

EVALUATION REPORT

Illinois State Board of Education
Nita M. Lowey 21st Century
Community Learning Centers
Program:
FY25 Statewide Evaluation

June 2026

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Executive Summary

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) implements the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21st CCLC), a federally funded program authorized by Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The purpose of the program is to support community learning centers that:

1. Provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services, to help students (particularly students who attend low-performing schools) to meet challenging state academic standards.
2. Offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities; service learning; nutrition and health education; drug and violence prevention programs; counseling programs; arts, music, physical fitness, and wellness programs; technology education programs; financial literacy programs; environmental literacy programs; mathematics, science, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs; internship or apprenticeship programs; and other ties to an in-demand industry sector or occupation for high school students that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students; and
3. Offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

ISBE has seven statewide program objectives:

Objective 1: Schools will improve student achievement in core academic areas.

Objective 2: Schools will show an increase in student attendance and graduation from high school.

Objective 3: Schools will see an increase in the social-emotional skills of their students.

Objective 4: Programs will collaborate with the community.

Objective 5: Programs will coordinate with schools to determine the students and families with the greatest need.

Objective 6: Programs will provide ongoing professional development to program personnel.

Objective 7: Programs will collaborate with schools and community-based organizations to provide sustainable programs.

Education Development Center (EDC) is contracted by ISBE to conduct the statewide evaluation of the 21st CCLC program, and as statewide evaluators, provides an annual report summarizing grant activities and outcomes.

This statewide evaluation report addresses grant-funded programs and activities implemented through subgrants active during FY25 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025). A total of 118 subgrants awarded in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2025 were active during the school year. In addition, 43 subgrants awarded in 2015 concluded their programming in the summer of 2024 and provided data for the summer reporting period. While the majority of this report focuses on programming for the 2024-2025 school year, in some instances data about summer

programming are included. This report provides a summary and analysis of data collected by and made available to EDC for FY25.

Program implementation

Grants, sites, and participants

In FY25, 118 grants operated 369 sites across the state. These grants served a total of 35,456 students during the school year. Over half of the grants operated one to three sites, and one third of the grants operated four sites. Most grants served elementary and/or middle school grade students, and 55% of participants were in grades preK-5 and 24% in grades 6-8. Less than half of the grants served high school students; 21% of participants were in grades 9-12.

Table 1. FY25 grants, sites, and students served (AS, APR)

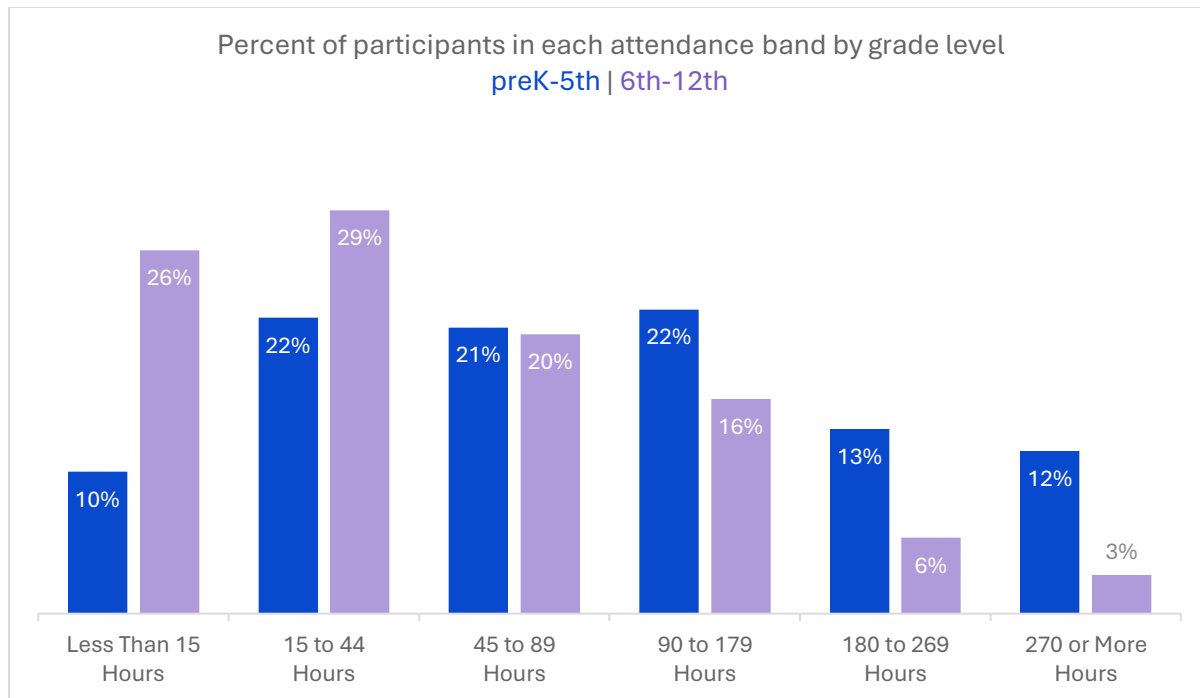
Grants, Sites, and Participants	FY25
Grants	118
Sites	369
Total participants (2024-2025 school year)	35,456

In FY25, grants from four cohorts were active. The number of grants in each cohort ranged in size from 22 to 35 grants. The proportion of students served by a cohort does not always align with the proportion of grants for a cohort; this is likely a reflection of where grant cohorts are in their implementation. For example, while cohorts 2021 and 2025 have almost the same number of grants, cohort 2021 was well-established and served a greater number of students than 2025, which was just starting.

Participant attendance and demographics

Program attendance is reported by ranges of hours, or attendance bands: less than 15 hours, 15-44 hours, 45-89 hours, 90-179 hours, 180-269 hours, and 270 or more hours. There is no designation for “regular” attendance or target number of hours specified by the US Department of Education.

Figure 1. Percent of participants in each attendance band by grade level (N=118) (APR)



The largest proportion of participants were Hispanic or Latino students (33%); Black or African American students made up 27% of participants. Participants included more female (41%) than male students (37%), and 21% had no data provided about them. With regard to participants from high-need populations, 9% of participants had limited English proficiency, 43% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, and 6% of participants were students with special needs.

Student programs and activities

The statewide evaluation has multiple sources of data about the programming and activities that 21st CCLC programs are implementing as part of their grant. Based on the annual evaluation survey, nearly all grantees (92% or more) provide a social-emotional learning (SEL) component, arts programming, STEM programming, tutoring or homework help, and a 21st century skills component. Mentoring, service-learning, and credit recovery programs were more frequently offered by grants serving high school students.

Family programming

Grantees reported that they had over 32,000 participants of family programming during the 2024-2025 school year. However, 14 grantees reported zero family programming participants in the data warehouse. The most common type of family programming reported by grantees was family activity nights (89%). These include everything from game nights to movie nights to cultural celebrations to STEM nights. Grantees also frequently cited showcases and performances as part of their family engagement strategy (80%). Many grantees provided

programming and activities specifically to support parents, including parent-teacher conference support (64%) and parent education activities (62%).

Participant outcomes

Academic achievement and engagement

A primary objective of the 21st CCLC program is to improve students' academic performance and achievement. The U.S. Department of Education has identified a number of indicators of academic improvement that are included in the APR system. These include:

- Academic growth based on state assessments for participants in grades 4-8
- Improvement in participants' GPA in grades 7-8 and 10-12
- Teacher survey report on improvements in homework completion for participants in grades 1-5

These data are collected via the IIRC data warehouse system and provided at the grantee-level to the evaluation.

State assessment data (Grades 4-8)

In total, 9.75% of participants demonstrated growth in mathematics and 17.8% of participants demonstrated growth in reading, according to available state assessment data. This is a notable increase from FY24, when 4.4% improved in mathematics and 12.2% in reading. There is little variation when looking at the percent of participants demonstrating growth by hours of program participation.

Improvements in GPA (Grades 7-8 and 10-12)

Improvement on GPA is reported only for students in grades 7-8 and 10-12 who had a GPA of less than 3.0 in the previous year. A very small number of students that fit into this category had data available. The number of students fitting these criteria with data reported was only 304. However, 55% of those students did improve their GPA. While it seems that a higher percentage of students who attended more program hours improved their GPA, the number of students is quite small, and data are not available to conduct tests for significance.

Teacher report on homework completion (Grades 1-5)

School-day teachers for 21st CCLC grantee program participants in grades 1 through 5 complete a survey that asks about improvement in the classroom. Overall, 71% of participants improved with respect to completing their homework. Variation by hours of attendance did not offer a consistent trend.

Student behavior

Improvements in student behavior—specifically improvements that are evident during the school day and not just during the 21st CCLC program—are another objective of the program.

As with academic performance, the federal 21st CCLC program has identified indicators of improvement that are included in the APR system. These include:

- Improvements in participants' school-day attendance (all grades)
- Decreases in participants' in-school suspensions (all grades)
- Teacher survey report on improvements in classroom behavior for participants in grades 1-5

School day attendance

Improvements in school day attendance were reported for participants whose attendance rate was less than 90% for the previous school year. Overall, 63% of those participants (who were indicated to have had less than a 90% attendance rate in the previous year) improved their school-day attendance. This indicator showed a trend of improvements in school day attendance with increased program attendance, and it makes sense that these two variables are connected; attendance in one is likely to correlate with attendance in the other.

In-school suspensions

Data are reported for students that had in-school suspensions in the previous school year across grade levels. Of those 198 students, 69% had a decrease in suspensions for the 2024-2025 school year. As with school-day attendance, as attendance increased, so did the percent of students whose suspensions decreased.

Teacher report on classroom behavior (Grades 1-5)

According to teacher surveys, 68% of participants in grades 1 through 5 improved with respect to classroom behavior. There is no clear trend with respect to percent of students improving behavior and hours of program attendance.

Organizational capacity

Staffing and professional development

Grantees provided data about the number and types of staff at their sites. Of the over 7,000 paid and volunteer staff working at 21st CCLC programs, almost one third (30%) were school-day teachers, with an additional 18% who were other (non-teacher) school staff. This indicates that grants both rely heavily on school staff and often have built-in connections between the afterschool program and the school day.

Seventy-five percent or more of grantees indicated that they were meeting or above expectations when it came to both site leaders and staff participating in professional development. The most commonly reported type of professional development that grantees reported for their staff was related to SEL (86%). The other most common types of professional development were 21st CCLC-specific training (including ISBE-led meetings and webinars), and training on trauma-informed practices.

Evaluation and continuous improvement

Grantees are required to collect and report data on program activities, and to engage in local program evaluation activities to support continuous improvement. Grantees reported making progress in their local evaluations, with 76% or more indicating that they were meeting or above expectations with respect to implementing evaluation activities and using data to improve their programs. Based on local evaluation reports, 86% of grantees had an external evaluator supporting their grant in FY25.

Program sustainability

When asked what proportion of their program components were sustainable beyond the grant, 26% of grantees indicated that at the time of the survey, all or most were sustainable; 62% indicated that some were sustainable, and 12% that none were sustainable.

Challenges and recommendations

On the annual survey, grantees were asked to indicate the extent to which a list of potential challenges posed a barrier when implementing their programs. Low parent involvement, which has been a consistent challenge to ISBE's 21st CCLC programs for the past 10+ years, continued to be the most frequently cited barrier for grantees across grade levels served. Beyond that, the most significant barriers were different for grantees based on the grade levels of their participants. Grantees serving middle and high school students reported that the various competing activities and students' responsibilities were a challenge for them—and they also reported inconsistent attendance and student recruitment as challenges more often than grantees serving elementary students. Many of the barriers cited by grantees are interrelated, and these challenges are reflected in the lower attendance rates of students at the high school level.

Conclusion

In FY25, ISBE's 21st CCLC program included 118 active grants from four funding cohorts. These grants resulted in 369 sites that served over 35,000 during the 2024-2025 school year. Data available to the statewide evaluation provide evidence that the program continued to provide valuable positive experiences and supports to students and their families across the state. Below, progress and findings related to each of the statewide program objectives are considered in light of the data provided in this report.

Objective #1: Participants in the program will demonstrate increased academic achievement. Grantees provided both general and targeted academic support, with 93% or more offering tutoring and home help, largely focused on mathematics and reading and/or English Language Arts. Nearly all grantees also provided STEM programming. The indicators associated with academic growth and improvement, as specified by the U.S. Department of Education, focus on students' in-school performance and offer conflicting and incomplete perspectives on growth. APR Teacher Survey data, which offers classroom teachers'

perspectives on how they see students performing in their classroom, indicated that 71% of students in grades 1 through 5 improved with respect to homework completion. State assessment data for students in grades 4 through 8 indicate that just under 10% of students demonstrated growth in mathematics, while close to 18% demonstrated growth in reading. Improvements in GPA for students in grades 7-8 or 10-12 are only reported for students that had less than a 3.0 the previous year, and the number of students that had data reported were very small (304 students). However, of those students, 55% improved their GPA. While the data available did not allow for comparative analysis, there did not appear to be a trend showing greater improvement with increased program attendance.

Objective #2: Participants will demonstrate an increased involvement in school activities and in participating in other subject areas such as technology, arts, music, theater, sports and other activities. Grantees offered a wide variety of programming and enrichment activities, with nearly all grantees offering arts and STEM programming. Grantees reported using technology in their programs as a tool to help students do homework and providing opportunities for students to learn and create with technology through computer programming and media-making activities. The great majority of grantees (84%+) provided fitness activities and group sports.

In addition to the demonstration of participant involvement in activities during the out-of-school time program, this objective aims to influence students' school day attendance rates. According to APR data, 63% of students with attendance below 90% in the previous year improved their attendance in FY25, with greater proportions of students improving with increased program attendance.

Objective #3: Participants in the program will demonstrate social benefits and exhibit positive behavioral changes. Nearly all grantees provided some form of SEL programming or other behavioral supports to participants during FY25. Grantees implemented a broad array of SEL activities or curricula designed to help students build skills. The majority of grantees (78%) employed trauma-informed practices, PBIS (63%), and/or restorative justice practices (62%) in their programs. According to teacher surveys, 68% of students in grades 1 through 5 improved their classroom behavior. According to APR data, 69% of students that had in-school suspensions during the previous year had fewer suspension in FY25. And, in reflecting on 10 years of programming, it is worth noting that the Cohort 2021 and 2023 grantees cited students' increased SEL as the number one grant achievement.

Objective #4: The 21st CCLC programs will provide opportunities for the community to be involved and will increase family involvement of the participating children. Grantees offered a variety of activities and programs for parents, guardians, and families of program participants. Grantees reported serving nearly 33,000 family participants during the 2024-2025 school year. Family activity nights and student showcases and performances were the most common approaches to engaging families. In addition, more than half of grantees offered parent education and/or support for parent-teacher conferences. While grantees continued to offer these programs, parent involvement and family engagement persisted in being the

number one challenge. However, increased student and family engagement was also reported as one of the top achievements of concluding grants.

Objective #5: Programs will provide opportunities, with priority given to all students who are lowest performing and in the greatest need of academic assistance. Grantees identified and enrolled students with the greatest need for academic assistance using a variety of recruitment and referral strategies. Programs rely heavily on school staff referrals in identifying students, and 81% or more of grantees used school attendance data, student grades and/or assessment data, and free or reduced lunch enrollment to identify students with the greatest needs. According to APR data, 10% of students in grades preK-5 were limited English proficiency.

Objective #6: Professional development will be offered by the programs and ISBE to meet the needs of the program, staff, and students. Grantees provided a variety of professional learning and training opportunities to their staff. The majority of content-specific training provided focused on SEL and trauma-informed practices. Nearly one third of program staff are made up of school day teachers.

Objective #7: Projects will create sustainability plans to continue the programs beyond the federal funding period. Program sustainability has long been a challenge for grantees, and this year was no different. Only 26% of grantees indicated that most or all their program components were sustainable in June of 2025. Grantees identified the need to address program sustainability as a top finding in their local evaluation recommendations for program improvement.

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1. Introduction

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) implements the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21st CCLC), a federally funded program authorized by Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The purpose of the program is to support community learning centers that:

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This report provides a summary and analysis of data collected by and made available to EDC for FY25. Subgrant awards and the associated organizations are referred to as “grantees” and are identified by their award year as Cohort 21, 22, 23, and 25 throughout this report.

These data include:

- **EDC’s Annual Evaluation Survey, administered to all active grantees in June 2025.** Data from the survey are indicated throughout this report as (AS). The survey was completed by all 118 active grantees (100% response rate).
- **Annual local evaluation reports submitted by each grantee for FY25.** Reports for Cohort 21 grantees were submitted in June and July 2025 as their grants ended June 30, 2025. Reports for all other cohorts were submitted in January 2026. Data from these reports are indicated as (LER).
- **Illinois Report Card data,** which are the data provided to the federal Annual Performance Report (APR) system. This system includes student attendance and outcome data, along with some program implementation data, for the 2024-25 school year. These data are indicated throughout this report as (APR).

This report is organized into the following sections.

- **Program implementation:** This section includes information about grantees’ implementation of programs for the year. It includes program participation data, as well as information about organizations and staffing, recruitment and retention, and program components.
- **Program activities:** This section provides data about program offerings and activities offered to students and families.
- **Participant outcomes:** This section provides data on student outcomes, including Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) indicators regarding academic achievement, school attendance, and student behavior.
- **Organizational capacity:** This section provides information about the organizational capacity of grantees, including staff development, progress toward meeting stated program goals, program evaluation, and sustainability.
- **Challenges and recommendations:** This section offers a summary of the challenges grantees report in achieving program goals along with their recommendations for program improvement.

2. Program implementation

Grants, sites, and participants

In FY25, 118 grants operated 369 sites across the state. These grants served a total of 35,456 students during the school year. Over half of the grants operated one to three sites, and one third of the grants operated four sites. Most grants served elementary and/or middle school grade students, and 55% of participants were in grades preK-5 and 24% in grades 6-8. Less than half of the grants served high school students; 21% of participants were in grades 9-12.

Table 1. FY25 grants, sites, and students served (AS, APR)

Participants	FY25
Grants	118
Sites	369
Students (2024-2025 school year)	35,456

Table 2. Number of sites per grant (N=118) (AS)

Number of sites	Number of grants	Percent of grants
1 site	19	16%
2 sites	18	15%
3 sites	26	22%
4 sites	40	34%
5 or more sites	15	13%
Total	118	100%

Table 3. Grade levels served (N=118) (AS)

Grade level	Number of grants	Percent of grants
Elementary School Students (Grades PreK-5)	99	84%
Middle School Students (Grades 6-8)	94	80%
High School Students (Grades 9-12)	55	47%

Table 4. 2024-2025 School year student participants by grade (N=118) (APR)

Grade level	Number	Percent of all students
PreK	233	1%
Kindergarten	1,671	5%
1 st grade	2,559	7%
2 nd grade	3,031	9%
3 rd grade	3,902	11%
4 th grade	4,063	11%
5 th grade	4,079	12%
6 th grade	3,132	9%
7 th grade	2,885	8%
8 th grade	2,368	7%
9 th grade	1,795	5%

Grade level	Number	Percent of all students
10 th grade	1,996	6%
11 th grade	1,998	6%
12 th grade	1,744	5%
Total	35,456	100%

In FY25, grants from four cohorts were active. The number of grants in each cohort ranged in size from 22 to 35 grants. The proportion of students served by a cohort does not always align with the proportion of grants for a cohort; this is likely a reflection of where grant cohorts are in their implementation. For example, while cohorts 2021 and 2025 have almost the same number of grants, cohort 2021 was well-established and served a greater number of students than 2025, which was just starting.

Table 5: Grants, sites, and student participants by cohort in FY25 (APR)

Cohort	# Grants	% of All Grants	# Students	% of All Students
2021	31	26%	10,815	31%
2022	35	30%	9,469	27%
2023	22	19%	7,574	21%
2025	30	25%	7,598	21%
Total	118	100%	35,456	100%

Summer 2024 programming

Grantees reported program attendance for the summer of 2024, but data provided do not indicate whether those students also attended programming during the school year. Therefore, the evaluation does not aggregate summer and school year program participation data, as it likely includes duplicate counts of students. Grantees reported a total of 15,406 summer participants.¹

Table 6. Summer 2024 program participants by grade level (APR)

Grade level	Number	% of all summer participants
Pre-K	110	1%
K	794	5%
1	1,326	9%
2	1,563	10%
3	1,710	11%
4	1,612	10%
5	1,446	9%
6	1,191	8%
7	1,246	8%

¹ This total includes participants from grantees from the 2015 cohort that ended June 30, 2024, and had extensions to provide summer programming.

Grade level	Number	% of all summer participants
8	957	6%
9	1,053	7%
10	826	5%
11	927	6%
12	645	4%
Reported total	15,406	100%

Grantees indicated whether their sites provided summer programming in the summer of 2024; 68% of the 369 sites had summer programs. Most grantees (71%) indicated they provided 4 to 6 weeks of summer programming.

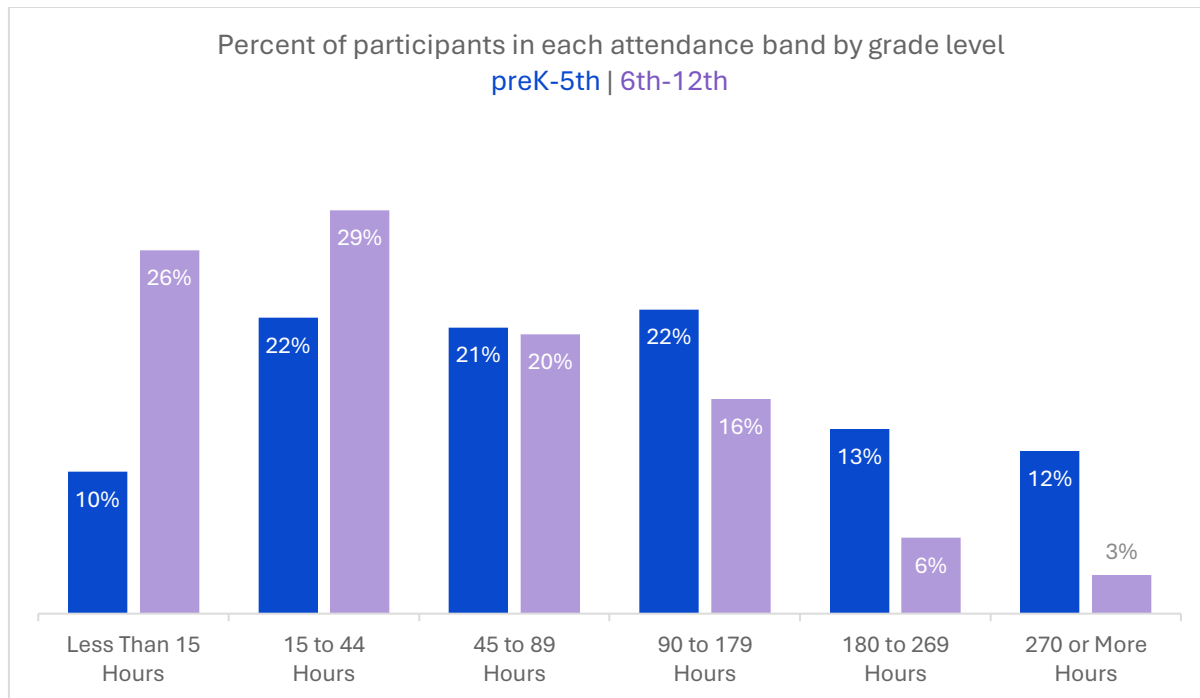
Table 7. Number of weeks of summer programming provided (N=252)(AS)

Number of weeks	Number	Percent
1-3 weeks	15	6%
4-6 weeks	180	71%
7-9 weeks	47	19%
10+ weeks	9	4%
Not reported	1	<1%

Participant attendance and demographics

Program attendance is reported by ranges of hours, or attendance bands: less than 15 hours, 15-44 hours, 45-89 hours, 90-179 hours, 180-269 hours, and 270 or more hours. There is no designation for “regular” attendance or target number of hours specified by the US Department of Education.

Figure 1. Percent of participants in each attendance band by grade level (N=118) (APR)



The largest proportion of participants were Hispanic or Latino students (33%); Black or African American students made up 27% of participants. Participants included more female (41%) than male students (37%), and 21% had no data provided about them.

Figure 2. Participants' race or ethnicity (N=35,454) (APR)

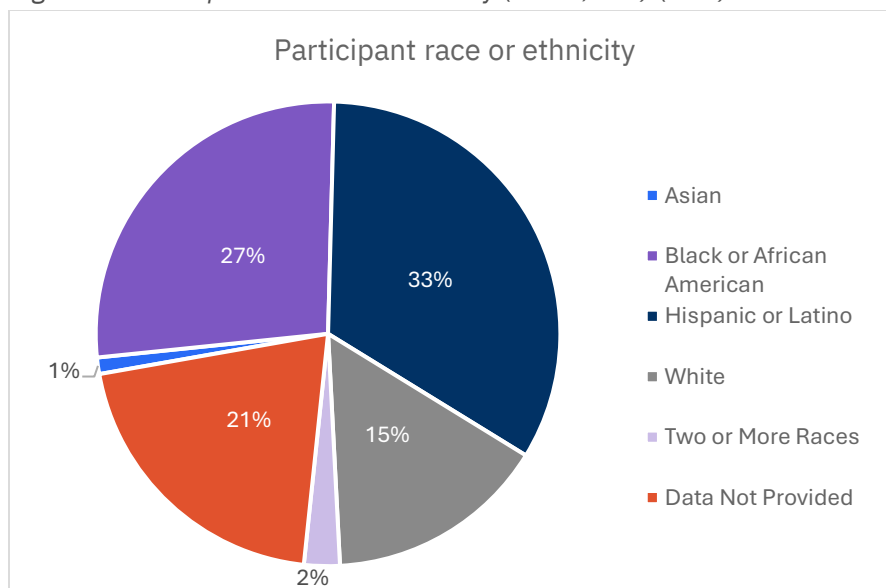


Table 8. Participants from high-need populations, by grade level (N=118²)(Apr)

Population	Grades preK - 5		Grades 6-12	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Limited English Proficiency	2,033	10%	1,463	9%
Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	5,565	28%	6,596	41%
Students with Special Needs	935	5%	1,215	8%

Program operations

Recruitment and retention

Grantees indicated how and by whom their program participants were referred to the program. The most common method used by almost all grantees across grade levels was school staff referrals. Parent/guardian and sibling/peer referrals were more frequently indicated for grants serving preK-5th and 6th-8th grade students, while grants serving 9th – 12th grades indicated more frequent student self-selection and community agency referrals.

Table 9: Program referral sources, by age group (N=118³) (AS)

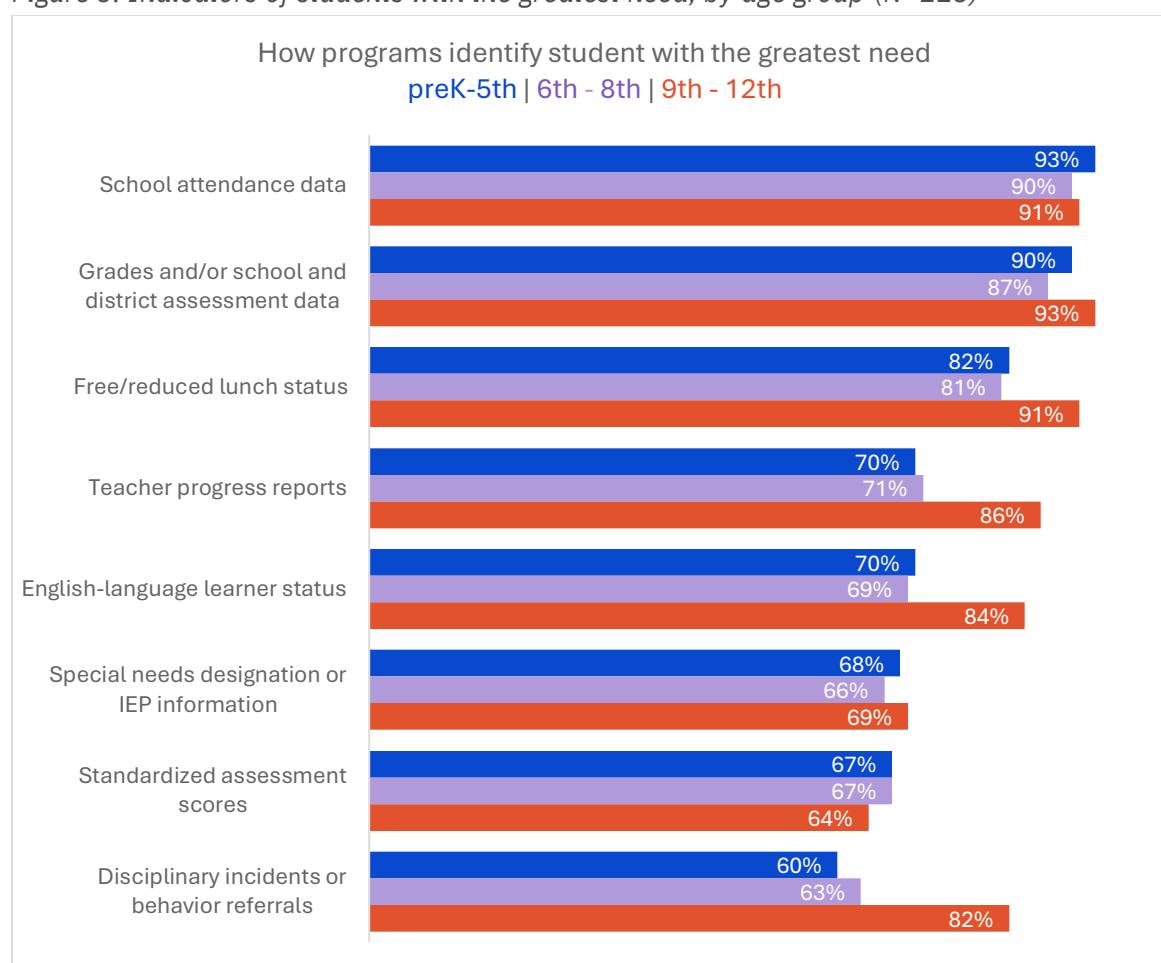
Referral type	preK-5 th	6 th -8 th	9 th -12 th
School Staff Referrals (e.g., teachers, administrators, counselors, etc.)	99%	98%	96%
Parent/Guardian Referrals	96%	94%	87%
Student Self-Selections (including returning students)	88%	89%	95%
Internal Program Referrals	84%	81%	82%
Sibling/Peer Referrals	62%	64%	56%
Community Agency Referrals	43%	45%	55%

Grantees rely on a variety of indicators to identify students with the greatest need. Nearly all grants use school attendance data, followed by grades or school assessment data. Grants serving high school students relied on different additional indicators when determining the greatest need. A higher percentage of grantees serving 9th-12th grade students indicated that they look to free or reduced lunch status, teacher progress reports, English-language learner status, and disciplinary incidents or behavioral referrals.

² The total number of grants in the APR system for this period was 118. However, 11 grants had values of zero across all population categories, which may indicate missing or unavailable data.

³ The Annual Survey includes skip logic, so grants respond to questions for the age groups they are serving. The N for all grants is 118. Throughout this report, the Ns for grants by grade levels are preK-5th=99, 6th-8th=94 and 9th-12th=55.

Figure 3. Indicators of students with the greatest need, by age group (N=118)



Most grantees indicated that they are prepared to support students with particular challenges or needs: 92% indicated capacity to support students experiencing homelessness; 85% students with asthma; and 74% support students with diabetes.

Table 10. Capacity to support students with specific challenges or needs (N=118) (AS)

Type of need	Number	Percent
Students with diabetes	87	74%
Students with asthma	100	85%
Students experiencing homelessness	109	92%
Students with other chronic health conditions	77	65%

Grantees employed a variety of strategies to retain program participants. Most grantees indicated that they provide an inviting and inclusive environment, and reach out to parents and/or school staff when a student demonstrates a pattern of absenteeism. When asked what their program provided that they thought played a role in student recruitment and retention, the top elements indicated by grantees were:

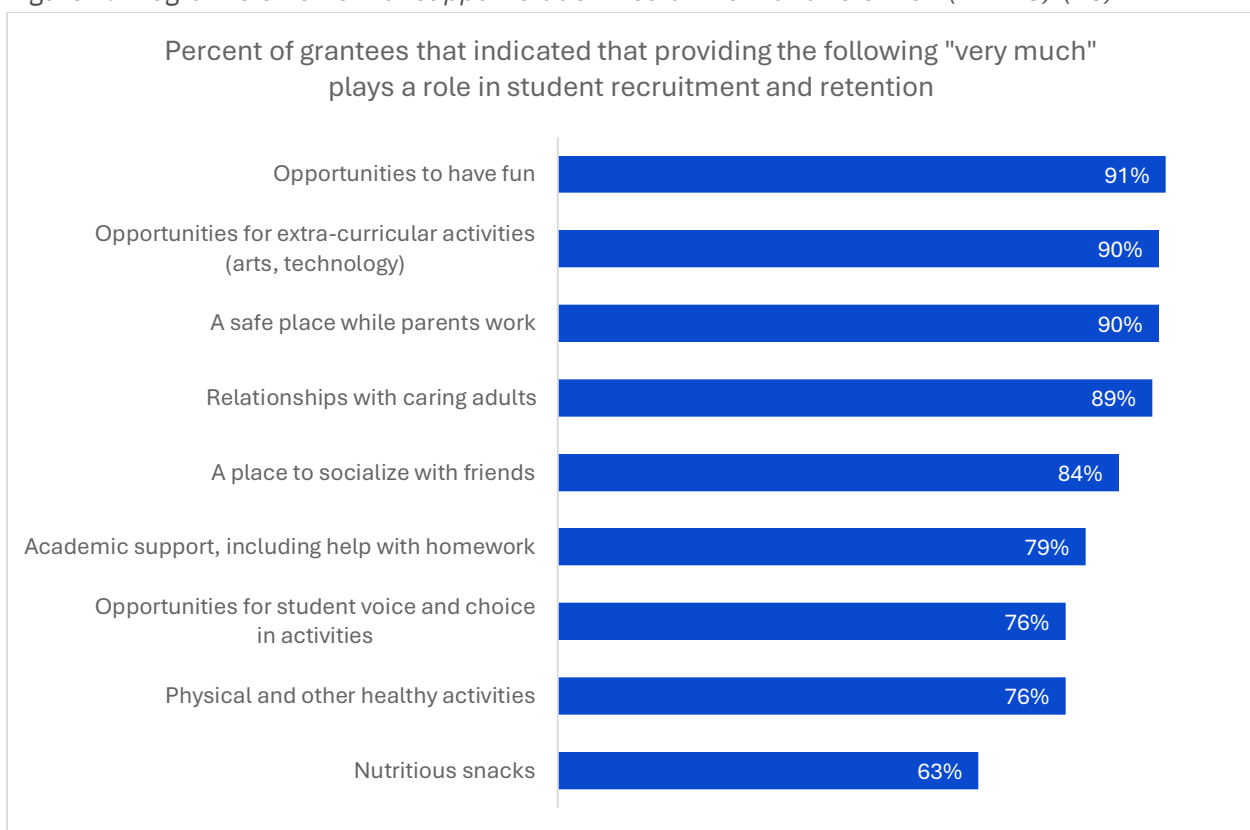
1. Opportunities to have fun.

2. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities (such as arts and technology programming).
3. A safe place for students while parents work.

Table 11: Program retention strategies, by age group (N=118) (AS)

Retention strategy	preK-5 th	6 th -8 th	9 th -12 th
Program provides an inviting and inclusive environment that encourages attendance	98%	93%	93%
Program reaches out to parents when students demonstrate patterns of absenteeism	95%	93%	87%
Program conducts outreach to school staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, counselors)	90%	88%	95%
Program reaches out to students when they demonstrate patterns of absenteeism	84%	84%	91%
Program operates an incentive system rewarding student attendance in the program	43%	39%	35%

Figure 4. Program elements that support student recruitment and retention (N=118) (AS)



Communication with caregivers

Across grade levels, grantees indicated that the most common methods of communicating with parents and guardians were via phone calls and text messages. Grantees serving grades preK-5 and 6-8 are more likely to have newsletters and use classroom communication apps.

Table 12: Methods of communicating with parents and guardians, by age group (N=118) (AS)

Communication method	preK-5 th	6 th -8 th	9 th -12 th
Phone calls	94%	94%	95%
Text messages	89%	86%	87%
Notes sent home	88%	88%	76%
In-person meetings	85%	85%	84%
Classroom communication apps (Remind, Class Dojo, Seesaw, etc.)	83%	84%	71%
Newsletters	80%	81%	67%
Social media	79%	82%	80%
Program website	52%	49%	51%
Virtual meetings	50%	47%	55%

Progress in implementation

On the annual survey, grantees are asked to report their progress in implementing a number of components and elements of their grant program. Most grantees (84% or more) indicated that their progress is meeting or above expectations with respect to implementing academic activities and enrichment activities, coordinating with school day programs, and serving the children with the greatest needs. Differences between grade levels served were minimal.

Table 13. Progress in implementing core program elements, by grade level: preK-5th(N=99), 6th-8th (N=94) and 9th – 12th (N=55) (AS)

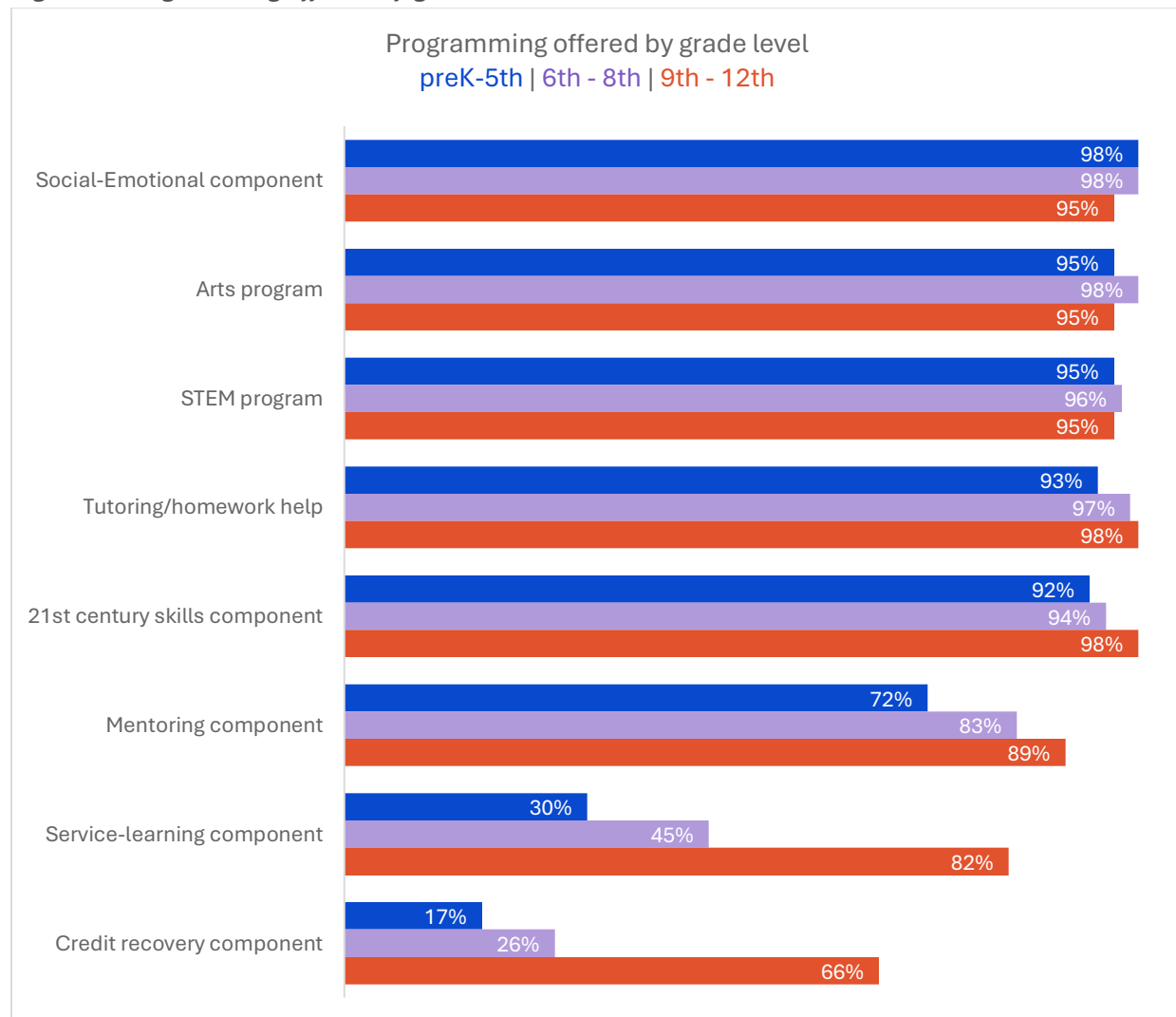
Program element	Grade level	Below expectations	Approaching expectations	Meeting expectations	Above expectations
Implemented academic activities	preK-5 th	0%	11%	61%	28%
	6 th – 8 th	2%	11%	65%	22%
	9 th – 12 th	7%	6%	64%	24%
Implemented other enrichment/ recreation activities	preK-5 th	0%	5%	33%	62%
	6 th – 8 th	2%	6%	33%	59%
	9 th – 12 th	6%	4%	31%	60%
Coordinated afterschool program with school day programs	preK-5 th	2%	10%	52%	36%
	6 th – 8 th	3%	13%	51%	33%
	9 th – 12 th	6%	9%	40%	46%
Served children with greatest needs	preK-5 th	0%	9%	49%	42%
	6 th – 8 th	2%	9%	52%	37%
	9 th – 12 th	6%	9%	55%	31%

3. Programming

Student programs and activities

The statewide evaluation has multiple sources of data about the programming and activities that 21st CCLC programs are implementing as part of their grant. Based on the annual evaluation survey, nearly all grantees (92% or more) provide a social-emotional learning (SEL) component, arts programming, STEM programming, tutoring or homework help, and a 21st century skills component. Mentoring, service-learning, and credit recovery programs were more frequently offered by grants serving high school students. Additional information about the specific activities offered within certain program areas is included below.

Figure 5. Programming offered by grade level (N=118) (AS)



Arts programming: Most grantees that indicated they providing arts programming included visual arts (96%), such as drawing, in their activities. Grantees also often included music and/or performance arts as a component of their programs.

Table 14. Types of programming offered by grantees providing arts programs (N=112)

Type of arts programming	Number	Percent
Visual Arts (drawing, photography, sculpture)	107	96%
Music	94	84%
Performance Arts (dance, theater)	93	83%
Decorative Arts (ceramics, jewelry)	85	76%
Applied Art (architecture, fashion design)	48	43%
Art History (visiting art museums)	33	30%

STEM Programming: Grantees that indicated they provided STEM programming offered a variety of activities and used different strategies to provide their programs. The most commonly reported activities were STEAM activities (88%), following by robotics and computer programming or coding activities (71% and 70% respectively). More than half of grantees reported that they use STEM kits provided by a vendor and had partnerships with STEM organizations or program providers, while 51% of grantees providing STEM programming indicated they have school-day science teachers to support activities. This range of strategies indicates that while some grants have internal capacity to provide STEM programming, many are looking to outside expertise to support this work.

Table 15. Types of activities included in STEM programming (N=112) (AS)

Types of STEM programming	Number	Percent
STEAM activities or programming	99	88%
Robotics clubs or activities (Lego and others)	80	71%
Computer programming or coding activities	78	70%
Family STEM nights or activities	76	68%
STEM kits provided by vendor	72	64%
Environmental science activities	69	62%
Activities aligned with school standards (NGSS)	64	57%
Partnerships with STEM organizations or program providers	63	56%
School-day science teachers to support activities	57	51%

Tutoring/homework help: Tutoring activities were focused almost entirely on mathematics and ELA/reading, with nearly all grantees that provide a tutoring program indicating these subjects as the target.

Table 16. Subjects most commonly targeted through tutoring and homework help (N=103)

Subject area	Number	Percent
Mathematics	102	99%
ELA/Reading	98	95%
Science	62	60%
Social studies/History	11	11%

21st century skills: Nearly all grantees indicated that they focused on the development of 21st century skills through their programming, with essentially all grantees (95% or more) targeting problem-solving, collaboration and teamwork, communication, and critical thinking. Information and media literacy was cited by just over half of grantees as a goal for their programming.

Table 17. 21st century skills specifically targeted through programming (N=101) (AS)

21 st century skill	Number	Percent
Problem-solving	100	99%
Collaboration and teamwork	96	95%
Communication	96	95%
Critical thinking	96	95%
Initiative and self-direction	92	91%
Information and media literacy	55	55%
Global awareness	49	49%
Civic literacy	46	46%

Social-Emotional Learning

Nearly all grantees indicated that they support SEL as part of their program. SEL can encompass a broad set of strategies in addition to specific curricula or activities designed to build skills. Most grantees (78%) incorporated trauma-informed practices, and over half of grantees employed a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) system and restorative justice practices. When it came to skill-building programming, grantees reported using a wide array of curricula. The two most cited curricula were Second Step (23%) and Character Counts (21%). Half of grantees indicated that they used a curriculum not included on the list provided on the survey (a list derived from survey responses in previous years), and when describing “Other,” no one curricula was commonly identified. While the diversity of SEL programming is not a negative finding, it does point to an opportunity for ISBE and grantees to identify and share the programs that they find effective with specific populations or for different goals.

Table 18. Behavior strategies and approaches (N=115) (AS)

Behavior strategy	Number	Percent
Trauma-Informed Practices	90	78%
Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)	72	63%
Restorative Justice Practices	71	62%

Table 19. Curricula or programs included as part of SEL programming (N=115) (AS)

SEL curricula or program	Number	Percent
Other	57	50%
Second Step Curriculum	26	23%
Character Counts	24	21%
Means and Measures of Human Achievement Labs (MHA) Tools	18	16%
Positive Action	15	13%
Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People Program	11	10%
Aggression Replacement Training	7	6%
Too Good for Violence / Too Good for Drugs	3	3%

“Other” curricula identified included: Character Strong, Responsive Classrooms, Boys and Girls Club specific curriculum, Be Good People, SMART Moves, Be A Star, SMART Girls, Passport 2 Manhood, Calm Classroom, CASEL Framework, Scholastic 7 Traits Framework for SEL, Triple Play: Social Recreation / Positive Club Climate, Everyday Speech, 7 Mindsets, SEE (Social, Emotional, and Ethical) Learning, Overcoming Obstacles, On My Own Two Feet, CircEsteem, Sanford-Harmony, ReThinkED, Ripple Effects, Reading with Relevance.

In addition to the SEL programming indicated on the annual survey, grantees reported through the APR system if they provided specific activities related to SEL: truant support (19%) and drug/violence prevention and counseling (41%).

Table 20. Grantees offering behavior support activities (N=118) (APR)

Behavior support	Number	Percent
Truant support	22	19%
Drug/violence prevention and counseling	48	41%

Programming for special populations

Grantees reported whether they provided activities for special, high-need populations through the APR system. One quarter of grantees indicated they provided activities for English language learned, and 17% indicated that they provided disability services.

Table 21. Grantees offering activities for special populations (N=118) (APR)

Special population	Number	Percent
Disability services	20	17%
English learner activities	30	25%

Service-learning

Grantees reported that over 6,000 students participated in service learning. Service-learning was most frequently offered by grantees serving high school students. Grantees reported that their service-learning activities frequently focused building connections with their communities and incorporating students' interests. Common activities included community clean-up, working with veterans or the elderly, and food or clothing donation drives. Some grantees incorporate service-learning into leadership development activities or connect with existing programs that focus on community service, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's established Keystone Club.

Service learning integrates community service with academic learning. Youth learn about different needs in the community (ranging from local humane society, to retirement communities, and nonprofit organizations) through activities that encourage them to give back through action. Reflection after the experience is a key component of the program, with youth debriefing and describing the experience. – Cohort 2025 grantee

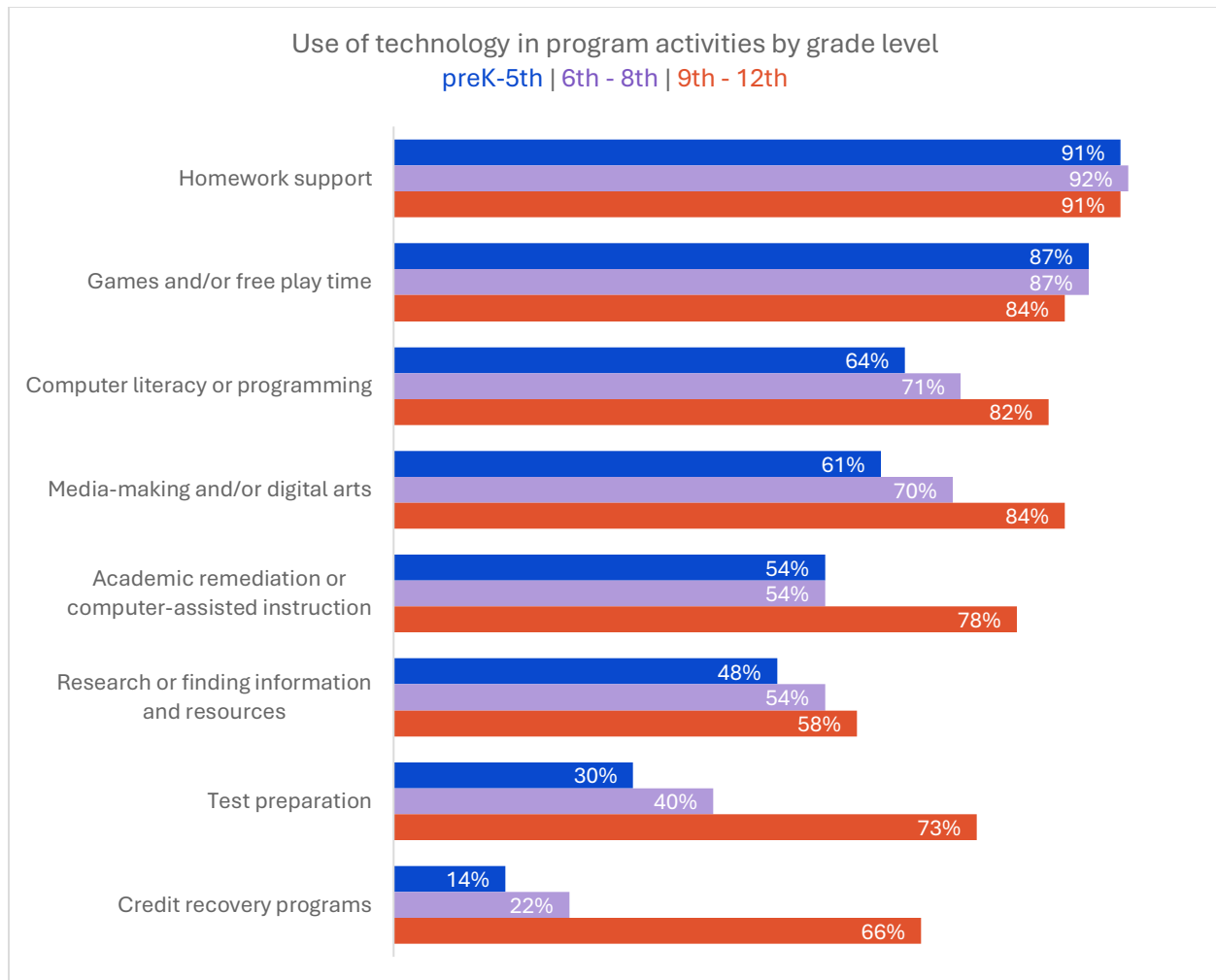
Table 22. Number of students participating in service learning by grade level (N=76) (AS)

Grade level	Number of service-learning participants
preK-5 th	2000
6 th – 8 th	1260
9 th – 12 th	3205

Technology

Grantees incorporated technology into programming and activities in numerous ways. Most grantees (91%-92%) used technology to support homework activities, and also for games and free time play (84% or more). Grantees serving high school students more frequently included technology as content or a tool to be learned, with over 80% of grantees providing computer programming and media-making or digital arts activities. Grantees serving high school students also reported using technology for academic remediation or computer-aided instruction, test preparation, and credit recovery in greater percentages than grantees serving elementary and middle school students.

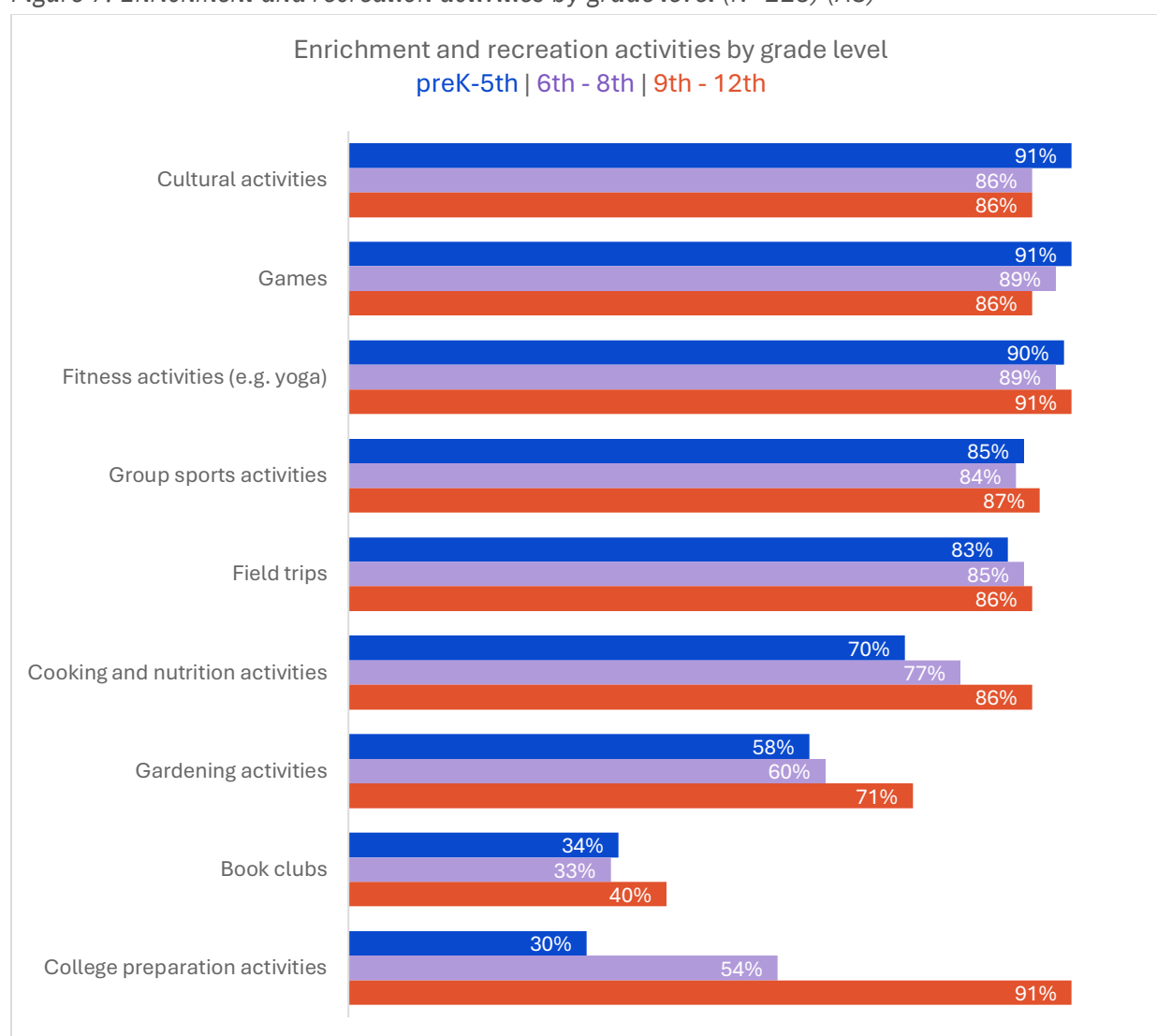
Figure 6. Use of technology in program activities by grade level (N=118) (AS)



Enrichment and recreation activities

In addition to programming focused on academic and SEL learning, grantees provided a variety of enrichment and recreational activities. Grantees indicated that providing opportunities to have fun and access extra-curricular activities are often what bring participants their programs. The most common activities included cultural activities, games, fitness, and group sports. Most grantees (83% or more) also indicated they offer field trips. Grantees serving high school students also provide college preparation activities (91%).

Figure 7. Enrichment and recreation activities by grade level (N=118) (AS)



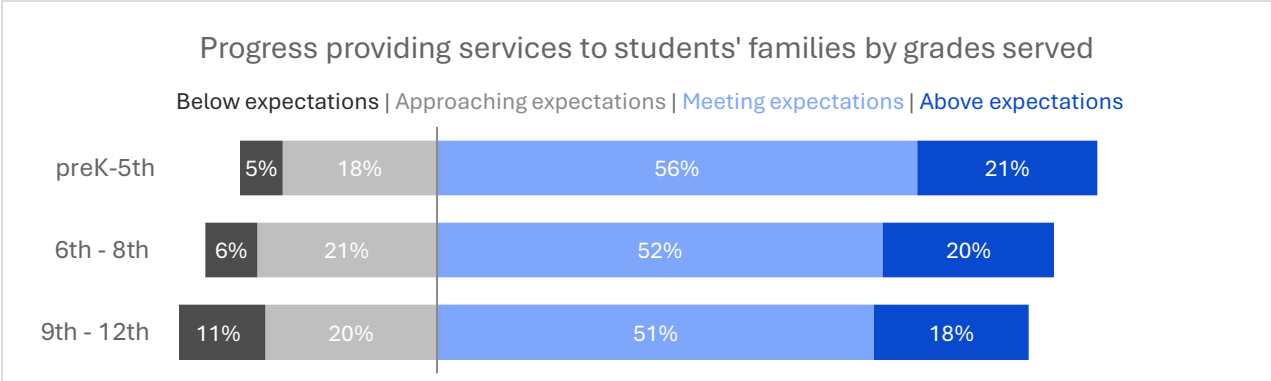
Pre-K programming

Twenty percent of grantees indicated that they provide pre-K programming. Grantees reported that their pre-K programming included play-based learning, activities designed to support fine and gross motor skills, arts and crafts, and beginning recognition of letters and numbers. As one grantee described: “Pre-K students explored gardening, LEGO robotics, and reading with authors—hands-on activities that sparked curiosity, built skills, and fostered a love of learning through play and discovery.” Chicago Public Schools offered pre-K programming for schools where this has been identified as a need for parents, and the collaborate with the office of early childhood education to ensure age-appropriate programming.

Family programming

In addition to supporting students’ academic and social development, a goal for the 21st CCLC program is to provide services and support to students’ families and community. Grantees serving older grades indicated less progress than those serving elementary students; 77% of grantees serving students in grades preK-5 were meeting or above expectations, while 69% of grantees serving students in grades 9-12 reported the same.

Figure 8. Grantees reported progress in providing services to students’ extended families, by grades served (N=118) (AS)

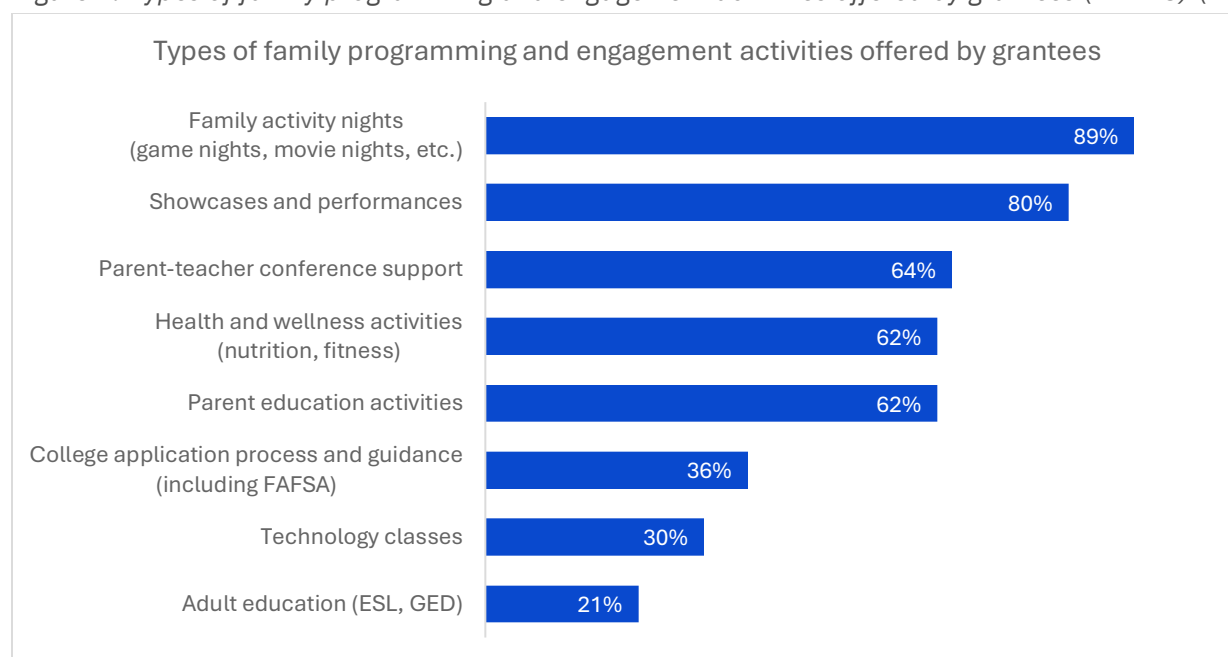


Grantees reported that they had over 32,000 participants of family programming during the 2024-2025 school year. However, 14 grantees reported zero family programming participants in the data warehouse. The most common type of family programming reported by grantees was family activity nights (89%). These include everything from game nights to movie nights to cultural celebrations to STEM nights. Grantees also frequently cited showcases and performances as part of their family engagement strategy (80%). Many grantees provided programming and activities specifically to support parents, including parent-teacher conference support (64%) and parent education activities (62%).

Table 23: Number of family participants (N=104) (APR)

Grade level	Fall/Spring 2024-2025
Grades PreK-5	20,530
Grades 6-12	12,417
Total	32,947

Figure 9. Types of family programming and engagement activities offered by grantees (N=118) (AS)



4. Participant outcomes

Academic achievement and engagement

A primary objective of the 21st CCLC program is to improve students' academic performance and achievement. The U.S. Department of Education has identified a number of indicators of academic improvement that are included in the APR system. These include:

- Academic growth based on state assessments for participants in grades 4-8
- Improvement in participants' GPA in grades 7-8 and 10-12
- Teacher survey report on improvements in homework completion for participants in grades 1-5

These data are collected via the IIRC data warehouse system and provided at the grantee-level to the evaluation. Participant totals for each indicator are reported by hours of participation. Summaries of these data are provided below. There are some factors to consider when interpreting these data:

- The evaluation does not have student level data (only totals by grant) and is not able to test for statistical significance between the different participation level groups (hours of participation).
- The number of students decreased with greater hours of participation.
- It is worth considering that students who attend more hours of programming are those with the greater need of support.
- Data are not available for all students. For example, the total number of students in grades 4-8 is 16,527, so data available were available for 73% of participants.

State assessment data (Grades 4-8)

In total, 9.75% of participants demonstrated growth in mathematics and 17.8% of participants demonstrated growth in reading, according to available state assessment data. This is a notable increase from FY24, when 4.4% improved in mathematics and 12.2% in reading. There is little variation when looking at the percent of participants demonstrating growth by hours of program participation.

Table 24. Academic growth in mathematics and reading of participants in grades 4-8 based on state assessment scores, by hours of program attendance (APR)

Hours of participation	Mathematics			Reading		
	# Participants w/ data	# Demonstrated growth	% Demonstrated growth	# Participants w/ data	# Demonstrated growth	% Demonstrated growth
Less than 15 hours	1,766	174	9.85%	1,773	304	17.15%
15-44 hours	2,933	266	9.07%	2,941	491	16.70%
45-89 hours	2,565	256	9.98%	2,564	455	17.75%
90-179 hours	2,430	241	9.92%	2,437	452	18.55%
180-269 hours	1,320	128	9.70%	1,316	251	19.07%
270 or more hours	1,079	114	10.57%	1,079	202	18.72%
All hours (Total)	12,093	1,179	9.75%	12,110	2,155	17.80%

Improvements in GPA (Grades 7-8 and 10-12)

Improvement on GPA is reported only for students in grades 7-8 and 10-12 who had a GPA of less than 3.0 in the previous year. A very small number of students that fit into this category had data available. The number of students fitting these criteria with data reported was only 304. However, 55% of those students did improve their GPA. While it seems that a higher percentage of students who attended more program hours improved their GPA, the number of students are quite small, and data are not available to conduct test for significance.

Table 25. Participants' improvement in GPA for grades 7-8 and 10-12, by hours of program attendance (APR)

Hours of attendance	Participants in grades 7-8, 10-12	# of students reported with GPA less than 3	# of students with improved GPA	% of students whose GPA improved
Less than 15 hours	3,023	81	43	53%
15-44 hours	3,305	85	45	53%
45-89 hours	2,153	81	46	57%
90-179 hours	1,667	44	25	57%

Hours of attendance	Participants in grades 7-8, 10-12	# of students reported with GPA less than 3	# of students with improved GPA	% of students whose GPA improved
180-269 hours	558	13	7	54%
270 or more hours	285	0	0	0
All hours (Total)	10,991	304	166	55%

Teacher report on homework completion (Grades 1-5)

School-day teachers for 21st CCLC grantee program participants in grades 1 through 5 complete a survey that asks about improvement in the classroom. Overall, 71% of participants improved with respect to completing their homework. Variation by hours of attendance did not offer a consistent trend.

Table 26. Teacher-reported improvements in homework completion by hours of program attendance, students grades 1-5 (APR)

Hours of attendance	# Teacher Reports	# Improved Homework Completion	% Improved Homework Completion
Less than 15 hours	721	584	81%
15-44 hours	1,501	1,088	72%
45-89 hours	1,590	1,168	73%
90-179 hours	2,163	1,584	73%
180-269 hours	1,519	927	61%
270 or more hours	1,087	774	71%
Total	8,581	6,125	71%

Student behavior

Improvements in student behavior—specifically improvements that are evident during the school day and not just during the 21st CCLC program—are another objective of the program. As with academic performance, the federal 21st CCLC program has identified indicators of improvement that are included in the APR system. These include:

- Improvements in participants' school-day attendance (all grades)
- Decreases in participants' in-school suspensions (all grades)
- Teacher survey report on improvements in classroom behavior for participants in grades 1-5

School day attendance

Improvements in school day attendance were reported for participants whose attendance rate was less than 90% for the previous school year. Overall, 63% of those participants (who were indicated to have had less than a 90% attendance rate in the previous year) improved their school-day attendance. This indicator showed a trend of improvements in school day

attendance with increased program attendance, and it makes sense that these two variables are connected; attendance in one is likely to correlate with attendance in the other. However, data are not available to provide insight into causation.

Table 27. Improvement in school day attendance by hours of program attendance, all grades (APR)

Hours of attendance	# students with <90% attendance last year	# of those students whose attendance improved	% of those students whose attendance improved
Less than 15 hours	1,562	863	55%
15-44 hours	1,826	1,098	60%
45-89 hours	1,234	805	65%
90-179 hours	1,110	739	67%
180-269 hours	498	372	75%
270 or more hours	300	245	82%
Total	6,530	4,122	63%

In-school suspensions

Data are reported for students that had in-school suspensions in the previous school year across grade levels. Of those 198 students, 69% had a decrease in suspensions for the 2024-2025 school year. As with school-day attendance, as attendance increased, so did the percent of students whose suspensions decreased.

Table 28. Decreases in in-school suspensions by hours of program attendance, all grades (APR)

Hours of attendance	Number of students with in-school suspensions last year	Number of those students with decreased suspensions	Percentage of students whose suspensions decreased
Less than 15 hours	35	23	66%
15-44 hours	50	34	68%
45-89 hours	49	31	63%
90-179 hours	35	25	71%
180-269 hours	22	18	82%
270 or more hours	7	6	86%
Total	198	137	69%

Teacher report on classroom behavior (Grades 1-5)

According to teacher surveys, 68% of participants in grades 1 through 5 improved with respect to classroom behavior. There is no clear trend with respect to percent of students improving behavior and hours of program attendance.

Table 29. Teacher-reported improvements in classroom behavior by hours of program attendance, students grades 1-5 (APR)

Hours of attendance	# Teacher Reports	# Improved Classroom Behavior	% Improved Classroom Behavior
Less than 15 hours	721	546	76%
15-44 hours	1,501	1,048	70%
45-89 hours	1,590	1,044	66%
90-179 hours	2,163	1,497	69%
180-269 hours	1,519	897	59%
270 or more hours	1,087	762	70%
Total	8,581	5,794	68%

5. Organizational capacity

Staffing and professional development

Grantees provided data about the number and types of staff at their sites. Of the over 7,000 paid and volunteer staff working at 21st CCLC programs, almost one third (30%) were school-day teachers, with an additional 18% who were other (non-teacher) school staff. This indicates that grants both rely heavily on school staff and often have built-in connections between the afterschool program and the school day.

Table 30. Number and proportion of staff by type across all grantees (N=118) (APR)

Staff Type	Paid Staff	Volunteer Staff	Total Staff	Percent of All Staff
School-Day Teachers	2163	76	2239	30%
Other School Staff	1295	63	1358	18%
Administrators	1123	55	1178	16%
Community Members	297	438	735	10%
Subcontracted Staff	679	73	752	10%
Other	425	14	439	6%
College Students	241	113	354	5%
High School Students	157	70	227	3%
Parents	32	34	66	1%
Total	6412	936	7348	100%

One of the objectives of the 21st CCLC program is to provide ongoing professional development to program personnel. Seventy-five percent or more of grantees indicated that they were meeting or above expectations when it came to both site leaders and staff participating in professional development. The most commonly reported type of professional development

that grantees reported for their staff was related to SEL (86%). The other most common types of professional development were 21st CCLC-specific training (including ISBE-led meetings and webinars), and training on trauma-informed practices.

Table 31. Progress in staff development, by grade level (N=118) (AS)

Program element	Grade level	Below expectations	Approaching expectations	Meeting expectations	Above expectations
Leaders participated in professional development	preK-5 th	3%	14%	40%	42%
	6 th – 8 th	6%	18%	36%	39%
	9 th – 12 th	6%	11%	35%	49%
Staff engaged in professional development	preK-5 th	2%	13%	42%	42%
	6 th – 8 th	5%	17%	37%	41%
	9 th – 12 th	7%	15%	29%	49%

Figure 10. Staff development or professional development offered by grantees (N=118) (AS)



Evaluation and continuous improvement

Grantees are required to collect and report data on program activities, and to engage in local program evaluation activities to support continuous improvement. Grantees reported making progress in their local evaluations, with 76% or more indicating that they were meeting or above expectations with respect to implementing evaluation activities and using data to improve their programs. Based on local evaluation report, 86% of grantees had an external evaluator supporting their grant in FY25.

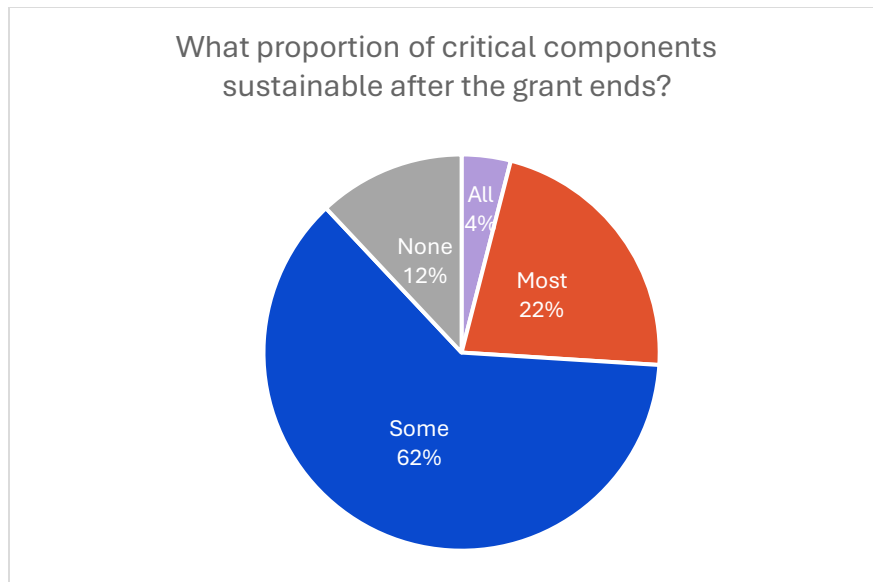
Table 32. Progress in program evaluation, by grade level (N=118) (AS)

Program element	Grade level	Below expectations	Approaching expectations	Meeting expectations	Above expectations
Implemented evaluation activities	preK-5 th	3%	13%	61%	22%
	6 th – 8 th	5%	17%	57%	20%
	9 th – 12 th	6%	15%	55%	26%
Used data to improve the program	preK-5 th	0%	17%	43%	39%
	6 th – 8 th	4%	16%	44%	36%
	9 th – 12 th	7%	17%	35%	41%

Program sustainability

Currently, ISBE awards organizations 21st CCLC grants for a 3-year period. During that time, grantees are expected to develop and implement a sustainability plan that will enable some or all of their programming to continue beyond the duration of the grant. When asked what proportion of their program components were sustainable beyond the grant, 26% of grantees indicated that at the time of the survey, all or most were sustainable; 62% indicated that some were sustainable, and 12% that none were sustainable.

Figure 11. Grantee indication of program sustainability after the grant ends (N=118) (AS)



Reporting on their progress in specific activities related to sustainability, just over half of grantees indicated that they were meeting or above expectations in identifying ways to continue critical components of the program after the grant period. Data on progress in this area indicate differences based on the grade levels that the grantee serves. Grantees serving high school students report less progress with respect to sustainability. It may be worth further exploring the specific challenges faced by these grantees.

Table 33. Progress in elements that contribute to sustainability, by grade level (N=118) (AS)

Program element	Grade level	Below expectations	Approaching expectations	Meeting expectations	Above expectations
Identified ways to continue critical components of the program after the grant period	preK-5 th	10%	36%	42%	11%
	6 th – 8 th	15%	26%	47%	13%
	9 th – 12 th	24%	27%	44%	6%
Coordinated the program with other funding sources to supplement the school's programs	preK-5 th	7%	16%	43%	34%
	6 th – 8 th	10%	19%	38%	33%
	9 th – 12 th	15%	11%	27%	47%
Involved other agencies and nonprofit organizations	preK-5 th	5%	14%	53%	28%
	6 th – 8 th	6%	17%	50%	27%
	9 th – 12 th	7%	18%	56%	18%

6. Challenges and recommendations

On the annual survey, grantees were asked to indicate the extent to which a list of potential challenges posed a barrier when implementing their programs. Low parent involvement, which has been a consistent challenge to ISBE's 21st CCLC programs for the past 10+ years, continued to be the most frequently cited barrier for grantees across grade levels served. Beyond that, the most significant barriers were different for grantees based on the grade levels of their participants. Grantees serving middle and high school students reported that the various competing activities and students' responsibilities were a challenge for them—and they also reported inconsistent attendance and student recruitment as challenges more often than grantees serving elementary students. Many of the barriers cited by grantees are interrelated, and these challenges are reflected in the lower attendance rates of students at the high school level.

Table 34. Percent of grantees indicating the following were barriers or significant barriers this year (N=118) (AS)

Barrier	preK-5 th	6 th -8 th	9 th -12 th
Low parent involvement in activities	32%	41%	75%
Difficulty in recruiting and retaining program staff	21%	23%	15%
Difficulties in transporting students (cost, logistics)	16%	15%	22%
Competing activities at school	12%	35%	42%
Competing responsibilities at home (e.g. babysitting)	8%	27%	45%
Competing responsibilities due to student needing to work	1%	6%	47%
Inconsistent attendance of students (low student retention)	5%	26%	40%
Difficulty in recruiting students	10%	17%	35%
Too little time with students	15%	20%	31%
Lack of coordination with school-day teachers	9%	11%	9%
Challenges obtaining school-related data	9%	16%	11%
Challenges in communicating with school	8%	10%	11%
Difficulty in maintaining/identifying partners	8%	10%	15%
Student access to technology/internet at home	7%	6%	11%
Difficulty in maintaining a safe environment for students	4%	5%	16%
Negative peer pressure and/or gangs influencing students	3%	10%	16%
Difficulty in engaging students	0%	11%	18%

Recommendations for program improvement

Grantees in the 2022 and 2025 cohorts concluded their evaluation reports with recommendations for program improvement in the upcoming year. In general, these recommendations are consistent with previous years. The most common recommendation was to address issues of student recruitment and retention. Examples of specific recommendations as stated in reports include:

- Improve attendance and retention: Address seasonal drops with flexible participation options, targeted family outreach, and clear re-entry pathways.
- Continue current recruitment strategies and make attempts to recruit students that have not participated in 21stCCLC programming at the end of each grading period.
- Maintain recruitment efforts focused on students with the greatest academic and behavioral needs. Collaborate with school personnel to identify new students who would benefit from academic and social-emotional support, ensuring the program continues to prioritize those most in need.

Other common recommendations included focusing on program sustainability, improving data collection and use, increasing parent involvement and family engagement, and providing additional staff training and development. Specific recommendation with respect to staff training and professional development included:

- Provide staff with professional development focused on SEL facilitation and behavioral management strategies.
- Align professional development: Focus training on teacher-identified priorities, including academic enrichment, SEL, engagement, and STEM.
- Increase the number of possible professional development opportunities for our staff that range from all levels of site staff.

Table 35. Recommendations for program improvement for cohort 2022 and 2025 grantees (N=64)

Recommendations	Number	Percent
Address student recruitment & retention issues	41	64%
Continue efforts to ensure program sustainability	36	56%
Improve data collection & use	36	56%
Increase parent/family involvement	35	55%
Provide additional staff professional development	32	50%
Consider changes to program offerings and activities	28	44%
Improve or make changes SEL programming or activities	20	31%
Continue developing partnerships and community outreach	17	27%
Improve connection to school day/teachers	15	23%
Make efforts to increase student engagement	14	22%
Address issues of staff hiring or program staffing strategy	13	20%

Achievements and lessons learned at end of grant

The final local evaluation reports submitted by grants in cohorts 2021 and 2023 included reflections on the overall achievements from their grant. The three most commonly cited achievements were:

1. Students' development of SEL skills: Grantees described students building social skills and improving behavior both in their programs and in classrooms. Grantees also reported that they observed reduced social isolation for their students.
2. Increased student and family engagement: Grantees reported that they had increases in participation in family programming and had feedback from families that they had a feeling of belonging.
3. Strong community partnerships: Grantees reported that over the course of their grant, they strengthened community partnerships, contributing to strong school-family-community connections.

Staff interviews and either student, parent or teacher surveys noted improved classroom behavior, better peer relationships, and greater engagement by a significant number of students each year. Surveys revealed high frequencies of satisfaction among students and parents, including students' and parents' enjoyment with being a part of the program and finding value in it. Meaningful relationships were formed. – Cohort 2021 grantee

Table 36. Grant achievement reported by cohorts 2021 and 2024 (N=48)(LER)

Grant Achievement	Number	Percent
Students developed SEL skills and improved behavior	22	46%
Increased student and family engagement	22	46%
Strong community partnerships	21	44%
Student made academic improvements	14	29%
Established safe, welcoming environment for the students and families	12	25%
Programming reflected student interests/needs	11	23%
Strength in enrolling and retaining students	11	23%
Students made connections with staff or peers	10	21%
Provided high quality staff professional development	9	19%
Progress in sustainability of program	9	19%
Provided activities that student would not otherwise have access to	7	15%
Staff was highly skilled/staff was strength of program	7	15%
Flexibility in programming	6	13%

Cohort 2021 and 2023 grantees also shared lessons learned in the final local evaluation report. Grantees noted many aspects of implementation and management that they deemed “important” for success. The most common lessons learned included:

1. Student/parent voice in programming is important for engagement: Grantees learned that incorporating participant voice and choice translates into increased attendance and engagement and contributes to the overall strength of the program.
2. Continuous evaluation of the program and data collection is important: Grantees shared the necessity of regular communication with evaluators, continuous monitoring of data collection, and engaging with and reflecting on data to learn what is working.
3. Importance of qualified and well-trained staff: Many grantees noted that their staff were the heart of their program, and the quality of their staff was integral to the success of their program.

Lessons learned: 1) There must be regular communication and coordination with the school site and the administrative team. 2) The Evaluation team must have regular contact and communication with the admin team and have regular progress check-ins on data. 3) School site staff must be willing to try things and fail and must engage programming with an entrepreneurial spirit. 4) Student voice, student choice, and student leadership is crucial to have youth buy-in and to have greater rates of engagement and ownership. 5) Staff selected must be passionate about working with young people. –Cohort 2021 grantee

Table 37. Lessons learned reported by cohorts 2021 and 2023 (N=48)(LER)

Lessons Learned	Number	Percent
Student/parent voice in programming is important for engagement	27	56%
Continuous evaluation of the program and data collection is important	23	48%
Importance of qualified and well-training staff	22	46%
Importance of relationships with school day staff	18	38%
Attending to sustainability, including the cultivation of partnerships, is important	15	31%
Be flexible in programming	14	29%
Communication with staff/between staff is important	13	27%
Involving parents/family is important	12	25%
Importance of relationships with evaluation team and/or district leaders	11	23%
Being consistent in overall programming is important	6	13%

7. Conclusion

In FY25, ISBE's 21st CCLC program included 188 active grants from four funding cohorts. These grants resulted in 369 sites that served over 35,000 during the 2024-2025 school year. Data available to the statewide evaluation provide evidence that the program continued to provide valuable positive experiences and supports to students and their families across the state. Below, progress and findings related to each of the statewide program objectives are considered in light of the data provided in this report.

Objective #1: Participants in the program will demonstrate increased academic achievement. Grantees provided both general and targeted academic support, with 93% or more offering tutoring and home help, largely focused on mathematics and reading and/or English Language Arts. Nearly all grantees also provided STEM programming. The indicators associated with academic growth and improvement, as specified by the U.S. Department of Education, focus on students' in-school performance and offer conflicting and incomplete perspectives on growth. APR Teacher Survey data, which offers classroom teachers' perspectives on how they see students performing in their classroom, indicated that 71% of students in grades 1 through 5 improved with respect to homework completion. State assessment data for students in grades 4 through 8 indicate that just under 10% of students demonstrated growth in mathematics, while close to 18% demonstrated growth in reading. Improvements in GPA for students in grades 7-8 or 10-12 are only reported for students that had less than a 3.0 the previous year, and the number of students that had data reported were very small (304 students). However, of those students, 55% improved their GPA. While the data available did not allow for comparative analysis, there did not appear to be a trend showing greater improvement with increased program attendance.

Objective #2: Participants will demonstrate an increased involvement in school activities and in participating in other subject areas such as technology, arts, music, theater, sports and other activities. Grantees offered a wide variety of programming and enrichment activities, with nearly all grantees offering arts and STEM programming. Grantees reported using technology in their programs as a tool to help students do homework and providing opportunities for students to learn and create with technology through computer programming and media-making activities. The great majority of grantees (84%+) provided fitness activities and group sports.

In addition to the demonstration of participant involvement in activities during the out-of-school time program, this objective aims to influence students' school day attendance rates. According to APR data, 63% of students with attendance below 90% in the previous year improved their attendance in FY25, with greater proportions of students improving with increased program attendance.

Objective #3: Participants in the program will demonstrate social benefits and exhibit positive behavioral changes. Nearly all grantees provided some form of SEL programming or other behavioral supports to participants during FY25. Grantees implemented a broad array of

SEL activities or curricula designed to help students build skills. The majority of grantees (78%) employed trauma-informed practices, PBIS (63%), and/or restorative justice practices (62%) in their programs. According to teacher surveys, 68% of students in grades 1 through 5 improved their classroom behavior. According to APR data, 69% of students that had in-school suspensions during the previous year had fewer suspension in FY25. And, in reflecting on 10 years of programming, it is worth noting that the Cohort 2021 and 2023 grantees cited students' increased SEL as the number one grant achievement.

Objective #4: The 21st CCLC programs will provide opportunities for the community to be involved and will increase family involvement of the participating children. Grantees offered a variety of activities and programs for parents, guardians, and families of program participants. Grantees reported serving nearly 33,000 family participants during the 2024-2025 school year. Family activity nights and student showcases and performances were the most common approaches to engaging families. In addition, more than half of grantees offered parent education and/or support for parent-teacher conferences. While grantees continued to offer these programs, parent involvement and family engagement persisted in being the number one challenge. However, increased student and family engagement was also reported as one of the top achievements of concluding grants.

Objective #5: Programs will provide opportunities, with priority given to all students who are lowest performing and in the greatest need of academic assistance. Grantees identified and enrolled students with the greatest need for academic assistance using a variety of recruitment and referral strategies. Programs rely heavily on school staff referrals in identifying students, and 81% or more of grantees used school attendance data, student grades and/or assessment data, and free or reduced lunch enrollment to identify students with the greatest needs. According to APR data, 10% of students in grades preK-5 were limited English proficiency.

Objective #6: Professional development will be offered by the programs and ISBE to meet the needs of the program, staff, and students. Grantees provided a variety of professional learning and training opportunities to their staff. The majority of content-specific training provided focused on SEL and trauma-informed practices. Nearly one third of program staff are made up of school day teachers.

Objective #7: Projects will create sustainability plans to continue the programs beyond the federal funding period. Program sustainability has long been a challenge for grantees, and this year was no different. Only 26% of grantees indicated that most or all their program components were sustainable in June of 2025. Grantees identified the need to address program sustainability as a top finding in their local evaluation recommendations for program improvement.