non-

participation group). Generally, students in the treatment group displayed 30 to 40 percent the rate of unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents displayed by students in the non-treatment group. Comparing treatment and non-treatment groups by grade level, significant, negative effects of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participation on unexcused absences were also observed for all grades except tenth (the data did not converge for grade 10, and were therefore excluded from analysis); in similar fashion, the percentage of disciplinary incidents in the treatment group was lower (and statistically significant) than that of the comparison group for grades 4-10 and 12 (with other grades showing no statistically significant effects, the effects observed for these grades having a relatively high likelihood of being due merely to chance).

## II. Introduction

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) provide learning and youth development opportunities to students in high-poverty communities. These opportunities are designed to enhance students' academic well-being, sense of school belonging, and long-term academic success. This report contains descriptive and impact findings of the RIDE 21st CCLC statewide evaluation for the 2011–12 school year.

### Evaluation Questions

Key objectives of the present evaluation are to understand: (a) how well centers are implementing programming relative to research-based practices and approaches and (b) the impact of 21st CCLC participation on student academic outcomes. Specifically, the evaluation set out to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is there evidence that students participating in services and activities funded by 21st CCLC demonstrated better performance on the outcomes of interest as *compared* with similar students *not participating* in the program?
2. To what extent is there evidence that students participating in services and activities funded by 21st CCLC grants *more frequently* demonstrated better performance on the outcomes of interest?
3. To what extent is there evidence of a relationship between center and student characteristics and the likelihood that students demonstrated better performance on desired program outcomes?

These evaluation questions are representative of the goals and objectives that RIDE has specified for 21st CCLC programs, as well as nationally pressing questions in the field of afterschool and expanded learning. Addressing these questions, this report details participant and program characteristics along with impact analyses. The actionable data represented in this report are intended for use by RIDE and 21st CCLC program staff for reflection and discussion.

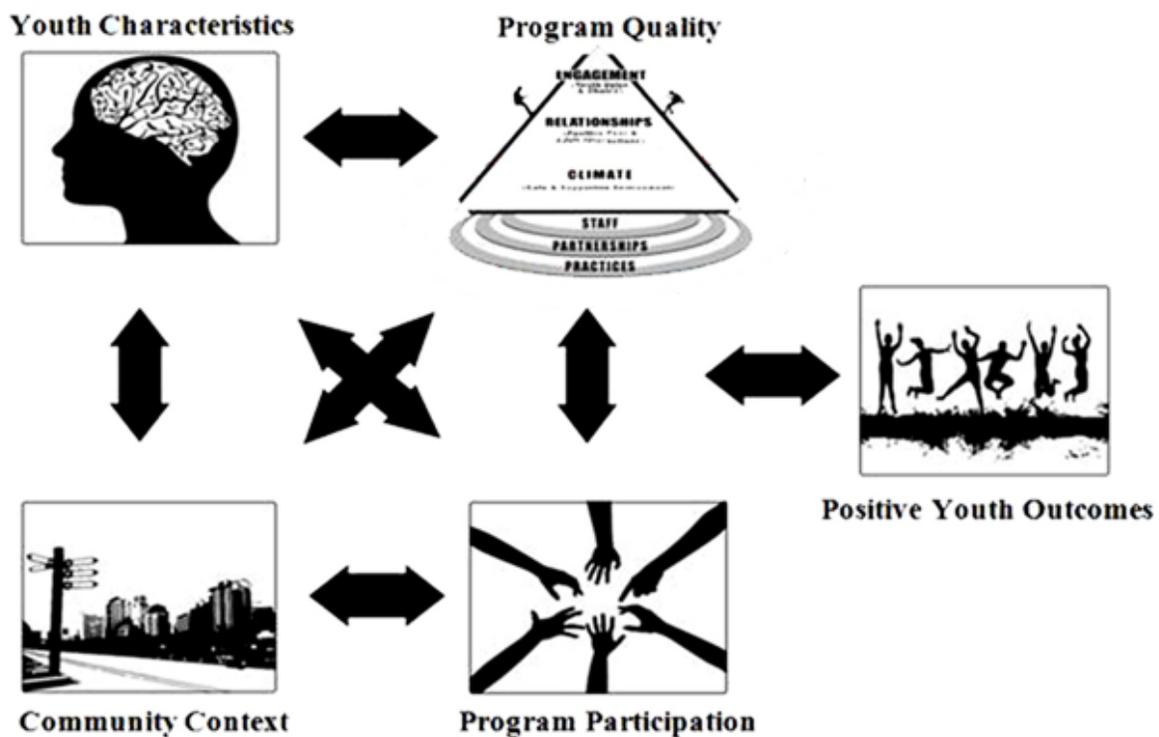
### Background and Organization of the Report

This report is divided into four main sections: Grantee and Center Characteristics (Section III), Program Attendance and Activities (Section IV), Organizational Processes (Section V), and Impact Analysis (Section VI). The first two of these sections depend largely on PPICS data, the third depends on responses provided to site manager surveys, and the fourth on a combination of PPICS and RIDE warehouse data. Each of these sections is important in conveying the variety and scope of programs within RIDE's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program, as well as overall program effects.

As is true in other youth-serving systems, youth development program quality in afterschool settings functions in relation to interrelated factors: (1) the individual characteristics of each child, (2) the community context, and (3) participation dosage. Program quality and these

interrelated factors ultimately affect youth outcomes (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010). The emerging literature in afterschool program quality is clear on defining these dimensions of best practice *and* in articulating that there are contextually driven indicators of quality that are not possible to unilaterally describe without relation to one another (Noam, 2008; Durlak et al., 2010). It is, therefore, not until we understand how these factors interact that we can truly describe the impact of afterschool and expanded learning programs. Figure 1 depicts the interrelated factors that influence youth outcomes in afterschool settings. Note that this theory of change is not intended to be a final or prescriptive; rather, this framework is a “mental scaffold” on which to build, and is intended to be refined further in the future. It is provided here as a starting point, and as a way of organizing the report findings.

**Figure 1. Theory of Change in Afterschool and Expanded Learning Settings**



Note that diversity in how 21st CCLC grantees design and run their programs is supported by the current body of knowledge in afterschool research, which suggests that a variety of paths can be taken in both the design and delivery of afterschool programs that may lead to improved participant academic and social and emotional learning outcomes (Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005; Black, Doolittle, Zhu, Unterman, & Grossman, 2008; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Granger, 2008; Lauer et al., 2006; Vandell et al., 2005). The research indicates, however, that quality matters: much of the afterschool research has found an uneven level of effectiveness in promoting positive participant outcomes that are largely based on variation in program quality (Granger, 2008). Further, meaningful progress has been made in uncovering

what constitutes quality afterschool programming (Granger, Durlak, Yohalem, & Reisner, 2007; Little, 2007; Vandell et al., 2005; Wilson-Ahlstrom & Yohalem, 2007; Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Fischer, & Shinn, 2009). Markedly, studies suggest that a primary catalyst for maintaining and improving program quality is found when midlevel managers and program staff have ongoing access to program data (e.g., evaluation data, observation data, self-assessment data) to make informed program improvements (Smith, Peck, Denault, Blazeovski, & Akiva, 2010). Statewide evaluations of 21st CCLC programs should not therefore be viewed only as an opportunity to collect and analyze data for the purpose of state and national program monitoring and improvement efforts, but also as a way of reporting back to grantees for the purpose of ongoing quality improvement efforts.

As noted, this report is divided into four main sections. These sections are designed to explore the elements of the theory of change depicted in Figure 1: Chapter III details the context of the program (grantee and center characteristics); Chapter IV describes participation (program attendance and activities); Chapter V provides a description of how grantees are aligned with organizational processes; and Chapter VI provides an assessment of program impact on youth outcomes (state assessment score changes, unexcused absence rates, and disciplinary incident rates). The methodology, measures, summary and detailed findings of each section are contained in those chapters.

### III. Grantee and Center Characteristics

The description of context and the setting of afterschool and expanded learning programs is one of the interrelated set of factors that determine program quality and ultimately influence participant outcomes. This chapter provides a broad description of the characteristics of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs in Rhode Island in relation to program schedule, setting, and staffing patterns.

#### Data Source

The 21st CCLC Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS) is a Web-based data collection system developed and maintained by American Institutes for Research (AIR) on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education. Data on the full domain of 21st CCLC programs funded nationally, including those in Rhode Island, are collected through this system. PPICS consists of various data collection modules, including the Annual Performance Report (APR) completed by grantees once a year to summarize operational elements of their program, the student population served, and the extent to which students showed improvements in academic-related behaviors and achievement. In this report, grantee and center data are primarily analyzed along two dimensions: across APR years and across various program categories. In some places, where appropriate, national numbers are provided for reference.<sup>1</sup> Where otherwise unmarked, data are taken from APR 2012, which covered program operations during the summer of 2011 and the 2011–12 school year.

Note that the term *grantee* in this report refers to an entity that applies for grants and serves as the fiscal agent for a given 21st CCLC grant. The term *center* refers to the physical location where grant-funded services and activities are provided to participating students and adults.

#### Summary of Grantee and Center Characteristics

During the 2011–12 Annual Reporting Period, 38 active 21st CCLC grantees across the state of Rhode Island operated a total of 56 centers. School-based and non-school-based grantees were represented in roughly equal numbers, and grantees classified as *Community-Based Organizations* made up the largest segment of non-school-based fiscal agents. PPICS data also showed the following grantee and center characteristics:

- Awards in Rhode Island have been made for five years and have tended to be somewhat lower than awards across the nation in terms of both average and median.
- Most grantees are mature (not in the first or last years of funding).
- The vast majority of Rhode Island centers (98 percent) offered school-year programming during afterschool hours, and most (79 percent) also operated in the summer.

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<sup>1</sup> With respect to national comparison values, note that the national numbers do not reflect finalized data: APR 2012 data reporting, at the time of compiling this report, was still open, with four different states incomplete. The national comparison numbers, therefore, do not reflect all 21st CCLCs that were active during the APR 2012 period, but rather the vast majority.

- Rhode Island centers most commonly served elementary school students; 39 percent of all centers were classified as *Elementary Only* in APR 2012. The percentage of centers serving elementary students exclusively has stayed about the same over the past few years.
- Rhode Island centers typically employ a mix of youth development workers, staff with no college, and school-day teachers (40 percent); school-day teachers and other school staff (27 percent); or school-day teachers only (24 percent), which is roughly consistent with national averages.

## Detailed Analysis: Grantee Characteristics

### Grantee Maturity

Grantee maturity is described here because it is hypothesized that more mature grantees have the experience necessary for providing high-quality programming, adapting to budget reductions, and sustaining program operations. To facilitate comparisons with national data housed in PPICS, Rhode Island grantees were classified into three possible maturity categories:

- *New*—grantees in their first year of 21st CCLC funding
- *Mature*—grantees not in their first year, but also not in their last year of funding
- *Sustaining*—grantees in their last year of 21st CCLC funding

As shown in Table 1, during APR 2012 there was a smaller proportion of grants that were *Sustaining* and a higher proportion of grants that were *Mature*. In Rhode Island, there were no grants that were defined as *New*. Awards in Rhode Island are for five years; award lengths across the nation vary from three to five years.

**Table 1. Grants by Maturity**

Grant Maturity	RI Grants		All Grants*	
	N Grants	% Grants	N Grants	% Grants
New	0	0.0%	421	10.6%
Mature	26	68.4%	2,072	52.1%
Sustaining	12	31.6%	1,481	37.3%
Total grantees	38	100.0%	3,974	100.0%

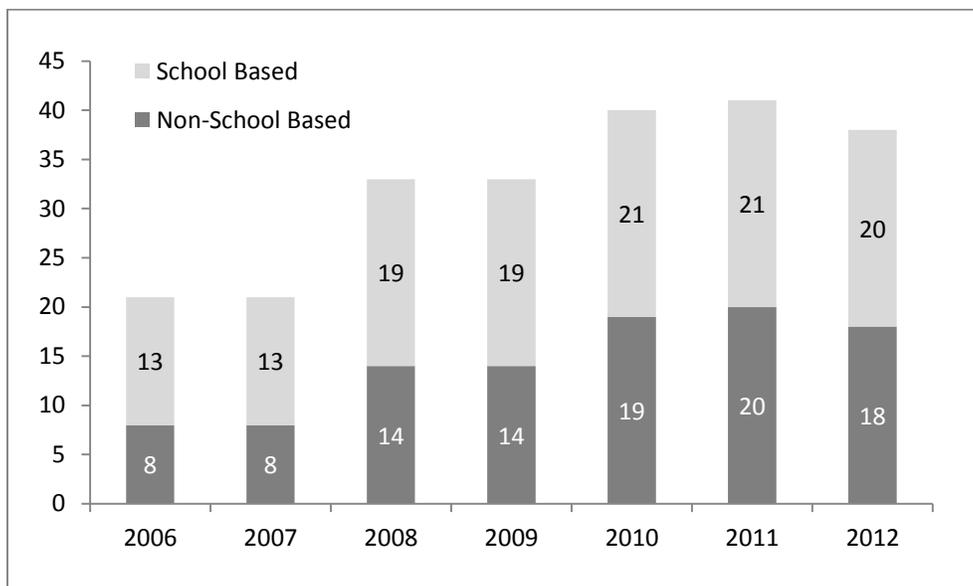
\*Organization maturity could not be determined for 142 grantees at the national level.

### Grantee Organization Type

All grantee organizations can be placed into one of two main groups: school-based and non-school-based. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, funding eligibility was expanded beyond schools to include public and private educational and youth organizations. These organizations are referred to as non-school-based organizations. School-based organizations (SBO) include school districts, charter schools, and private schools. Non-school-based organizations (NSBO) include, among other entities, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, health-based organizations, and park districts. Both SBOs and NSBOs may apply for grants.

Of 21st CCLC grantees funded by Rhode Island, school-based and non-school based organizations have been represented roughly equally. In 2012, for example, school districts were the fiscal agents on 20 of the 38 active grants (53 percent of all 21st CCLC grants). Figure 2 shows the comparison across seven APR years.

**Figure 2. Number of School-Based Versus Non-School-Based Grantees**



Of the non-school-based grantees, *Community-Based Organizations* are the largest group, making up more than 34 percent of all grantees in 2012. The next highest non-school based grantee type was YMCAs/YWCAs, making up approximately 8 percent of all fiscal agents.

### Grant Amounts

Rhode Island's first-year grant award amounts and the duration of the grants were assessed alongside national averages, as shown in Table 2. No major differences in terms of the average length of a grant were noted between the two groups, but the average first-year award for Rhode Island grantees was lower than the national average. Although not displayed in Table 2, the median first-year award amounts for Rhode Island and the nation (Rhode Island inclusive) were, respectively, \$149,355 and \$200,000.

**Table 2. Grants by First-Year Award Amount\***

Award Amount and Duration	RI Grants	All Grants**
	Mean	Mean
Year 1 award amount	\$156,105	\$329,451
Award length	5 years	4.5 years
Total grantees	38	4,116
Mean number of centers per grant	1.5	2.5

\*Of grantees reporting data for APR 2012.

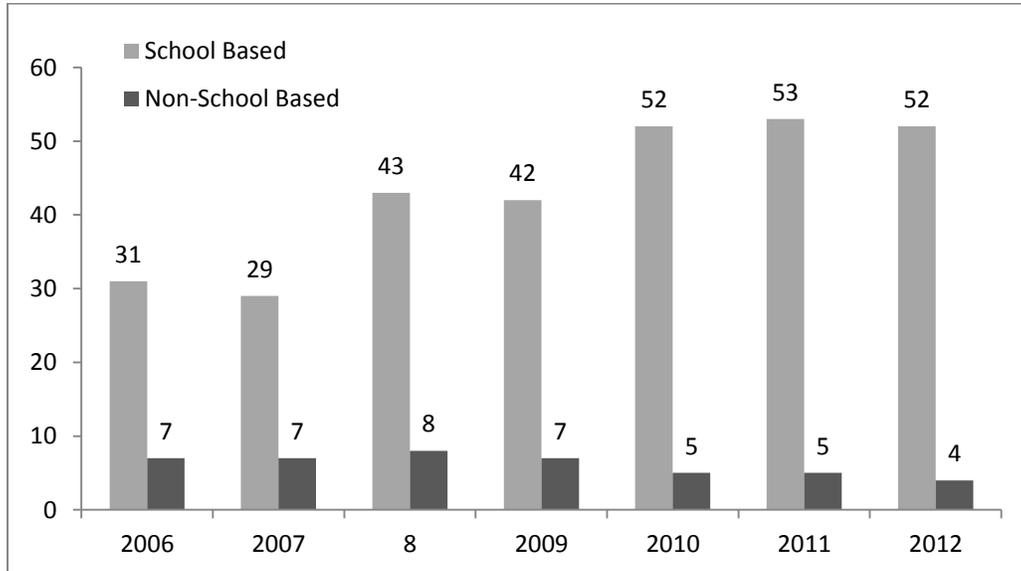
\*\*Exclusive Rhode Island grants.

## Detailed Analysis: Center Characteristics

### Center Organization Type

As with grantees, centers can be classified as either school-based or non-school based. During APR 2012, the vast majority of Rhode Island’s centers (53 or 93 percent) were located in schools (see Figure 3), which is above the national average of 87 percent.

**Figure 3. School-Based Versus Non-School-Based Centers**



### School-Year and Summer Operations

A total of 55 centers in Rhode Island (98 percent) offered school-year programming during the 2012 reporting period. This is similar to the national average, 96 percent. Rhode Island centers tended most often to offer programming after the school day (as opposed to before the school day, during the school day, or on weekends), offering on average 11 hours of programming after

school each week. On average, Rhode Island offered slightly less programming during the school year than did centers across the nation, with roughly 12.8 hours of programming per week compared with 13.4 hours per week. Rhode Island centers offered programming an average of 4.2 days per week over 32 weeks, which is similar to national averages.

In terms of summer operations, a total of 44 of Rhode Island's centers (79 percent) offered summer programming, which was about the same as previous years. In 2012, Rhode Island centers, however, were more likely than other centers nationwide to offer summer programming (national average: 54 percent). Overall, Rhode Island centers tended to be very similar to other centers nationwide that operate in the summer. Rhode Island centers with summer programs had, on average, 5.5 weeks of programming (compared with 5.3 nationally) and approximately 27 hours of programming per week (compared with 25 hours of programming per week).

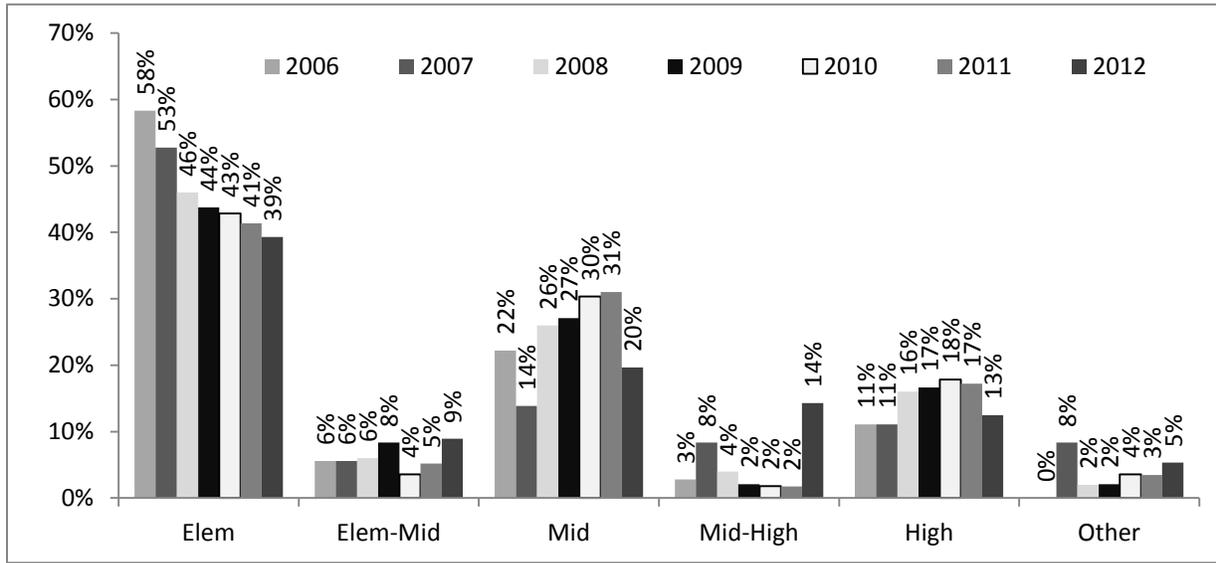
### **Grade Levels Served**

A topic garnering increasing attention at the national level relates to the role that grade level plays both in terms of how 21st CCLC programs should structure their operations and program activities, and the outcomes for which they should be held accountable through performance indicator systems. Using student-level data about the grade level of students attending a program, 21st CCLC programs were classified according to six categories:

- ***Elementary Only***—centers serving students up to Grade 6
- ***Elementary/Middle School***—centers serving students up to Grade 8
- ***Middle School Only***—centers serving students in Grades 5–8
- ***Middle/High School***—centers serving students in Grades 5–12
- ***High School Only***—centers serving students in Grades 9–12
- ***Other***—centers that did not fit one of the other five categories

The *High School Only* category is especially important to examine because afterschool programs for older children often look considerably different from elementary or middle school programs (Naftzger et al., 2007). High school students are experiencing developmental transitions different from those of younger students and often have other afternoon obligations such as jobs, caring for younger siblings, or extracurricular activities. In terms of grade levels served, centers in Rhode Island 21st CCLC programs most commonly serve elementary school students exclusively, with 39 percent of all centers being classified as *Elementary Only* in APR 2012 (see Figure 4). The percentage of centers serving elementary students exclusively has stayed about the same over the past few years.

**Figure 4. Percentage of Centers per Grade-Level Cluster per Year**



*Note.* Reflective of centers with grade-level status available. Two centers in 2006, along with one center each in 2008, 2009, and 2010 lacked a clear grade-level status.

## Staffing

In terms of the staffing of Rhode Island 21st CCLCs, a total of 1,733 staff members were reported for 2011–12 school-year operations (35 percent volunteer), and 608 for the summer of 2011 (20 percent volunteer). Of the school-year staff, 22 percent were paid school-day teachers, and 14 percent were paid youth-development workers. Volunteer college students were the largest volunteer group, accounting for 19 percent of school-year staff.

Summer staffing was very similar to school-year staffing in terms of staff type: 22 percent summer staff being paid school-day teachers, and 18 percent other paid youth-development workers. Volunteer high school students accounted for 11 percent of all summer staff.

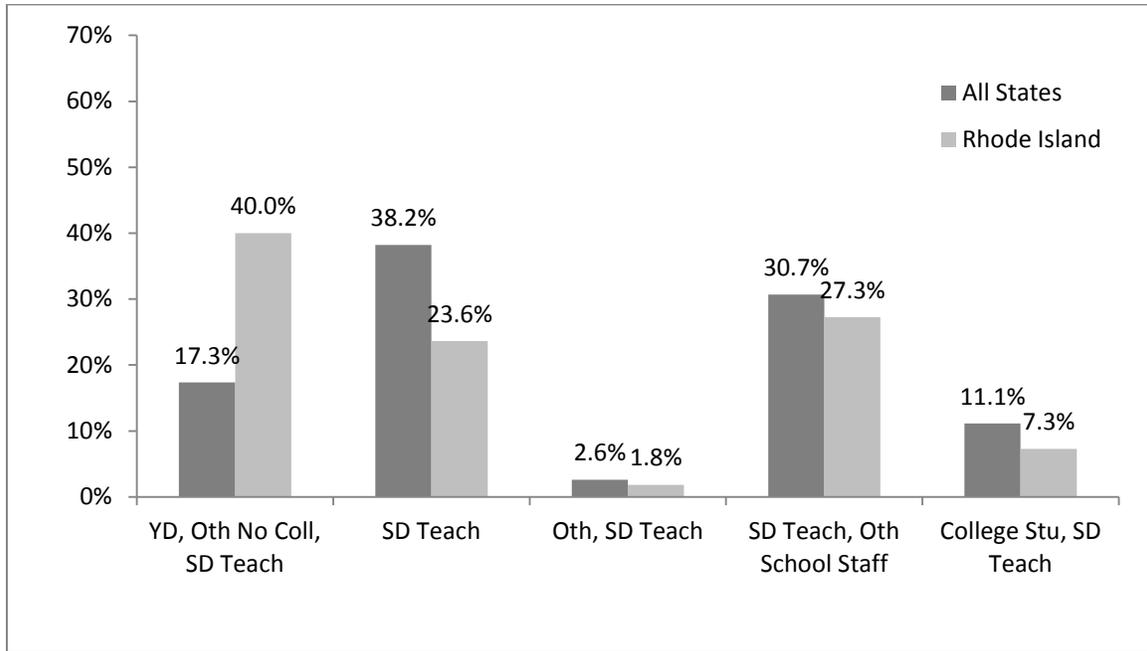
In order to further classify centers into categories that meaningfully represent the extent to which different types of staff are employed to deliver programming to youth (e.g., school-day teachers, youth-development workers, college students), K-Means cluster analysis was employed using center-level percentages for each category of staff. These percentages represent the extent to which centers nationwide emphasized certain types of staff in the programming offered to participating youth. Cluster analysis typically is employed to combine cases into groups using a series of variables as criteria to determine the degree of similarity between individual cases, and it is particularly well suited when there is a desire to classify a large number of cases into a smaller domain of discrete groupings.<sup>2</sup>

Based on this analysis, roughly two thirds of Rhode Island centers typically employ a mix of youth-development workers, staff with no college, and school-day teachers (40 percent); school-

<sup>2</sup> Due to the fact APR 2012 data were not entirely complete at the time of this report (three states were missing APR staffing information), the final cluster solution for 2012 may be somewhat different than presented here.

day teachers and other school staff (27 percent); or school-day teachers only (24 percent), as shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. Staffing Clusters, Rhode Island and the Nation (Annual Reporting Period 2012)**



*Note.* Percentages are based on 55 centers in Rhode Island and 9,560 centers nationally with complete staffing information.

## IV. Program Attendance and Activities

Student participation in afterschool and expanded learning programs is a critical variable in predicting youth experience in programs and is one of the interrelated set of factors that indicate program quality and ultimately influence participant outcomes. This chapter details 21st CCLC program attendance and activities.

### Data Source

Data on program attendance and activities for the 2011–12 programming period were extracted from the APR module of PPICS. A total of 56 centers across the state associated with 38 21st CCLC grants active during this programming period were represented in the data set extracted from PPICS.

### Summary of Program Attendance and Activities

- A total of 12,388 students were reported as attending 21st CCLCs for at least one day during the 2012 reporting period, with 37 percent classified as regular attendees.
- On average, each center in Rhode Island served approximately 221 total students, among whom 81 (37 percent) were regular attendees.
- Rhode Island centers mostly served Hispanic and white students; 39 percent of all regular attendees identified as Hispanic, and 33 percent identified as white.
- When compared with the nation, centers in Rhode Island were more likely to offer *Mostly Enrichment* activities (34 percent of all Rhode Island centers, 21 percent of centers nationally) or *Mostly Recreation* activities (32 percent of all Rhode Island centers, 24 percent of centers nationally).

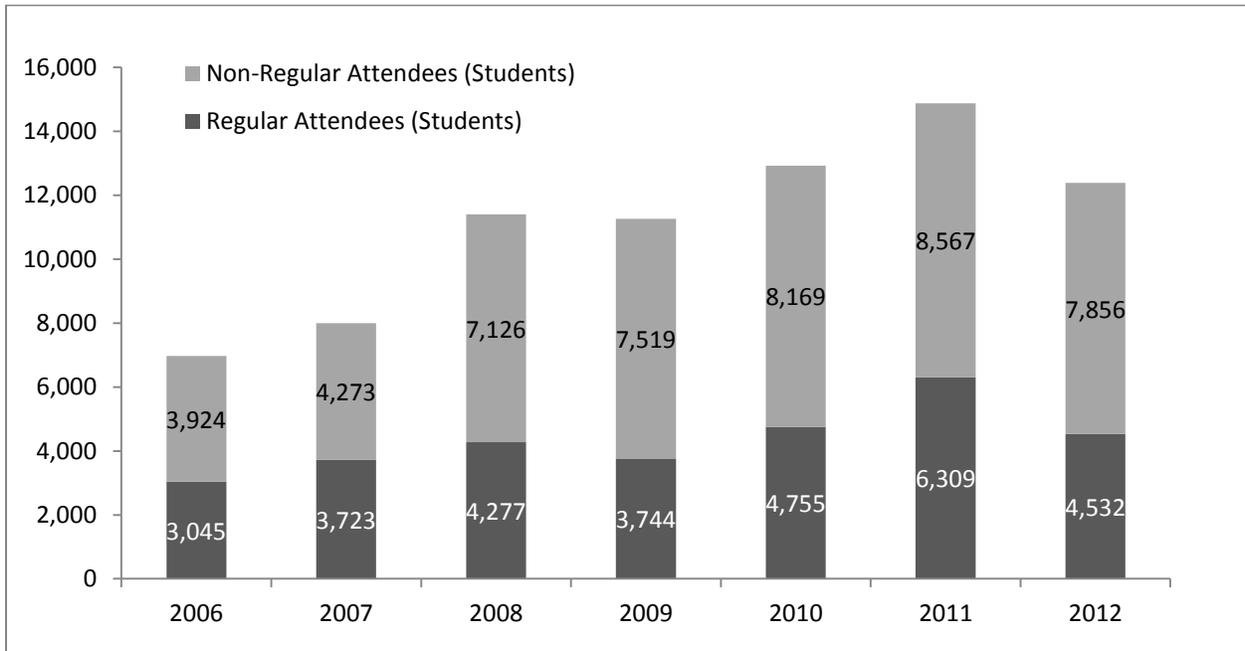
### Detailed Analysis: Program Attendance and Activities

#### Center Attendance

As part of the APR data-collection process in PPICS, information is collected on the total number of students that a given center served during the reporting period, how many of those students met the definition of *Regular Attendee* by participating in 30 or more days of programming, and demographic information about the student population in question, including grade level and ethnicity.

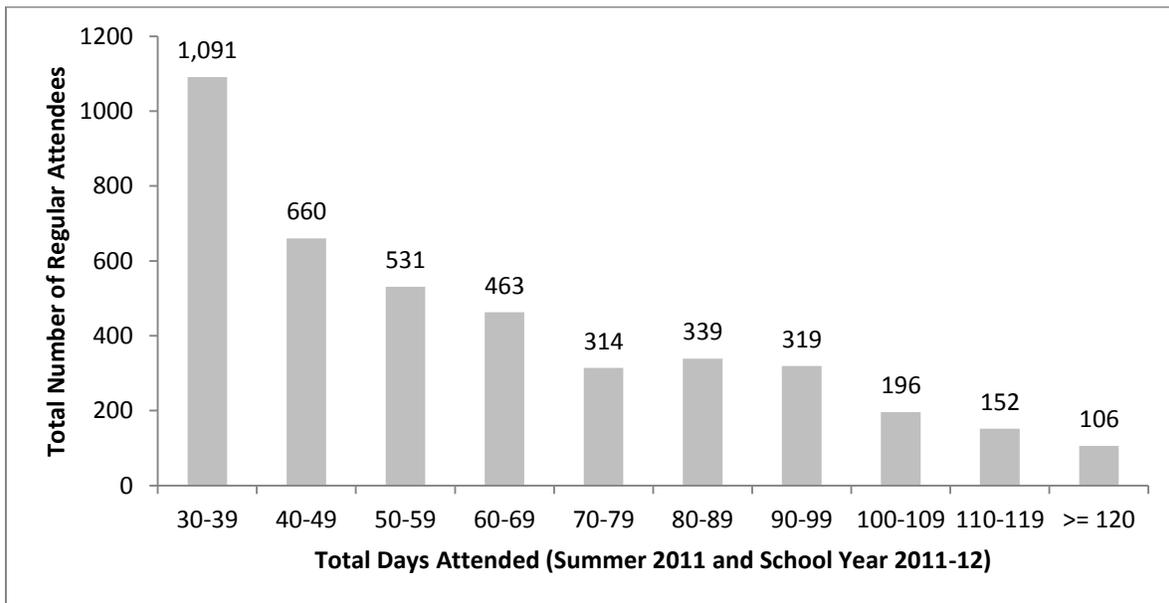
In Rhode Island, a total of 12,388 students were reported as attending 21st CCLC programs for at least one day during the 2012 reporting period. Of these, 4,532 students—or 37 percent (compared with 50 percent nationally)—were regular attendees. Annual attendance levels are presented in Figure 6. Attendance was highest in 2011, dipping somewhat in 2012.

**Figure 6. Attendees and Regular Attendees in Rhode Island, by Annual Reporting Period**



As Figure 7 shows, among regular attendees, just under one half attended 60 days or more ( $n = 1,889$ ) as opposed to fewer than 60 days ( $n = 2,282$ ). There was a steady decline in the number of students attending with each increasing 10-day attendance band (although there was a slight increase at the 80–89 days range).

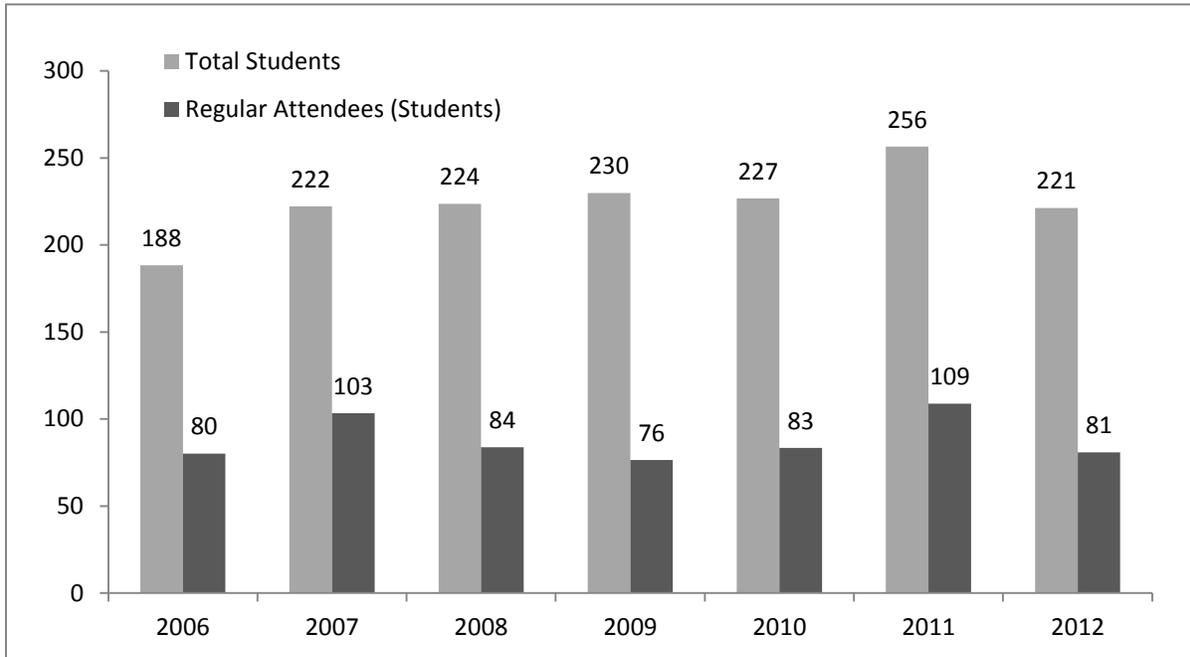
**Figure 7. Number of Regular Attendees, by Number of Days Attended**



Overall, the mean school-year attendance rate for regular attendees was 65 days, with a median of 57. For summer, the mean attendance rate for regular attendees was 15 days, with a median of 17 days.

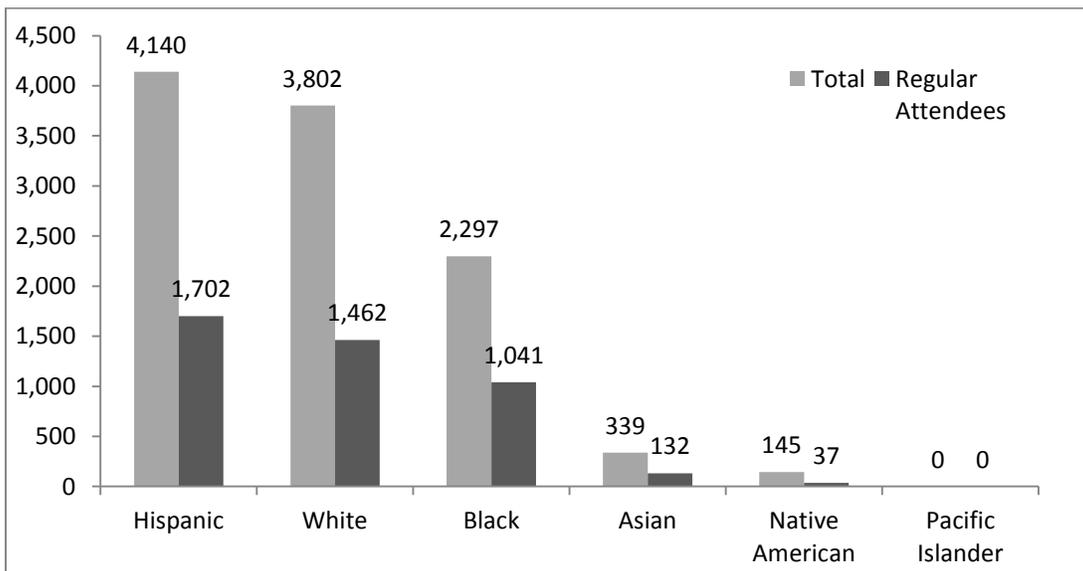
On average, each center in Rhode Island served approximately 221 total students, among whom 81 (or 37 percent) were regular attendees. This was about the same as total attendance in previous years. Median values show a similar trend. See Figure 8 for annual trends.

**Figure 8. Average Attendance Rate per Center, by Annual Reporting Period, Total and Regular Attendees (Rhode Island Only)**



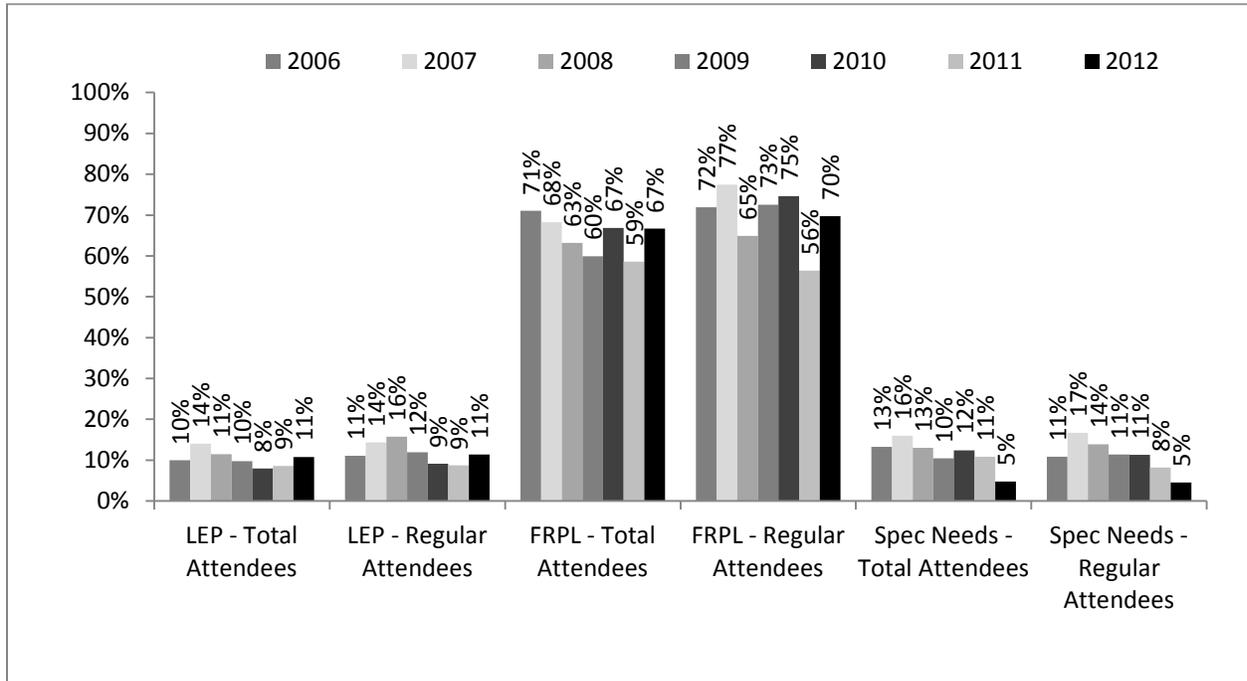
In terms of ethnicity, Rhode Island centers mostly served Hispanic and white students, with 39 percent of all regular attendees identified as Hispanic, and 33 percent identified as white. Figure 9 shows the total number of students and regular attendees according to student ethnicity.

**Figure 9. Number of Total Students and Regular Attendees, by Ethnicity**

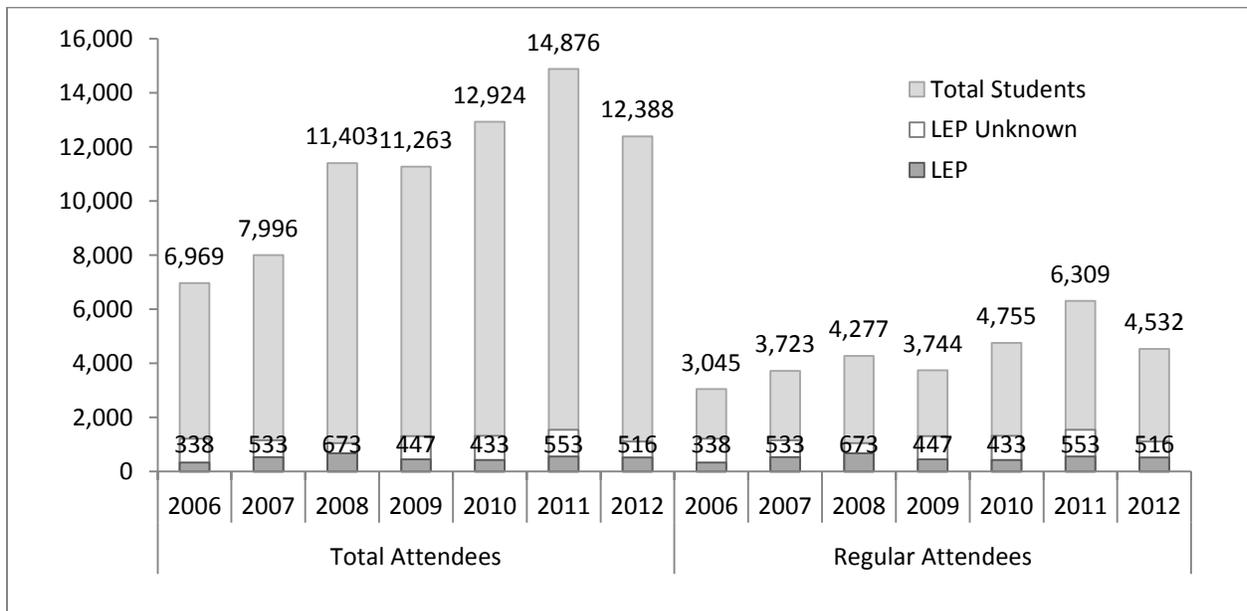


In terms of special status (limited English proficiency [LEP], free or reduced-price lunch [FRPL], or special needs), the proportion of students stayed roughly level over the seven APR periods. However, there was a slight decrease in the proportion of attendees identified as special needs from 2007 to 2012, both for total attendees and for regular attendees (see Figures 10 through 13).

**Figure 10. Percentage of Attendees, by LEP, FRPL, and Special-Needs Status**

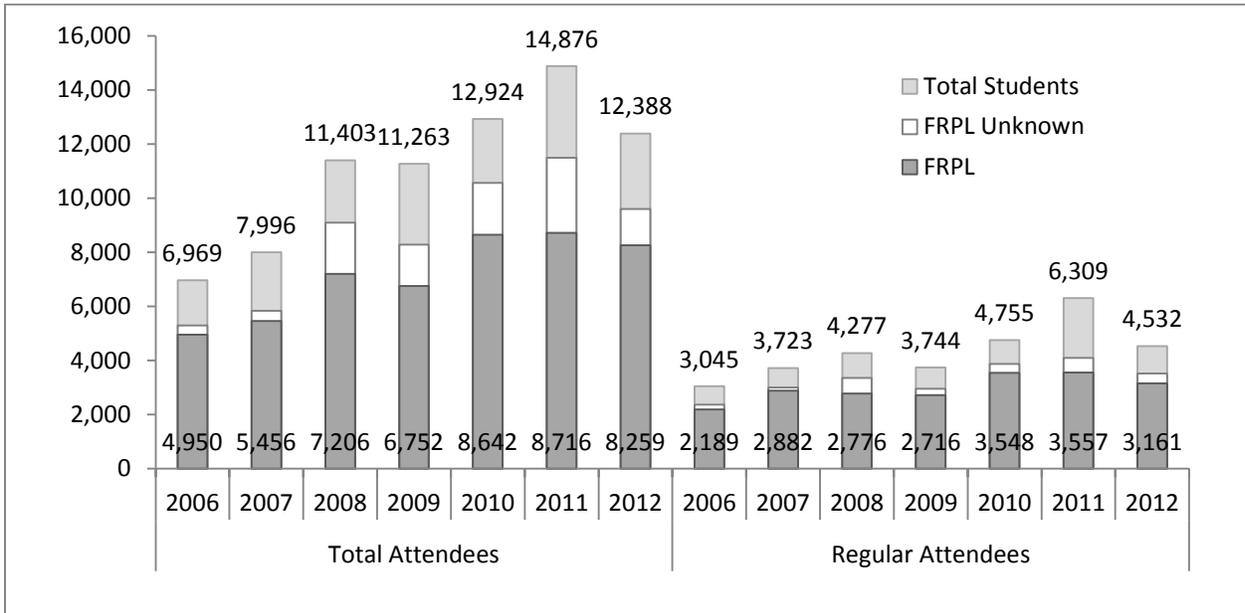


**Figure 11. Number of Total and Regular Attendees, by Limited-English-Proficiency Status**



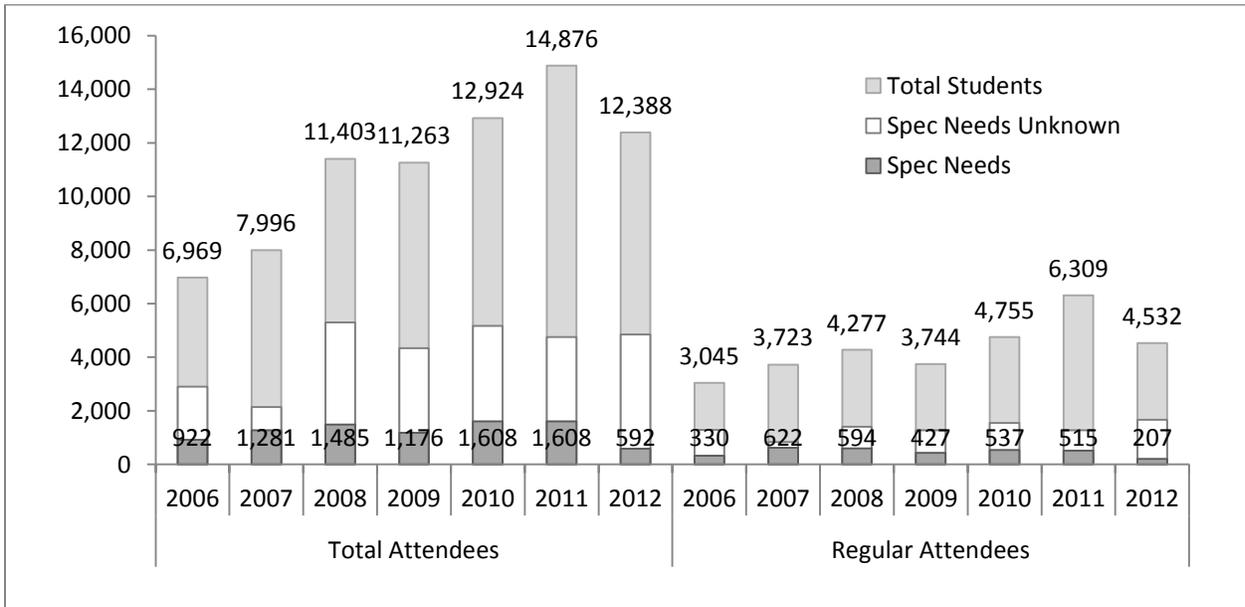
*Note.* The number of students whose LEP status was unknown is not shown.

**Figure 12. Number of Total and Regular Attendees, by FRPL Status**



*Note.* The number of students whose FRPL status was unknown is not shown.

**Figure 13. Number of Total and Regular Attendees, by Special-Needs Status**



*Note.* The number of students whose special-needs status was unknown is not shown.

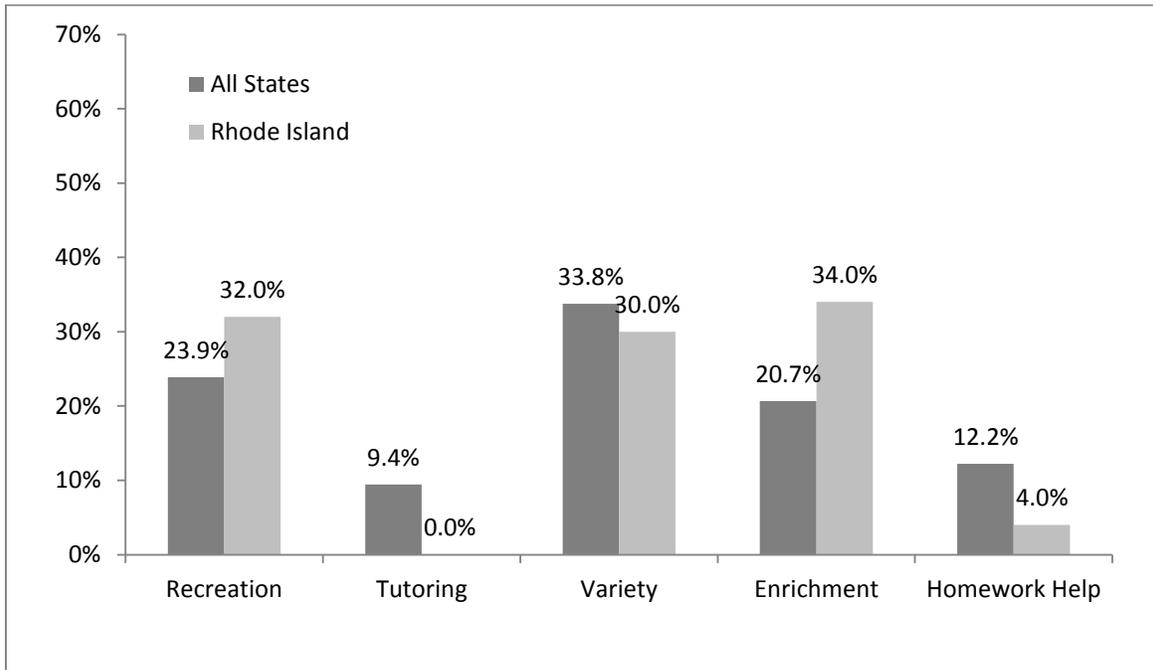
## Center Activities

Both the staff working at a given 21st CCLC site and the activities offered to participants are critical in participants' program experiences and potential benefits gained from participation in 21st CCLC programming. The national goal of the 21st CCLC program encompasses a host of different types of activities, including the following, which are tracked in PPICS:

- Academic enrichment learning program
- Recreational activity
- Homework help
- Supplemental Education Services (SES) tutoring
- Activity to promote youth leadership
- Expanded library service hours
- Drug/violence prevention, counseling, or character education
- Career/job training
- Promotion of family literacy
- Mentoring
- Community service/service learning
- Promotion of parent involvement
- Other (e.g., activities involving computers and technology, life skills, nutrition, etc.)

In order to further classify Rhode Island centers into categories that meaningfully represent the relative emphasis given to providing different types of activities (academic enrichment, tutoring, homework help, recreation, etc.), K-Means cluster analysis was employed using center-level percentages for each category of activity. When compared with the nation, centers in Rhode Island were more likely to fall into the *Mostly Enrichment* cluster (34 percent of all Rhode Island centers compared with 21 percent of centers nationally) or the *Mostly Recreation* cluster (32 percent of all centers in Rhode Island, compared with 24 percent nationally), as shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14. Activity Clusters, Rhode Island and the Nation, by 2012 Annual Reporting Period**



*Note.* States have the option to require their centers to submit activities data in the APR in one of two different ways: as aggregated hours or as individual activity records. Because only individual activity records are used to carry out the cluster analysis in question, the numbers presented under “Activity Cluster” represent centers in states that opted to employ the individual activity record option. For all states, there were 4,541 centers with individual activity cluster designations (Rhode Island inclusive); for Rhode Island, there were 50 centers with individual activity cluster designations.

## V. Organizational Processes

Implementation of sound organizational practices is crucial in supporting point-of-service program quality. This chapter provides a description of organizational processes from survey findings. These findings are aligned with the research-based indicators of program quality, offering a snapshot of how 21st CCLC programs in Rhode Island are implementing best practices.

### Data Source

Site managers working in Rhode Island 21st CCLC centers completed a survey during the 2011–12 academic year. The site manager was defined as the individual at a given center who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program and serves as the point of contact for parents and staff when questions or issues arise on-site. In general, site managers are often viewed as important middle managers in the delivery of 21st CCLC programs.

A total of 52 surveys were administered. This number was based on identification of centers that were active during the evaluation period. Completed surveys were received from 46 site managers for a response rate of 88 percent. The survey addressed the extent to which centers engaged in practices supported by research as effective in afterschool programming. Survey items were organized within five dimensions of program operations: (1) Collaboration and Partnerships, (2) Staffing, (3) Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment (RIPQA) Process, (4) Intentional Program Content and Activities, and (5) Intentional Family Involvement Activities. A series of questions were asked to assess more specific indicators of practices within each dimension. (See the appendix for a list of core survey items organized by dimension.)

### Summary of Findings

#### Dimension 1: Collaboration and Partnership

- Most site managers reported that partners/collaborators and certified teachers lead program activities, which likely enhances the quality and breadth of activities that are offered to participating youth.
- Most centers work informally or formally with partner agencies to establish program goals and provide staff professional development. Few site managers reported working with partner agencies to plan for program sustainability and expansion.
- Staff members at centers generally work together on a monthly basis for program planning and to discuss ways to improve programming or engage youth.
- Most site managers report a minor strategy to align afterschool programming with the regular school day. Site managers are more likely to report communication with regular school-day staff as a major strategy—compared with more direct collaborations with regular school-day staff to monitor participants’ academic performance or deliver programming.

## **Dimension 2: Staffing**

- Staff attended state and local meetings/trainings for professional development; however, only slightly more than one half of site managers reported staff attending either new-staff orientation or all-staff training prior to the start of the program year. Most site managers reported that attended trainings were of either excellent or good quality and adequate. Nearly one third of site managers rated the attended professional developments as insufficient.
- Staffing challenges were mostly minor, with approximately 15 percent of site managers reporting more major, consistent staffing challenges. Common staffing challenges included staff turnover and inadequate time for staff meetings and planning periods.

## **Dimension 3: RIPQA Process**

- Site managers reported working an average of eight hours with Quality Advisors and generally included two program staff in work with Quality Advisors. Major topics of work with Quality Advisors included training staff and setting program goals.
- Most site managers reported a moderate impact of RIPQA participation on various aspects of programming. Fewer than 15 percent of site managers generally reported no impact of RIPQA participation on various aspects of programming. The most common aspects of programming impacted by RIPQA participation included how staff interacts with youth, professional development, and the design of program activities. Less common aspects of programming impacted by RIPQA participation included alignment with the regular school day and embedding content in program activities.

## **Dimension 4: Intentional Program Content and Activities**

- Sixty-three percent of site managers reported conducting a formal needs assessment, and less than one half completed a structured planning process. One third of site managers reported developing an action plan, and one fourth assessed participants' social-emotional competencies.
- The most common high-priority program objective was raising the academic performance of students who are interested in participating in the program.
- Most site managers agreed with a series of statements of how youth build ownership of the program, with only 5 percent disagreeing. The most common ways youth built ownership of the program included youth providing feedback on programming and making plans for program activities. Site managers reported that young people were typically involved in planning program activities on a weekly or monthly basis.
- Although a large portion of enrolled students were recruited for program participation based on specific academic needs (e.g., referral from school or low performance on state or local exams), site managers generally reported occasional use of student data to plan program activities. Roughly one fourth of site managers reported no use of or access to various types of student data to plan program activities. Individualized education plans and student scores on district- or building-level assessments were least commonly used to plan program activities.

- Commonly addressed subject areas included reading, art and music, mathematics, and health and nutrition. Commonly unaddressed subject areas included engineering and entrepreneurship.
- Half of the surveyed site managers reported aligning program content in core academic areas to Rhode Island state standards, and most (61 percent) do not use a published or externally available curriculum to guide program activities.
- Site managers reported that program activities were sometimes to frequently characterized as developmentally responsive and appropriate, and well planned/intentional. Only 12 percent to 20 percent reported that program activities were always characteristic of developmentally responsive and appropriate and well-planned/intentional aspects of program activities.

### **Dimension 5: Intentional Family Involvement Activities**

- Site managers generally reported that center staff sometimes communicate with families about the program and their child’s progress and/or encourage family involvement in program activities. Relative to frequency of communicating with families, site managers were more likely to report frequently encouraging family involvement in program activities.

### **Detailed Analysis**

Many of the scales on the site manager survey contain a set of questions that are intentionally designed to measure an underlying latent construct or indicator of quality (e.g., opportunities for youth engagement). For scales of this type, Rasch analysis techniques used site manager responses to a particular set of questions to create an overall scale score for the indicator in question. These scale scores are an inferential statistic that provides a measure of site managers’ general response tendency within a given construct. For the purposes of interpretation, scale scores at the indicator level were then calibrated with the survey response categories for the respective set of questions. Results for scale scores are summarized with regard to the number and percentage of site managers falling within a response category on the basis of their calibrated scale scores in a given indicator.

Other findings presented in this chapter are not suited to the same sort of scale construction discussed above. Findings of this type are described descriptively.

### **Dimension 1: Collaboration and Partnership**

Indicators of program quality within this dimension include: (1) the presence and extent of partnerships and collaborations within partner agencies, (2) the frequency of internal collaboration among afterschool program staff, and (3) collaboration efforts to link the afterschool program with the regular school day.

**Presence and Extent of Partnerships and Collaborations With Partner Agencies.** Within 21st CCLC programs, partners can play an important role in enhancing the variety of program offerings available to youth and promoting program sustainability. Ideally, partners and grantees

have developed a collaborative relationship to work on various aspects of program design and delivery with a shared vision of program goals. The site manager survey measured the extent to which sites have established partnerships and collaborate with partner agencies to implement key program activities.

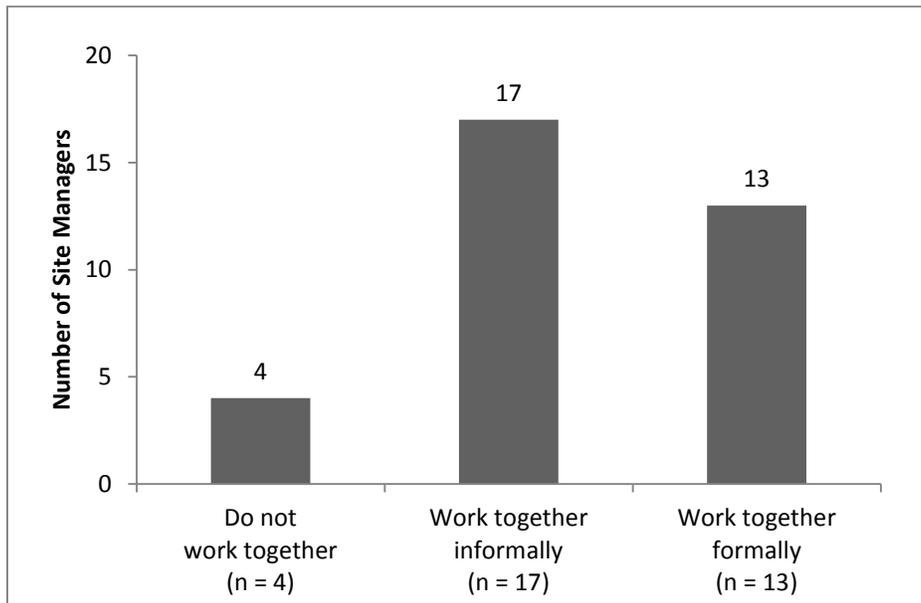
Site managers were first asked to identify one or more parties who are responsible for determining program content, program scheduling, and leading program activities. As Table 3 shows, multiple parties are responsible for determining program content, including program administration, program staff, students, and certified teachers. Program administrators and staff are largely responsible for determining the program schedule. Lastly, program staff, certified teachers, partners/collaborators, and vendor/partners are responsible for leading program activities.

**Table 3. Responsibility for Program Operations, N = 46**

<i>Indicate all those who are responsible for determining program content, program scheduling, and leading activities.</i>	<b>Determine the Program Content</b>	<b>Determine the Program Schedule</b>	<b>Lead Activities</b>
Program administrators	94%	91%	28%
Program staff	89%	61%	83%
District and school admin. staff	48%	48%	22%
Certified teachers	65%	24%	85%
Partners / collaborators	59%	20%	67%
Vendors / partners	48%	13%	72%
Community leaders	33%	13%	44%
Students	70%	28%	41%

Site managers also were asked a set of questions regarding how they work with partner agencies on key program activities. Responses to the set of questions were scaled to place site managers in a general response category with regard to how they work with partner agencies. Scale scores categorized site managers into one of three response categories. As Figure 15 indicates, 30 site managers (88 percent) fell into the *Work together informally* or *Work together formally* categories, indicating that most site managers reported at least informal collaboration with partner agencies to implement key program activities. Very few site managers ( $n = 4$ , or 12 percent) fell in the response category of *Do not work together* with partner agencies.

**Figure 15. Collaboration With Partner Agencies to Implement Program Activities,  $N = 34$**



Site managers were more likely to report collaborating with partner agencies on certain program activities, including establishing goals and objectives for the program and providing professional development opportunities to program staff. In comparison, site managers were less likely to report collaborating with partner agencies to plan for program sustainability and/or expansion and to orient new staff to the program.

*“All of the providers bring content area, materials, and experiences to the student participants that the school day would not be able to support and that our organization would not be able to provide on its own.”*

When asked to describe the content or expertise provided by partners, respondents made clear that partners were an invaluable resource for diverse expertise and enrichment programming (e.g., in arts, sports, science, foreign languages) that their afterschool program would otherwise not be able to offer. Some partners also provided instruction on such topics as leadership, problem solving, and college readiness.

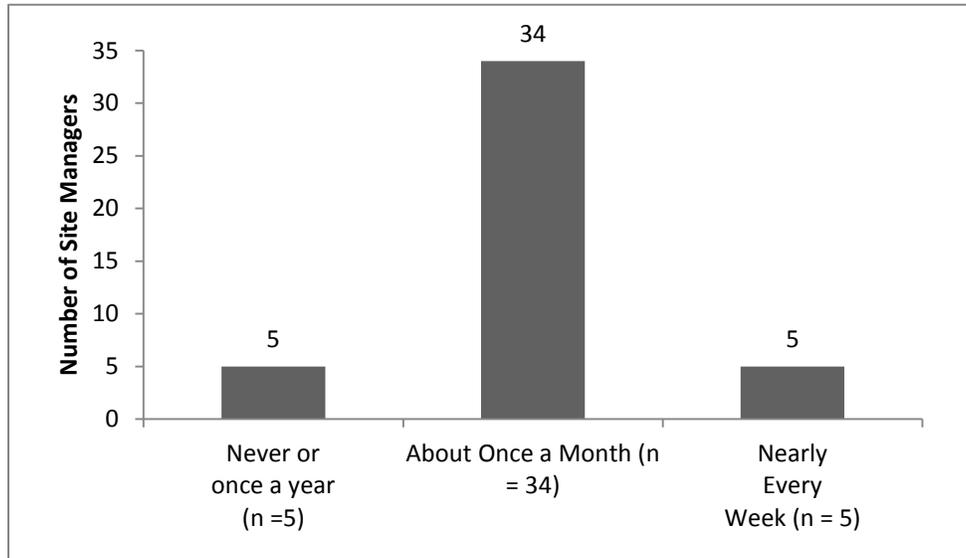
Although less commonly cited, partners also provided afterschool programs with physical space, management support, professional development, and evaluation services. In terms of depth of involvement, one respondent commented, “The longer they [partners] have been providing services, the more involved they are in programming, curricula development, engagement with students, parents and teachers, and sustainability and fundraising efforts.”

**Frequency of Internal Collaboration Among Afterschool Program Staff.** Drawing from the work by Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke (2005), Glisson (2007), and Smith (2007), it is hypothesized that programs characterized by supportive and self-reflective climates that empower staff to take steps to improve program quality are more likely to offer positive and meaningful program experiences.

Site manager responses to a set of questions about the frequency of internal staff collaboration were scaled using Rasch analysis. Scaling indicated that respondents were not easily distinguishing between the frequency categories of *Never* and *About once a year*. These response options were therefore combined in further analysis. Figure 16 provides a distribution of the response categories into which site managers fell on the basis of Rasch scale scores. The figure shows that 34 site managers (77 percent) are in the response category of collaborating with afterschool program staff *About once a month* to promote program quality. The remaining site managers were evenly split between the categories of *Never collaborating* or *Collaborating approximately once a year* ( $n = 5$ , or 11 percent) and *Collaborating nearly every week* ( $n = 5$ , or 11 percent).

Site managers who tended to report minimal (once a year) to no collaboration with other afterschool program staff were more likely to report that when collaborating with other afterschool program staff, they discussed ways to make programming more engaging, and they shared experiences or followed up on individual youth. Site managers reporting more consistent (once a month) internal collaboration were more likely to report collaborating on various activities related to program improvement (e.g., conduct program planning based on a review of program data, observe other afterschool staff delivering programming and provide feedback on their practice). Lastly, site managers reporting ongoing (nearly every week) internal collaboration reported collaborating on the aforementioned activities as well as using evaluation data to set program improvement goals.

**Figure 16. Collaboration With Partner Agencies to Implement Program Activities,  $N = 44$**



**Collaboration Efforts to Link the Afterschool Program With the Regular School Day.**

Another indicator of program quality in this dimension is collaboration and partnerships between afterschool staff and regular school-day staff to align the afterschool program with the regular school day. This indicator is meant to capture the strategies 21st CCLC staff use to align programming to the school day and individual student needs.

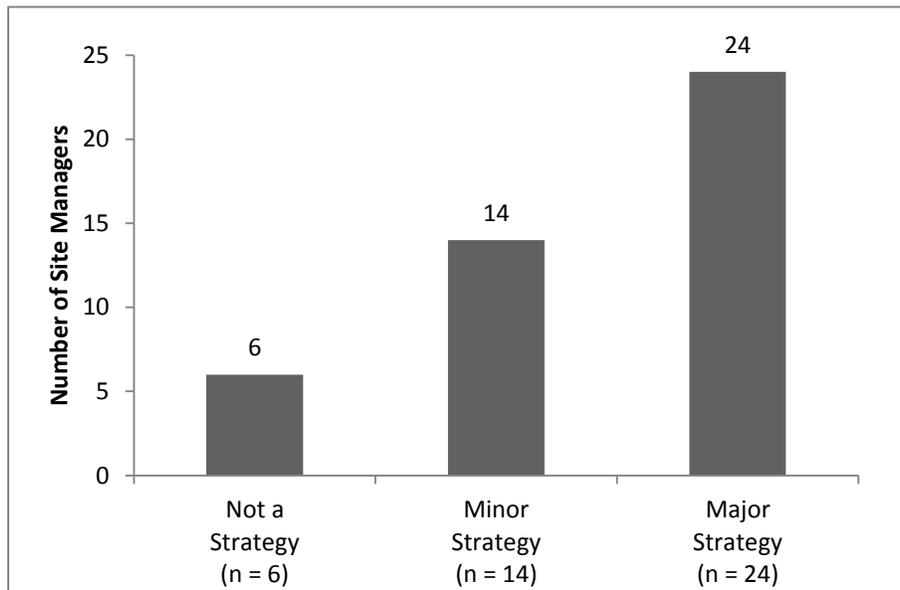
Rasch analysis of questions assessing strategies for aligning afterschool programming with the regular school day indicated that strategies fall into two strategy types: (1) communication strategies and (2) direct collaboration between afterschool program staff and regular school-day staff to design and deliver program content. Examples of activities within these strategy types include the following:

- **Communication Strategies:** Regular face-to-face meetings with school-day teachers, principals, or other school-day administrative staff and/or regular electronic communications with school-day teachers, principals, or other school-day administrative staff
- **Program Offerings and Direct Collaboration:** Aligning programming to school-day curriculum and standards, helping with homework, using student assessments and/or grades to inform programming, monitoring student academic performance, hiring regular school-day teachers, joint professional development and co-teaching of programs between school-day teachers and afterschool program staff.

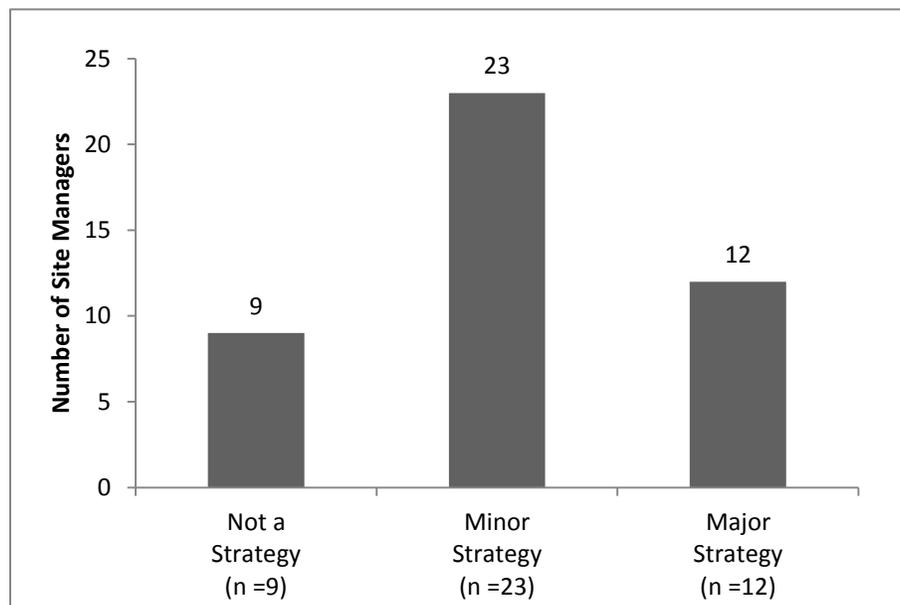
Scale scores for each type of alignment strategy placed site managers in one of three response categories: *Not a strategy*, *Minor strategy*, *Major strategy*. Figures 17 and 18 provide the distribution of site managers within these three response categories, showing that more site managers fell into the *Major strategy* response category with regard to using various communication strategies ( $n = 24$ , or 55 percent) when compared with the site managers who fell into the *Major strategy* response category for use of alignment strategies related to program offerings and direct collaboration ( $n = 12$ , or 27 percent).

Figure 19 provides the distribution of site managers in response categories for both types of alignment strategies. Looking across the types of alignment strategies, it appears as though there is some overlap in the site managers in the *Not a strategy* and *Minor strategy* categories, with less overlap in the site managers falling in the *Major strategy* category. This indicates that site managers who generally report strategies as major are more likely to report using either communication or program offerings/direct collaboration as a primary strategy rather than report using both strategies on a consistent basis. In addition, a small number of site managers ( $n = 4$ , or 9 percent) generally report not using either strategy type to align afterschool programming with the regular school day.

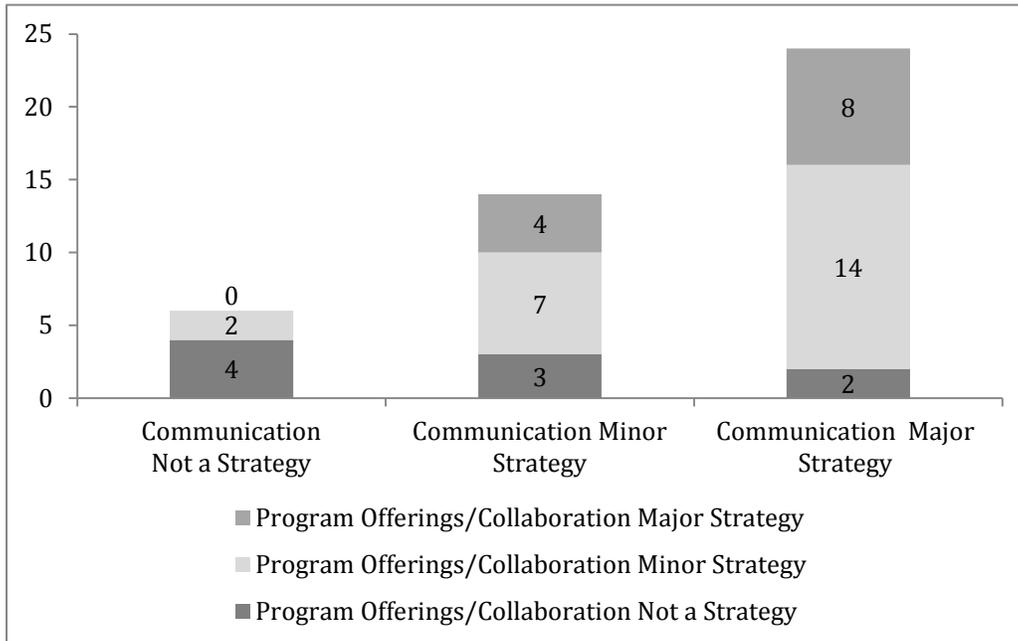
**Figure 17. Use of Communication Strategies for Aligning Afterschool Program With Regular School Day,  $N = 44$**



**Figure 18. Use of Program Offerings and Collaboration Strategies for Aligning Afterschool Program With Regular School Day,  $N = 44$**



**Figure 19. Combined Strategies for Aligning Afterschool Program With Regular School Day, N = 44**



When asked to describe steps taken to engage school staff, site managers commonly cited frequent informal communication via e-mail as well as regular face-to-face meetings with school administrators and teachers (e.g., weekly, biweekly, daily) on students’ grades, attendance, and behavior. Respondents described a two-way channel of communication in which they and classroom teachers interact with each other on specific issues or discuss the performance or behavior of specific students. Regular communication with principals and administrators around goals of the afterschool program and changes or improvements in programming or scheduling also occurred. One site manager characterized the interaction as “regular conversations with teachers and administrators regarding any student concerns in order to better target ways that a young person’s specific needs can be met.” Several managers mentioned the use of a newsletter or electronic mailing list to keep school personnel informed about afterschool programming news and events.

Direct collaboration with the school community included participating in school meetings, such as planning and professional development sessions, and events such as parent-teacher nights, open houses, and graduation ceremonies. Also, a number of respondents asserted that the close connection with the school was largely made possible through the participation of many school-day teachers and staff in the afterschool program. As one manager shared, “We encourage all school staff to work in our program. All staff and administration are encouraged to share their feedback with the staff. We are housed directly in the school building itself, and are available throughout the entire school day.”

*“This is a great partnership because the teachers already have a relationship with students and have a clear understanding of the needs of our population.”*

## Dimension 2: Staffing

Indicators of program quality within this dimension include: (1) providing program staff with high-quality training and/or professional development and (2) minimal program challenges in relation to staffing the afterschool program.

Site managers described a diverse mix of full-time staff, part-time staff, and volunteers (e.g., VISTA, AmeriCorps, and City Year) who provide afterschool programming at 21st CCLC sites in Rhode Island. They are teachers, teaching assistants, teaching students, retired teachers, as well as parents, high school and college students, community leaders, “working artists who have expertise in a particular creative discipline,” and some former afterschool participants. Many have an arts background or certification in a particular academic subject; some have an extensive teaching, coaching, or youth-development background; others demonstrate “core competence in youth work.”

*“Our goal in hiring full-time staff for teaching positions is creating long-term relationships with very disconnected youth. Our program would not be successful if instructors were around for only a few hours a week.”*

One site manager articulated the following hiring philosophy, which was shared by several other respondents: “Our goal in staffing is to offer students exposure to many different kinds of people, from different walks of life, who have something of value to share with and teach young people.” Respondents described a rigorous hiring process that may involve a request for proposal, background checks, and interviews, sometimes led by current afterschool

students. A few managers noted that creating stable connections for participating students is an important consideration when making hiring decisions.

### **Providing Program Staff With High-Quality Training and/or Professional Development.**

This indicator is meant to capture the degree to which staff members are trained to deliver high-quality programming and the quality of professional development events attended by program staff. Table 4 summarizes the types of professional development events attended by afterschool program staff during the 2011–12 program year. The most common professional development events included state meetings/trainings and regional and local meetings. It is interesting to note that only a little more than one half of site managers reported staff attending new-staff orientation or all-staff training prior to the start of the program year. It is not clear if this is due to a lack of new hires during the program year or the lack of policies and procedures for training new staff. Site managers also were asked to report on the quality and adequacy of the attended professional development events. Thirteen (28 percent) of the site managers classified the quality of professional development events as *Excellent*, 26 (56 percent) classified them as *Good*, and three (7 percent) classified them as *Fair* or *Poor*. With regard to the adequacy of the professional development events, most site managers indicated that they were either *Adequate* ( $n = 28$ , or 61 percent) or *Insufficient* ( $n = 13$ , or 28 percent).

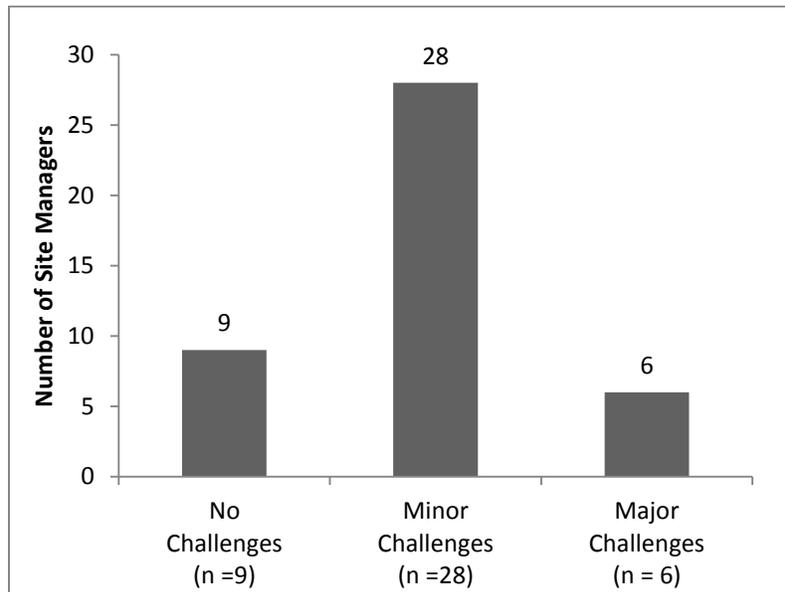
**Table 4. Types of Professional Development Events Attended by Afterschool Program Staff, N = 46**

Type of Professional Development Event	Sites Attended
State meetings/trainings	70%
Regional and local meetings/trainings	70%
Trainings held for all staff before the start of the program cycle	59%
Training provided by partners/collaborators	54%
New-staff orientation	54%
School district professional development	52%
On-site trainings held during the fall programming period	50%
National trainings/conferences	26%

When asked to identify the topics on which they would like to receive professional development, site managers listed the following areas: staff management (including evaluation and motivation), educational leadership, positive discipline, special education instruction, middle and high school youth development, project-based learning, program sustainability (including fundraising, grant writing, and community partnerships), family engagement, data use, and curriculum development. Future professional development topics site managers suggested for their staff included: developing lessons that align with academic standards, professional goal setting, behavior/classroom management, student learning objectives, project-based learning, middle and high school youth engagement, parent engagement, and using technology such as social media to engage students.

**Minimal Program Challenges in Relation to Staffing Afterschool Program.** In the course of delivering programs, staff management and administration are likely to experience a variety of staffing challenges. However, minimizing and overcoming staffing challenges is not only indicative of an effective organizational infrastructure but also contributes to the quality and continuity of program experiences for participating youth. This indicator assesses the extent of staffing challenges experienced by programs. Site managers were asked to rate the extent to which various staffing issues were a challenge; responses were combined to create a scale score that represents the general presence of staffing challenges according to site manager responses. According to their scale scores, site managers fell into one of three response categories: *Major challenge*, *Minor challenge*, and *Not a challenge*. Figure 20 summarizes the distribution of site managers across these three response categories. Most site managers ( $n = 28$ , or 65 percent) fell in the *Minor challenge* category, indicating overall minor staffing challenges. Only six (14 percent) of the site managers fell in the *Major challenge* category, indicating more extensive staffing challenges overall. With the overall degree of staffing challenges taken into consideration, the most commonly reported major staffing challenges included staff turnover, lack of planning time for staff, and lack of time to hold staff meetings.

**Figure 20. Degree of Staffing Challenges Experienced by Programs**



Source:  $N = 44$  site managers.

Site managers indicated that a challenge was related to more intentionally providing structured planning time and professional growth opportunities that do not interfere with the afterschool program schedule. In one case, this meant reserving Friday afternoons or evenings after the program for professional development; in another, it was “holding longer retreats multiple times throughout the year.” Other managers reserved blocks of their own time to work one-on-one with afterschool staff on their performance or classes. To further facilitate the implementation of quality programming, one respondent shared, “I try to help my staff as best I can with supplies, copying, or anything that will make their job easier so they can spend all their time with the kids and not doing paperwork things.” The hope is that efforts to support staff development and quality program planning and implementation will encourage youth to stay in the program. As one manager observed, “Our most at-risk students that are enrolled in the program are also the ones least likely to attend regularly.”

### **Dimension 3: RIPQA Process**

Indicators in this dimension include (1) topics focused on with Quality Advisors and the overall frequency of program staff working with Quality Advisors and (2) the extent to which participation in the RIPQA process changed aspects of program design and delivery.

**Topics Focused on With Quality Advisors and Overall Frequency of Work With Quality Advisors.** Site managers reported focusing on a variety of topics with Quality Advisors. As shown in Table 5, the most common topics included planning for program quality and implementing action steps. Less common focus topics included training staff and setting goals, although between 26 percent and 39 percent of site managers reported a minor or major focus on training staff and setting goals. The topic of assessing activities or practices was generally reported as a minor focus of work with Quality Advisors. Site managers reported spending an

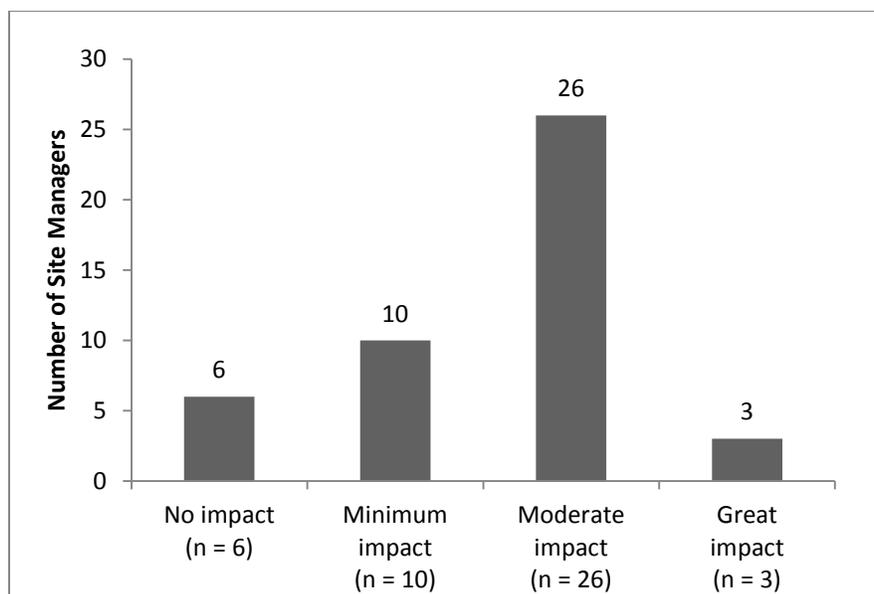
average of eight hours (standard deviation = 6.35, range = 0–25 hours) during their most recent off year working with Quality Advisors, which typically included two program staff.

**Table 5. Topics Included in Work With Quality Advisors, N = 42**

Topic	Percentage in Response Category		
	Major Focus	Minor Focus	Not a Focus
Planning for Quality	46%	28%	17%
Implementing action steps	41%	30%	20%
Training staff	39%	26%	26%
Assessing activities or practices	37%	35%	20%
Setting goals	35%	30%	26%

**Extent to Which Participation in the RIPQA Process Changed Program Design and Delivery.** Site managers were asked a set of questions regarding the extent to which involvement in the RIPQA process changed various aspects of program design and delivery. Scale scores for site manager responses to this set of questions placed site managers in one of four response categories. Figure 21 provides the distribution of site managers across the four response categories. Although most site managers ( $n = 26$ , or 58 percent) reported a *Moderate impact* of RIPQA participation on various aspects of program design, some site managers reported *No impact* ( $n = 6$ , or 13 percent) or *Minimum impact* ( $n = 10$ , or 22 percent) of RIPQA participation. Across the response categories, site managers were more likely to report that RIPQA participation impacted staff interactions with youth, professional development for staff, and the design of program activities. In comparison, site managers were less likely to report that RIPQA participation impacted how programs connect with schools to design and deliver program services, engage in community partnerships, and embed content in program activities.

**Figure 21. Extent of Impact of RIPQA Participation on Aspects of Design/Delivery, N = 45**



#### Dimension 4: Intentional Program Services and Activities

Indicators within this dimension include: (1) intentional program development, (2) opportunities for youth engagement and ownership of programming, and (3) intentional design and delivery of content to support student development in core content areas.

**Intentional Program Development.** A key indicator of program quality is the degree to which programming is intentionally developed on the basis of a needs assessment and a structured planning process. Site managers were asked about the process of developing programming and program objectives (see Table 6). More than one half ( $n = 29$ , or 63 percent) used a formal needs assessment, fewer completed a structured planning process, and less than one fourth assessed participants’ social-emotional competencies.

**Table 6. Site Manager Responses Regarding Program Development,  $N = 46$**

Question	Informed Program Development
<b>Used formal needs assessment for program development</b>	<b>63%</b>
For those completing formal needs assessment, types of data included:	
Needs assessment	48%
Asset mapping	28%
School improvement plans	22%
Environmental scan	15%
Participatory analysis	15%
<b>Completed structured planning process</b>	<b>44%</b>
For those completing structured planning process, planning process involved:	
Development of an action plan	30%
Development of a logic model	13%
Participatory action planning with program participants, staff, and stakeholders	13%
Identification of smart goals	7%
<b>Assessed participants’ social-emotional competencies</b>	<b>22%</b>

Site managers also were asked to list the top three program objectives from a predefined list. As Table 7 indicates, the most common high-priority program objective was raising levels of academic performance for any students interested in participating in afterschool programming, indicating that programs are not typically targeting the lowest performing students. Additional priorities identified by site managers included providing students access to academic enrichment opportunities, providing opportunities for students to participate in activities not offered during the school day, and enhancing the social or civic development of students.

**Table 7. High-Priority Program Objectives, N = 46**

<i>Please indicate which of these program objectives constitute the top three priorities for your program.</i>	<b>Highest Priority</b>	<b>Top 3 Priority</b>
Raise the academic performance levels of any students who have an interest in participating.	37%	19%
Enable low-performing students to achieve grade-level proficiency.	17%	11%
Provide students with access to academic enrichment opportunities.	11%	41%
Provide opportunities for students to participate in activities not offered during the school day.	11%	41%
Enhance the social or civic development of students.	7%	20%
Enhance the artistic development of students (e.g., visual and performing arts, etc.).	4%	4%
Provide supervised space for students to complete homework.	2%	4%
Prepare students for college and work.	0%	13%
Provide students with the opportunity to participate in sports and recreation activities.	0%	7%
Engage families	0%	15%

Site managers were then queried about how the activities provided support their main objectives. To support the academic growth and enrichment of students, respondents described a process of working closely with classroom teachers to determine student needs, providing one-on-one support to students in greatest need, and creating clubs and programming with an academic focus (e.g., writing, debate, science, and math). Also, classroom teachers were often hired as afterschool instructors, which further contributed to the academic focus of activities.

*“Activities offered are hands-on experiential learning that is project-based, where students are empowered to discover their love of learning and its application to academics and real life.”*

Several managers emphasized the importance of making learning fun or different by incorporating hands-on activities and project-based concepts. One respondent voiced the overall sentiment of many respondents by noting, “Afterschool time is the students’ time and it is to be fun, challenging and safe for all those that want to participate. We try to offer an array of programming that would be of interest to all types of students with different learning styles.”

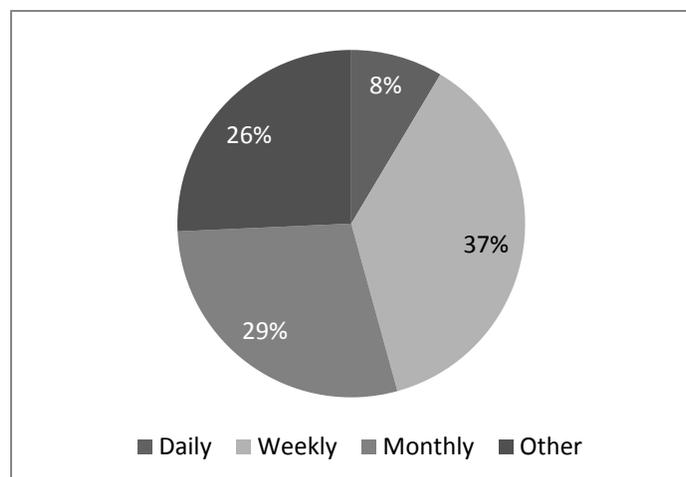
When asked to describe how well their current objectives relate to those outlined in the original application, site managers who replied to this question indicated that the objectives were the same or revised on the basis of changes to the program but still aligned with the original. Several noted that their programs have expanded over the years in terms of reach and offerings. As one respondent shared, “Our program mission is very consistent with the original CLC application. However, because our program has grown in size and scope, our goals have evolved.”

*“Our objectives have grown with the needs of the school. We currently have a much bigger role in the school than when the application was submitted.”*

**Opportunities for Youth Engagement and Ownership of Programming.** Research on effective afterschool programs suggests that program effectiveness varies as a function of engaging learning opportunities and the delivery of activities in a manner consistent with core youth development principles, including opportunities to build youth ownership of programming.

Site managers were asked to rate how much they agree with a set of statements regarding how youth build ownership of and participate in decisions about program delivery. Based on scale scores, most site managers fell in the *Agree* category ( $n = 33$ , or 79 percent), with a small portion of site managers in the *Strongly disagree/Disagree* ( $n = 2$ , or 5 percent) and *Strongly agree* ( $n = 7$ , or 17 percent) categories. Overall, site managers were more likely to agree that youth participate by providing feedback on programming, making plans for activities that are offered, and creating expectations and guidelines for the program. In contrast, site managers were less likely to report youth involvement in choices about what content is covered and how it is covered or serving a formal role in program governance. In addition to asking about the types of activities youth engage in for program ownership, site managers were asked to report how frequently youth are involved in planning program activities (see Figure 22 for a breakout of responses).

**Figure 22. Frequency of Youth Participation in Planning Program Activities,  $N = 46$**



When asked to describe strategies or approaches that program staff are encouraged to employ to build youth ownership, many site managers noted that their program actively promotes or is planning to provide opportunities for greater youth involvement and ownership. At a minimum,

*“Many afterschool staff members encourage students to determine what their course will consist of. They have discussions about what the majority of the students would like to ‘get’ from the class and ‘do’ in the class.”*

most programs invited youth to provide input and feedback on their own selection of activities and classes via surveys and discussions. Others also involved students in making decisions about how the program as a whole runs and the range of classes that are offered. As one manager noted, “Before each session, students are asked to rate their experience with staff, community providers. Students are asked what enrichment classes should stay and what classes they don’t want to

participate in.” Some also noted that staff members were encouraged to listen to students, be more cognizant about individual preferences and needs, and more intentionally invite youth feedback.

A smaller number of programs also actively sought to develop leadership among students. This was done formally through the formation of youth councils or youth membership on advisory boards typically made up of program staff, community members, and students. Whether students-only or mixed membership, these groups often were responsible for collecting youth feedback, organizing events and celebrations, and participating in various decisions about programming and operations, including hiring staff and setting behavior policies. As described by one respondent, “There is a strong Youth Council who is very involved in the day-to-day operations of the program.” Another shared, “We have a Youth Leadership Board of 15 members who meet regularly throughout the year to organize and plan events and community-building opportunities in our program.” One manager described using an inclusive “membership model” in which all students and staff have regular community meetings. This practice sent the message that students “are important members of our community, not just people who come once a week for class.” In other programs, opportunities were less formal but still intentionally focused on building youth leadership. For example, in some programs, students were encouraged to attend staff and board meetings, participate in various committees, develop their own “clubs,” and act as “peer buddies” with new or younger students.

### **Intentional Design and Delivery of Content to Support Student Development in Core**

**Content Areas.** There is a growing body of research suggesting that desired student achievement outcomes can be realized through afterschool programs by paying attention to *how* programming is delivered through the creation of developmentally appropriate settings that are consistent with core youth development principles (Birmingham et al., 2005; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

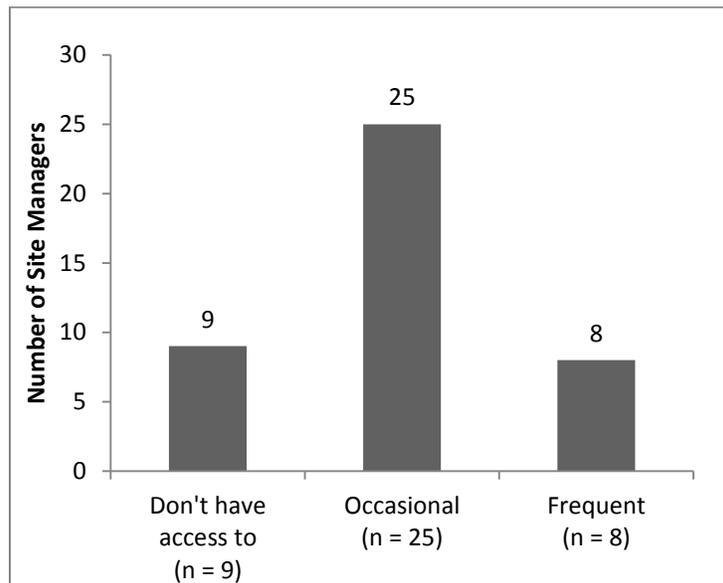
Site managers were asked to estimate the number of students targeted for program recruitment for various reasons. As shown in Table 8, there was variation in the proportion of enrolled students recruited for program participation on the basis of the listed selection criteria. The most common selection criteria (with *Some* to *Most* enrolled) included (1) referral from a school-day staff member indicating the need for additional assistance in reading or math and (2) below-proficient scores on local or state assessments.

**Table 8. Proportion of Students Recruited for Program Based on Selection Criteria**

Selection Criteria	Estimate of Students Enrolled for Selection Criteria			
	No Students	Some Students	Most Students	All Students
Referral from school-day staff	13%	52%	26%	0%
Below-proficient score on local or state assessments	13%	52%	24%	2%
Failure to receive passing grade	20%	50%	20%	2%
English language learner	26%	63%	2%	0%

To further understand the extent of intentional planning of program activities, site managers were asked a set of questions about staff access to and use of various types of data/information about students for planning activities. Site manager responses across the questions were used to create a scale score that reflects the overall range of data used and the extent of data use for planning activities. Figure 23 provides the distribution of site managers within four frequency response categories for use of various types of data/information about students to plan activities. Site managers generally reported lack of access to ( $n = 9$ , or 21 percent), occasional use ( $n = 25$ , or 60 percent), and frequent use ( $n = 8$ , or 19 percent) of various types of student data to plan program activities. Overall, the most commonly used types of student data/information included information about school-day attendance, students’ grades, and information about student behavioral issues. Individualized education plans and student scores on district- or building-level assessments were less likely to be used for planning program activities.

**Figure 23. Use of Various Types of Student Data to Plan Program Activities,  $N = 42$**



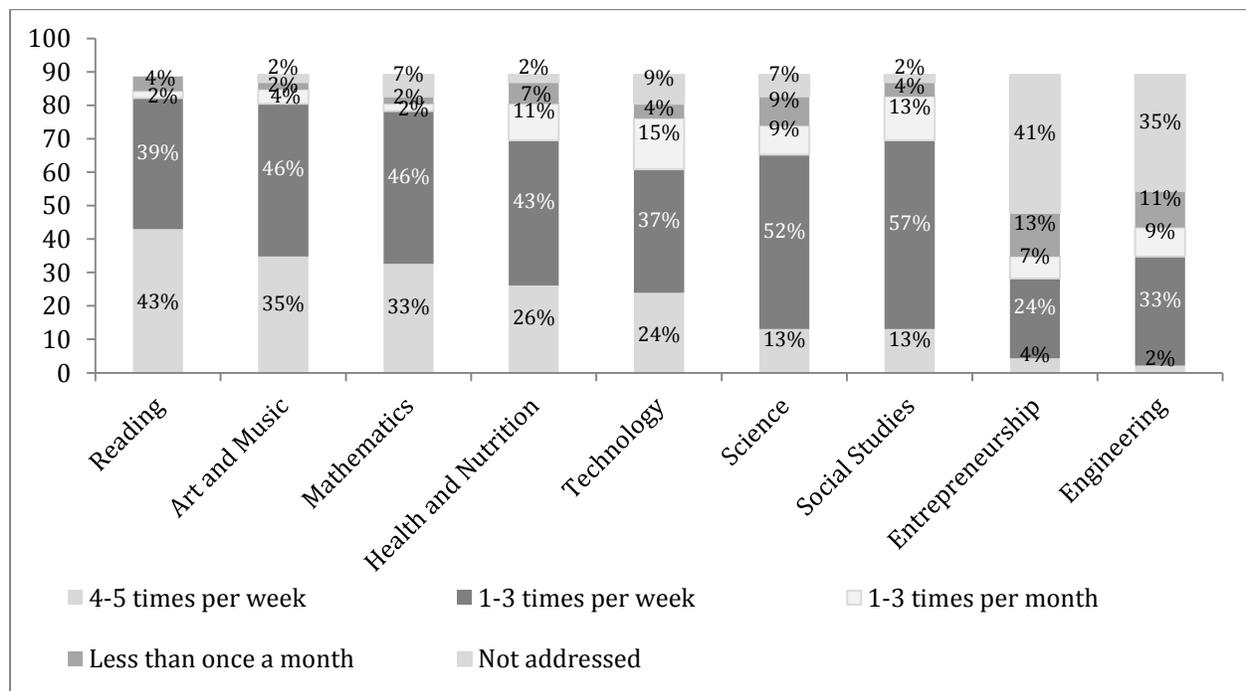
Site managers were asked to provide additional details about how student data are used to inform programming. If available to them, afterschool programs—sometimes through a trained evaluator—review student behavior or discipline data as well as academic records to inform individual student as well as larger program plans. (Respondents, however, also stressed the importance of informal but regular communication with classroom teachers.) For example, instruction and enrollment in remedial interventions, such as math or literacy tutoring, are often provided to participants based on student academic or social-emotional needs.

*“We provide additional supports including one-on-one tutoring and family support to help students that are below grade level and/or having behavioral problems in school.”*

Aggregated student data are also used to inform broader programming decisions, including partnering with community organizations. This use of student data is summarized by one respondent who stated, “If most of our students struggle with math as indicated by their data, then we would offer more than one option for activities that include a math skill strengthening focus.” Another noted, “We identify weaknesses and needs based on assessments, and we use this information when selecting program providers.” Several programs also specifically mentioned consideration of New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) scores in developing academic enrichment programming.

Site managers also were asked to describe how often specific subject areas were addressed during the provision of program activities (see Figure 24). The areas addressed most frequently (3–5 times per week) were reading/literacy, arts and music, mathematics, and health and nutrition. Engineering and entrepreneurship were the least frequently addressed subject areas.

**Figure 24. Percentage of Site Managers Indicating Frequency of Addressing Subject Areas, N = 41**



In addition to asking about the frequency of addressed subject areas, the survey also asked site managers about the alignment of activities in a given content area to state and/or Common Core State Standards. As displayed in Table 9, site managers reported greater alignment of activities in English language arts/reading, mathematics, and science to Rhode Island state standards. As far as use of a published or externally developed curriculum, most site managers ( $n = 28$ , or 61 percent) stated that the program did not use a published or externally developed curriculum to support afterschool program activities.

**Table 9. Alignment of Program Activities to Existing Standards,  $N = 46$**

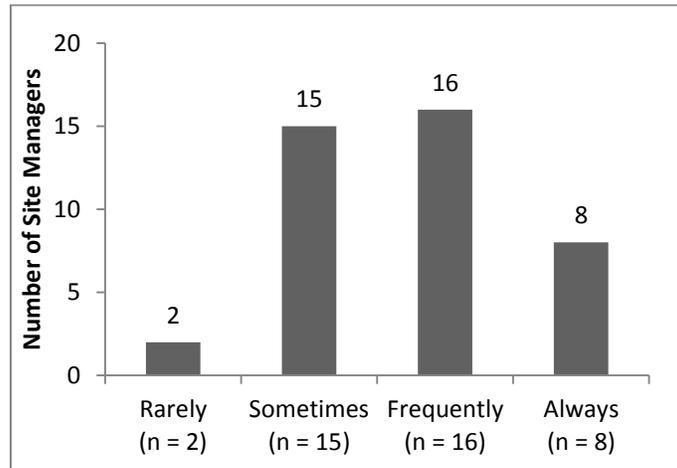
Content Area	Percentage of Site Managers Indicating Activities Are Linked to Given Standard	
	Rhode Island State Standards	Common Core State Standards
English language arts/reading	50%	33%
Mathematics	48%	30%
Science	48%	0%
Written or oral communication	44%	0%

Lastly, site managers were asked to respond to a set of questions regarding how often program activities meant to support student development in reading and/or mathematics meet the following criteria:

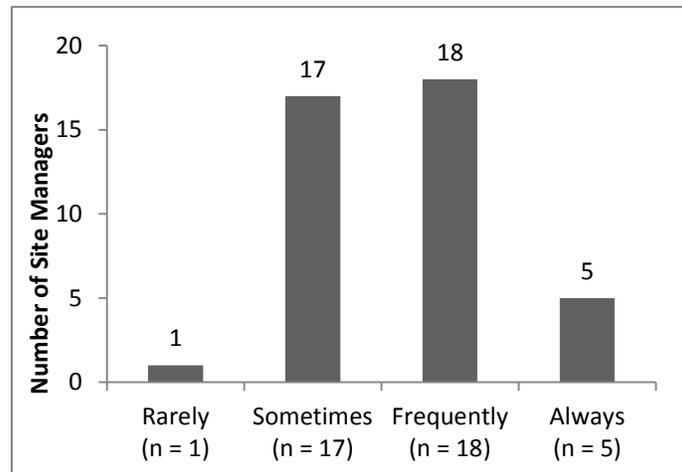
- ***Developmentally Responsive and Appropriate:*** This includes how often program activities build upon skills from prior activities/sessions, address specific developmental domains, are structured to respond to youth feedback, and are informed by the expressed interests, preferences, and/or satisfaction of participating youth.
- ***Well Planned and Intentional:*** This includes how often program activities are based on written plans, are planned in advance, are tied to specific learning goals, and explicitly promote skill building and mastery in relation to one or more state standards.

Site manager responses to questions regarding how often program activities were developmentally responsive/appropriate and well planned/intentional were scaled to provide an overall indication of how often site managers reported that program activities were characteristic of developmentally responsive/appropriate and well planned/intentional program activities. As shown in Figures 25 and 26, site managers indicated that program activities were generally (*Sometimes to Frequently*) characterized as developmentally appropriate and responsive as well as well planned and intentional. There were no clear differences between site manager reports of the frequency of developmentally appropriate and responsive program activities relative to the frequency of well-planned and intentional program activities.

**Figure 25. Frequency of Program Activities Characterized as Developmentally Responsive and Appropriate,  $N = 41$**



**Figure 26. Frequency of Program Activities Characterized as Well Planned and Intentional,  $N = 41$**



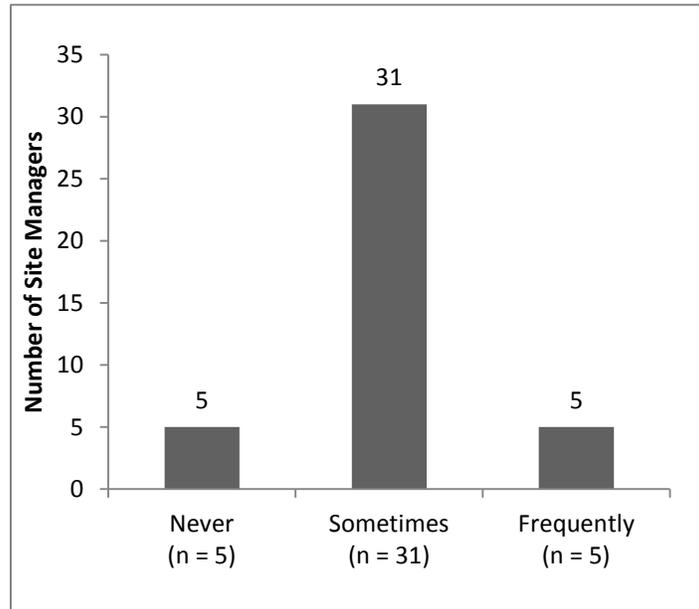
### **Dimension 5: Intentional Family Involvement Activities**

Another quality practice referenced in the literature on effective afterschool programs relates to engaging the parents and adult family members of participating youth, both to build the skills of adult participants and to facilitate greater parental involvement in the educational development of participating youth.

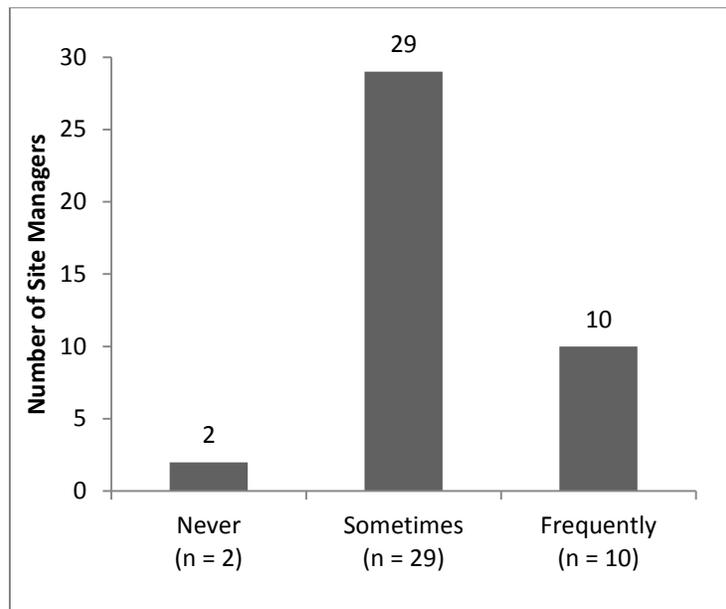
Site managers were asked how often they communicate with families about program services/activities and their child’s progress in the program. The survey also asked site managers how often they ask for parent input and/or encourage family members to participate in programming provided by the afterschool program. In both instances, site manager responses across the respective set of questions were scaled to provide an indication of overall frequency of

family communication and encouragement of family involvement. As Figures 27 and 28 indicate, site managers reported that, overall, programs *Sometimes* communicate with families and encourage family input and involvement in program activities.

**Figure 27. Frequency of Program Communication With Families,  $N = 41$**



**Figure 28. Frequency of Encouraging Family Input and Involvement in Program Activities,  $N = 41$**



## **VI. Impact Analysis**

### **Data Source**

To create the comparison datasets necessary for the impact analysis, student records provided to AIR for upload into PPICS (as part of the APR 2012 reporting process) were matched by RIDE with State-Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs). This matching was done through demographic variables provided by the sub-grantees themselves. Once each student was matched with his or her SASID, RIDE linked each student record with data stored in RIDE's data warehouse, including demographic information, school-of-attendance data, and outcome data (state assessment scale scores for two years, unexcused absence data, and disciplinary information). Once linked, these data were provided to AIR along with similar data for non-21<sup>st</sup> CCLC students who attended the same schools as 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC students. This provided AIR with a large dataset that included student demographic information, school-of-attendance information, and outcome data for both 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participants and non-participants.

### **Impact of 21st CCLC Participation on Student Outcomes**

The evaluation team employed a quasi-experimental research design to examine the effect of 21st CCLC participation on three different student outcomes: 1) reading and math achievement scores; 2) the number of unexcused absences; and 3) the number of disciplinary incidents. Students' reading and math achievement were measured by New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) reading and math tests for grades 3-8, while unexcused absence and disciplinary rates were provided by RIDE. Note that unexcused absences were selected as an outcome measure (as opposed to attendance or simple absence rates, excused or unexcused) due to the value of this particular outcome measure as discovered through other evaluation work.

The goal of this analysis was to answer the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent is there evidence that students participating in services and activities funded by 21st CCLC demonstrated better performance on reading and math assessments as compared with similar students not participating in the program?
- To what extent is there evidence that there are differences between students participating in services and activities funded by 21st CCLC and similar students not participating in the program in the non-academic aspects, number of unexcused absences and number of disciplinary incidents?

Two treatment groups were defined to address these questions, the first consisting of students attending 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC 30 days or more during the reporting period and the second consisting of students attending 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC 60 days or more during the reporting period (the latter group being a subset of the first group to assess dosage differences). These treatment groups were compared to a non-participant group of students using a propensity score stratification approach, described in more detail below.

## Propensity Score Matching

In any evaluation of a program where participants are not randomly assigned to participate in the program, the problem of selection is paramount. We know that it is likely that students who participate in 21st CCLC programming are different from those who do not attend. These differences can bias estimates of program effectiveness because they make it difficult to disentangle pre-existing differences between students who attended the program and those who did not from the effect of attending the program. In review of the datasets used in the analysis, we found that students who attended the program tended to be higher achieving students than those who did not *prior to the start of the current academic year*. The quasi-experimental approach outlined here, propensity score matching (PSM), is a method for mitigating that existing bias in program effect (i.e., if one were to simply compare the students who attended and those who did not).

Propensity score matching is a two-stage process. In the first stage, the probability that each student participates in the 21st CCLC program is modeled on available observable characteristics. By modeling selection into the program, this approach allowed comparison of participating and non-participating students who would have had a similar propensity to select into the program based on observable characteristics (e.g., demographic data supplied by RIDE). In the second stage, the predicted probability of participation was used to model student outcomes while accounting for selection bias. Pretreatment group differences were balanced in observed covariates using a propensity score stratification and marginal mean weighting approach (Hong & Hong, 2009).

## Creation of the Comparison Group

The outcome of interest in modeling propensity scores is treatment status (1 for students participating in the program, 0 for the comparison group). To account for this binary outcome, logistic regression was used to model the logit (or log-odds) of student group assignment status. Examples of student-level variables used to fit the propensity score models included:

- Prior achievement in reading and math
- Student demographic information including
  - Gender
  - Racial Status
  - Socioeconomic status
  - Special Education status
  - Migrant status
  - Immigrant status
  - School type

In addition to the student-level variables, the propensity score model also included school variables which added information about the school a student attended (to account for school-

based contextual differences which may account for differences in the propensity for a student to participate).

A total of 53 variables were considered for the propensity score model. Data were not available for each of these covariates for all students. To account for this, indicator variables were used to model the relationship between the pattern of missing data and propensity to participate in the program (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1984). The propensity score model was fit separately for each grade (grades 3-12), and separately for each definition of treatment (30+ days, 60+ days). The final propensity score models for each grade were checked to ensure that the analysis sample was balanced across relevant covariates. The propensity score models all produced comparison samples which were balanced with the treatment across the 53 variables examined for balance. This result indicates that the treatment and comparison groups had no significant differences from one another (prior to treatment) as measured by these variables.

It is important to note that the comparison group for the 30+ day and 60+ day treatment definitions were different. Separate propensity score models were fit for each, as it is reasonable to assume that students who attend 60 or more days may be different from those who only attend 30 or more days.

### State Assessment Results

Tables 10 shows the effect of 21st CCLC programming on student reading and math achievement, pooling together all grade levels (3-7).

There was a statistically significant, positive impact of 21st CCLC on reading achievement at the 0.05 significance level for the 30 days or more treatment group, with students in the treatment group achieving 0.055 standardized deviation units higher than students in the comparison group. Note that this is a very small effect size. The impact of 21st CCLC on reading for the 60 days or more treatment group was also positive, but not statistically significant; that is, the likelihood that the observed effect was the result of mere chance is above the probability threshold necessary for statistical significance.

For mathematics, there were very small, positive impacts of 21st CCLC on achievement for both the 30 days or more group and the 60 days or more group, but in both cases the effects were not statistically significant (Cohen, 1988).

**Table 10. Impact of 21st CCLC on Academic Achievement  
Pooled Across Grades<sup>1</sup>**

Subject	Treatment	Effect Size	S.E. <sup>2</sup> of Effect Size	<i>p</i>
Math	30+ day	0.017	0.027	0.530
	60+ day	0.012	0.031	0.686
Reading	30+ day	0.055	0.028	0.047
	60+ day	0.048	0.032	0.137

Notes:

1. Include grades 3-7
2. Standard Error

Table 11 shows the effect of 30 days or more of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programming on student reading and mathematics achievement, with grade levels treated separately. Surprisingly, the impact of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participation on mathematics achievement was actually negative for grades 3-5 (i.e., the comparison group achieved higher performance than the treatment group), but not significantly so. In fact, no significant impact was found at significance level 0.05 for any grade for either reading or mathematics achievement. Effect sizes were small, ranging from 0.042 to 0.081.

**Table 11. Impact of 21st CCLC on Academic Achievement – 30+ Day Treatment**

Grade	Math				Reading			
	Effect	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Effect Size	Effect	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Effect Size
3	-1.091	1.120	0.331	-0.070	0.717	1.118	0.522	0.047
4	-1.039	1.136	0.361	-0.066	0.724	1.127	0.521	0.048
5	-1.061	1.138	0.352	-0.067	0.672	1.128	0.551	0.044
6	1.612	0.965	0.095	0.081	1.665	1.067	0.119	0.079
7	1.653	1.169	0.158	0.071	1.002	1.245	0.421	0.042

Table 12 presents the effect of 60 days or more of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programming on student reading and mathematics achievement. Similar to the 30 days or more treatment, no statistically significant impact was found at significance level 0.05 for any grade for either reading or mathematics. All impacts except those for third grade mathematics and seventh grade reading were positive. Again, the magnitude of effect size was small, ranging from 0.001 to 0.092.

**Table 12. Impact of 21st CCLC on Academic Achievement – 60+ Day Treatment**

Grade	Math				Reading			
	Effect	S.E.	<i>P</i>	Effect Size	Effect	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Effect Size
3	-0.521	1.314	0.692	-0.033	0.975	1.366	0.476	0.064
4	0.471	1.012	0.642	0.030	1.530	1.290	0.236	0.092
5	0.011	0.923	0.990	0.001	0.935	0.952	0.326	0.064
6	0.768	1.348	0.569	0.035	1.087	1.461	0.457	0.047
7	0.159	1.729	0.927	0.007	-0.547	1.859	0.769	-0.022

### Unexcused Absences and Disciplinary Incidents

Tables 13 and 14 show the impact of 21st CCLC programming on students' number of unexcused absences and number of disciplinary incidents.

A statistically significant, negative effect of 21st CCLC was found for the number of unexcused absences and the number of disciplinary incidents for both the 30 days or more and 60 days or more treatment groups. Table 13 indicates that the percentage of unexcused absences and percentage of disciplinary incidents are much lower for the treatment groups than the comparison groups.

**Table 13. Impact of 21st CCLC on Non-Academic Aspects Pooled Across Grades**

Aspects	Treatment	Effect	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Ratio of Percentage of Absences or Incidents (Treatment/Comparison) <sup>1</sup>
Unexcused Absences <sup>2</sup>	30+ days	-0.578	0.010	0.000	0.383
	60+ days	-0.664	0.017	0.000	0.301
Disciplinary Incidents	30+ days	-0.557	0.042	0.000	0.415
	60+ days	-0.583	0.079	0.000	0.277

Notes:

1. The percentage of absences or incidents is the number of unexcused absences or disciplinary incidents divided by the number of days as a school member.
2. Grade 10 was excluded from the analysis because the data did not converge.

Table 14 shows the effect of 30 days or more of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programming on unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents, broken out by grade level. A statistically significant, negative impact was found for the number of unexcused absences for all grades except tenth grade. Likewise, there was a significant, negative impact for the number of disciplinary incidents for grades 6-10 and grade 12. The impact for other grades was negative as well, but not statistically significant (i.e., the calculated possibility that the effects observed are merely due to chance is higher than the threshold for statistical significance).

**Table 14. Impact of 21st CCLC on Non-Academic Aspects – 30+ Day Treatment**

Grade	Unexcused Absences				Disciplinary Incidents			
	Effect	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Ratio of Percentage of Absences (Treatment/Comparison)	Effect	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Ratio of Percentage of Incidents (Treatment/Comparison)
3	-0.491	0.034	<.001	0.577	-0.226	0.347	0.516	0.730
4	-0.495	0.035	<.001	0.587	-0.302	0.343	0.379	0.658
5	-0.495	0.035	<.001	0.585	-0.374	0.349	0.285	0.661
6	-0.436	0.021	<.001	0.648	-0.842	0.083	<.001	0.426
7	-0.573	0.024	<.001	0.528	-0.433	0.087	<.001	0.560
8	-0.600	0.028	<.001	0.586	-0.340	0.095	<.001	0.600
9	-0.992	0.055	<.001	0.345	-0.812	0.141	<.001	0.546
10	Did not converge				-0.447	0.162	0.006	0.647
11	-0.829		<.001	0.368	-0.123	0.151	0.417	0.970
12	-0.774		<.001	0.389	-1.302	0.231	<.001	0.261

Table 14 presents the effect of 60 days or more of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programming on unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents, again by grade level. A statistically significant, negative impact was found for the number of unexcused absences for all grades for the 60 days or more treatment group, meaning students participating in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC 60 days or more had lower unexcused absence rates than did non-participants. Similarly, there was a significant, negative impact of 21st CCLC on the number of disciplinary incidents for grades 5-10, meaning students

in these grade levels who attended 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC for 60 days or more had lower disciplinary rates than did non-participants in these grade levels.

Surprisingly, there was a statistically significant, positive impact on the number of disciplinary incidents for grade 11, and a positive (but not statistically significant) impact for grade three (i.e., 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participants in the 60 days or more treatment groups in these grades had *higher* rates of disciplinary incidents than did non-participants, though this effect is only statistically significant—i.e., very unlikely to be due merely to chance—for grade 11).

**Table 15. Impact of 21st CCLC on Non-Academic Aspects – 60+ Day Treatment**

Grade	Unexcused Absences				Disciplinary Incidents			
	Effect	S.E.	<i>p</i>	Ratio of Percentage of Absences (Treatment/Comparison)	Effect	S.E.	<i>P</i>	Ratio of Percentage of Incidents (Treatment/Comparison)
3	-0.722	0.052	<.001	0.467	0.182	0.438	0.678	0.999 <sup>1</sup>
4	-0.668	0.056	<.001	0.498	-0.181	0.401	0.652	0.747
5	-0.544	0.036	<.001	0.526	-0.914	0.384	0.018	0.437
6	-0.558	0.036	<.001	0.502	-1.409	0.180	<.001	0.236
7	-0.660	0.039	<.001	0.443	-0.506	0.142	<.001	0.610
8	-0.820	0.048	<.001	0.502	-0.521	0.175	0.003	0.500
9	-1.374	0.078	<.001	0.349	-3.181	1.010	0.002	0.037
10	-0.284	0.062	<.001	0.697	-0.561	0.282	0.047	0.770
11	-0.743	0.082	<.001	0.366	0.483	0.244	0.049	2.294
12	-1.535	0.104	<.001	0.188	-5.357	4.449	0.229	0.000

Notes:

- 1) The effect size for third grade disciplinary incidents is positive, while the ratio of percentage of incidents is just under one (0.999). This slight discrepancy is due to a difference in calculation: The effect was calculated using a multilevel model (students nested in schools nested in districts) while the percentage of incidents was calculated without consideration of the hierarchy (i.e., directly from the student level).

## Limitation of Results

It could be theorized that students who have fewer unexcused school-day absences and disciplinary incidents are, by virtue of some unknown (untested and un-modeled) quality, also more likely to attend 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC more regularly and, as a consequence, be included in the treatment group. The propensity score stratification approach employed here seeks to minimize the impact of such selection bias on the estimates of program impact by controlling for similar student characteristics, but it is an untestable assumption that such models can fully account for selection bias. To the extent that other variables exist (not available for this analysis) that predict student participation in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and are also related to student academic achievement or other non-academic aspects (such as the number of unexcused absences or number of disciplinary incidents), these analyses may be limited. To that end, these analyses provide initial evidence about the impact of 21st CCLC on academic achievement and other non-academic aspects, but should not necessarily be considered equivalent to experimental studies which have strong internal validity.

## VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

As shown by the impact analysis, Rhode Island's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program is having a significant, positive impact on 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participants, notably on student school-day attendance and behavior as gauged by unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents. Less clear is the impact of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program on reading or mathematics state assessment results; most of the impact analyses revealed a not-statistically-significant relationship between 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participation and assessment changes (though there was a very small, significant effect of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participation on reading assessment score changes for students attending 30 days or more). In terms of the theory of change used to frame this report, however, this shows that the program is in fact yielding significant positive youth outcomes, a highly encouraging finding.

These positive effects are, however, associated with program participation across the state as a whole without extensive consideration of program quality. That is, while the evaluation presents some findings relating to quality via the survey results shown in Chapter V, the impact analysis presents the effects of participation in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC on desirable student outcomes without reference to particular programming models or practices; while the findings are indeed positive, it would be interesting to see more detail about how program quality directly relates (or does not relate) to student outcomes. Inclusion of certain quality measures was in fact originally included in AIR's 2011-12 impact assessment plan (i.e., using RIPQA data), but was ultimately excluded due to considerations of data quality and consistency. In future evaluation efforts, it may be beneficial to look deeper into quality assessment for both descriptive and impact assessment purposes. Research questions of particular interest would address:

- The extent to which centers are serving the targeted student population (students in high-poverty areas and students in need of academic improvement)
- The extent to which centers are providing academic enrichment and additional opportunities that support and contribute to the academic achievement and youth development for all student participants
- The extent to which centers are providing families of participating students with activities that promote literacy and related educational development
- The extent to which grantees are recruiting and engaging community partners to expand capacity for program offerings and for sustaining the program beyond the grant period
- The extent to which subgrantees are engaging in practices theorized to be linked to desirable student outcomes

Each of these areas—with particular emphasis on the last—would provide useful data on program quality, providing groundwork for further exploration of the linkages between program implementation and student outcomes.

In terms of next steps, it is recommended that an analysis of program quality in the form of activity observations be undertaken in order to create a measure of program quality at the point of service. Further, given the findings relating to unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents, along with the lack of significant findings concerning positive assessment score changes, it may be advisable to collect data that will show more intermediary student outcomes that may “fall

between” the outcomes of attendance and academic growth—for example, student beliefs or perceptions about school, learning, or their own abilities. These data could be used as an additional outcome measure, and would help to present a more complete picture of how 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC activities affect student outcomes.

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## Appendix. Core Survey Items

### Dimension 1: Collaboration and Partnership

To examine the level of partner involvement in program operations and activities, the evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*Do you and representatives from partner agencies involved in afterschool programming work together to do the following, and if you do, are these things done informally or formally?*

(Response options were *Do not work together*, *Work together informally*, and *Work together formally*.)

- Establish goals and objectives for the program
- Orient new staff to the program
- Provide professional development opportunities to program staff
- Review evaluation results and target areas for improvement
- Develop and evaluate the effectiveness of operational procedures (e.g., recruitment, scheduling, activity transitions, etc.)
- Plan for program sustainability and/or expansion

To assess the level of collaboration and communication among center staff members, the evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*How frequently do you engage in the following tasks with other staff working in the afterschool program?*

(Response options were *Never*, *About once a year*, *About once a month*, and *Nearly every week*.)

- Conduct program planning based on a review of program data
- Use evaluation data to set program improvement goals
- Discuss progress on meeting program improvement goals
- Observe other afterschool staff delivering programming in order to provide feedback on their practice.
- Conduct program planning in order to meet specific learning goals in coordinated ways across multiple activities
- Share ideas on how to make programming more engaging for participating students
- Share experiences and follow up about individual youth
- Engage in discussions with school-day teachers and/or administrators on how the program could better support student learning needs
- Participate in training and professional development on how to better serve youth
- Discuss current research-based instructional practices

To assess the extent of collaboration and communication between center staff and school-day staff, the evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*What strategies are used to link the program to the regular school day?*

(Response options were *Not a strategy*, *Minor strategy*, and *Major strategy*.)

- Align programming to school-day curriculum and standards
- Help with homework
- Hire regular school-day teachers to deliver programming
- Joint professional development between school-day teachers and afterschool staff
- Co-teaching of programs between school-day teachers and afterschool staff
- Use student assessment and/or grades to inform programming
- Regular face-to-face meetings with school-day teachers
- Regular face-to-face meetings with principals and other school-day administrative staff
- Regular electronic communications with school-day teachers
- Regular electronic communications with principals and other school-day administrative staff
- Regular monitoring of students' academic performance on district- or building-level assessments across the school year and use of this information to inform activity provision
- Ensure activities are informed by and meant to support schoolwide improvement targets related to student performance

## **Dimension 2: Staffing**

To determine program alignment with principles of quality staffing and professional development, site managers were asked to report whether each of the following possible challenges to staffing their programs was a *Minor challenge*, a *Major challenge*, or *Not a challenge*:

- Staff not adequately trained or experienced
- Staff turnovers
- Not enough staff
- Not enough time to orient new staff
- A lack of planning time for staff
- Not enough time to hold staff meetings
- Lack of staff dedication to the program
- Staff not designing and delivering activities that are consistent with center goals and activities
- Staff-to-student ratios are lower than what I would consider ideal

### **Dimension 3: RIPQA Process**

To gauge the level of impact of RIPQA participation, the evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*To what extent has participation in the RIPQA process changed the following at your site?*

(Response options were *Not at all*, *Minimum extent*, *Moderate extent*, and *Great extent*.)

- Staff hiring policies
- Professional development for staff
- Connecting with schools
- Involving the community in partnerships
- Use of data for continuous improvement
- Designing activities
- Embedding content
- Interacting with youth

### **Dimension 4: Intentional Program Services and Activities**

To gauge the level of youth ownership among centers, the evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about how your students build ownership of the program:*

(Response options were *Strongly disagree*, *Disagree*, *Agree*, and *Strongly agree*.)

- Youth set goals for what they want to accomplish in the program.
- Youth help make plans for what activities are offered at the program.
- Youth make choices about *what* content is covered in program offerings.
- Youth make choices about *how* content is covered in program offerings.
- Youth help create expectations and guidelines for the program.
- Youth provide feedback about the ways things should work in the program.
- Youth have a formal role in program governance.

To further understand the extent of intentional planning of program activities, site managers were asked a set of questions about staff access to and use of various types of student data/information for planning activities. The evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*Please indicate whether your program has access to the following and to what extent this information is used by program staff in planning for the activities provided:*

(Response options were *Do not have access to*, *Occasionally use*, and *Often use*.)

- Individualized Education Plans
- Students' state assessment scores
- Students' score on district- or building-level assessment
- Students' grades
- Teacher-provided student progress reports
- Information on student disciplinary incidents, referrals, or actions (i.e., detention, suspensions, etc.)

To gauge the intentionality of program design, the evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*How often do your staff leading activities that are especially meant to support student growth and development in reading and/or mathematics provide program activities that meet the following criteria?*

(Response options were *Rarely [once or twice a semester]*, *Sometimes [once or twice a month]*, *Frequently [once or twice a week]*, and *Always [daily for every session]*.)

- Based on written plans for the session, assignments, and projects
- Well planned in advance
- Tied to specific learning goals
- Build upon skills cultivated in a prior activity or session
- Explicitly promote skill building and mastery in relation to one or more state standard
- Explicitly address a specific developmental domain (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional, civic, physical, etc.)
- Structured to respond to youth feedback on what the content or format of the activity should be
- Informed by the expressed interests, preferences, and/or satisfaction of participating youth

## **Dimension 5: Intentional Family Involvement Activities**

To gauge the level of communication with families among centers, the evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*How often do you:*

(Response options were *Never*, *Sometimes [once or twice a semester]*, and *Frequently [monthly to weekly]*.)

- Send materials about program offerings home to parents/adult family members.
- Send information home about how the student is progressing in the program.
- Hold events or meetings to which parents/adult family members are invited.
- Have conversations with parents/adult family members over the phone.
- Meet with one or more parent/adult family member.
- Ask for input from parents/adult family members on what and how activities should be provided.
- Encourage parents/adult family members to participate in center-provided programming meant to support their acquisition of knowledge or skills.
- Encourage parents/adult family members to participate in center-provided programming with their children.

To gauge the level of family input and involvement among centers, the evaluation team developed a scale based on the following survey question and items:

*How often do you:*

(Response options were *Never*, *Sometimes [once or twice a semester]*, and *Frequently [monthly to weekly]*.)

- Ask for input from parents/adult family members on what and how activities should be provided.
- Send information home about how the student is progressing in the program.
- Encourage parents/adult family members to participate in center-provided programming meant to support their acquisition of knowledge or skills.
- Encourage parents/adult family members to participate in center-provided programming with their children.
- Invite parents/adult family members to provide program guidance or advocacy.

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