



2014

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21st Century Community Learning Centers

A Descriptive Evaluation for 2012-2013

This evaluation study provides descriptive information about the implementation and outcomes of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program in West Virginia, from September 2012 through May 2013.

Method of study. The report draws on information from online surveys of directors of 30 CCLC programs and from school teachers for 4,102 participating students.

Findings. Most participating students attended elementary grades. Depending on the program, the average days students attended ranged from about 2 to 93. Teachers perceived the greatest improvements in behaviors related to promptness and quality of homework turned in, overall academic performance, and participation in class. Sources of the most volunteers included K-12 service learning programs, parents and faculty members, local businesses, and postsecondary service learning. Program directors reported the greatest level of success with “other” (100%) and service learning K-12 (99.7%) volunteer groups. The two most frequent types of support received from partners were programming and resources. Partnerships engaged in funding, programming, resources, and training were reported to be the most effective. The professional development topics best attended by program directors were programming, STEM/STEAM, and program evaluation. As for parent and community involvement, more than half of program directors indicated they either had no family components in their programs or that they were well below target goals. Of those who reported success in this area, three main themes emerged: (a) the right types of activities, (b) ongoing, even daily contact with parents, and (c) a shared commitment to the program, which involved engaging parents in meaningful work toward program goals. Program directors reported offering more than 600 substance abuse prevention activities, involving more than 7,000 students and nearly 1,600 adults. Nearly three quarters of program directors found the continuous improvement process for after school moderately or very helpful. Likewise, the great majority found the WVDE monitoring visits moderately or very helpful.

Limitations of study. We cannot assume that the CCLC attendance was a key factor in the improvement of behaviors perceived by teachers. We did not hear from all program directors, so we lack information about at least two of the programs.

Recommendations. Topics for which program directors reported needing additional professional development include programming, staff development, and STEM/STEAM. Requested technical assistance topics include program evaluation, program sustainability, and project management. Parent involvement, too, seems to need attention. Additional recommendations include, (a) provide more opportunities for networking among program staff to encourage the sharing of best practices; (b) improve both the frequency and quality of communication with program staff to improve understanding of program requirements; (c) to the extent possible, provide technical assistance and professional development support to grantees to maximize their capacity to successfully implement their programs; (d) make reasonable efforts to reduce the reporting burden and other compliance-related tasks in order to reserve time for program implementation, while keeping grantees accountable and focused on improving program delivery; and (e) consider revising state evaluation instruments to be less cumbersome and redundant.

For more information, contact the Office of Research (phammer@access.k12.wv.us), or download the full report from the WVDE Office of Research website at <http://wvde.state.wv.us/research/reports2014.html>.

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