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**MEMPHIS**<sup>™</sup>

The Center for Research in  
Educational Policy (CREP)

# Evaluation of Virginia's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning

Centers

2020-2021

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## **Executive Summary**

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, funded through the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), provides academic enrichment opportunities outside of the regular school day to help students meet state and local performance standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math. This report summarizes the 2020-2021 evaluation procedures and results for Virginia 21st CCLC programs.

### **The Evaluation Design**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine whether the 21st CCLC programs were addressing the statewide program objectives: (1) improving student academic achievement in reading; (2) improving student academic achievement in mathematics; and (3) providing opportunities for family engagement. Student achievement and school-day attendance data, which are typically provided every year, were unavailable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, those analyses were not conducted or used to answer the above evaluation questions this year.

Data were analyzed from the following sources: (a) the online Annual Local Evaluation Survey (ALERT), (b) the Virginia Annual Performance Report (VAPR) Survey, and (c) the Teacher Survey.

### **COVID-19**

In early 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. In response, the government ordered school building closures across the country, including in Virginia, ending all in-person learning for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. The pandemic continued to create mass disruption for the 2020-2021 school year as individual states and school districts navigated in-person, virtual, and remote learning options, as well as impromptu quarantines. Those effects and the impact of COVID-19 on the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC evaluation are noted throughout the report.

### **Conclusions**

The conclusions of the analyses are summarized below by evaluation question.

***What is the nature of the Virginia 21st CCLC grant program and level of participation by students?***

Grantees reported the effects the pandemic had on the nature of the program and the level of student participation. VAPR data showed that the after-school attendance during summer and the regular school year was approximately half of what it was the prior school year (2019-2020). Perceptual student data, which may lend additional insight into the nature of the 21st CCLC programs, were not collected at the end of the 2020-2021 school year because VDOE felt the survey would add too much of a burden and challenge to the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC staff and students who were already challenged by the various alternative modes of learning during the pandemic (i.e., virtual and remote learning). Still, there were many commonalities when compared to previous years. The majority of the students who attended the program attended less than 30 days and were in grades three through eight. Most students were either White or Black. Over two-thirds qualified for free/reduced price lunch.

Most 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC staff were paid school day teachers or administrators. Though, unlike previous years, there were very few volunteers. Teacher turn-over and burnout were mentioned as a challenge by grantees.

Centers offered a wide variety of activities to students and their families. More than 200 activities were offered in the summer across 60 centers, and more than 700 activities across 138 centers were offered during the regular school year. STEM, arts & music, physical activity, and literacy were the activity types provided most often. Academic support, literacy enrichment, and small group work were common practices used within the centers to improve student academic achievement specifically. Grantees noted that programs had to be innovative in the ways they provided opportunities for students and their families given the ever-changing transitions between in-person and virtual programming. Teacher Survey data showed that the majority of substantially served 21st CCLC students improved in behavior and homework participation over the school year.

### ***To what degree did centers meet Virginia’s objectives for the program?***

Without student achievement data from 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 available, it is difficult to determine if the first two objectives were met (improve student academic achievement in reading and math). However, based on the grantee reported VAPR data, more than two-thirds of students who were categorized as “needs to improve” in the first quarter improved in both reading and math by the third quarter. Also, students who attended the program 90+ days had a slightly better chance of improving their grades than student who attended 30-59 days.

Although centers provided opportunities for family engagement (Objective 3) there was low parent participation in the summer of 2020. However, the participation numbers increased during the regular school year. Overall, when comparing 2020-2021 parent participation numbers to 2019-2020, this year's numbers increased from the previous year. Still, about half of centers reported parent participation as "somewhat of a problem", and a little less than half reported it as a "major problem." Grantees also reported in the ALERT that the family engagement objective was even more difficult due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Those who were somewhat successful reported the need to find innovative methods to involve family members. The most frequently reported promising practices adopted by programs included family in-person or virtual engagement events, family systems support, and family enrichment.

***What is the impact of 21st CCLC program participation on students' school-day attendance?***

As previously mentioned, a two-year analysis of available school-day attendance data was not conducted because methods for recording and collecting attendance data for 2020-2021, when most schools were offering online school or a hybrid approach, could have varied considerably by school. Without the results from these data, it is difficult to determine if this objective was met.

***What promising practices regarding the achievement of required objectives were identified by centers?***

Among comments about promising practices submitted by grantees across the six subjects (math and reading/language arts; family engagement; enrichment opportunities; character education; and community partnerships), the most heavily emphasized "promising practices" addressed three broad areas. First, and most prominently, were practices that supported the students. These can be broken into three types: Support for academic performance, enrichment activities, and use of small groups. The second broad group of practices encompassed family engagement through events (virtual or in-person), support, and enrichment. Finally, there were practices such as strong communication, outreach to continue current programming, and utilizing virtual programming aimed at improving and maintaining community partnerships.

## **Introduction**

This report summarizes the 2020-2021 evaluation procedures and results for Virginia 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programs. While in past years the Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) utilized a mixed-method evaluation, this year's evaluation only analyzed perceptual data from study participants.

CREP, Virginia's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC evaluator, is a State of Tennessee Center of Excellence and is located at The University of Memphis. CREP's mission is to implement a research agenda associated with educational policies and practices in preK-16 schools, and to provide a knowledge base for use by educational practitioners and policymakers. Since 1989, the Center has served as a mechanism for mobilizing community and university resources by addressing educational problems and meeting the University's commitment to primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. Functioning as part of the College of Education, the Center seeks to accomplish its mission through a series of investigations conducted by Center faculty, staff, and associates, College and University faculty, and graduate students.

## **Background and Program Description**

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program was established by Congress as Title X, Part I, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). It was reauthorized by Congress under Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). The purposes of the 21st CCLC program are as follows:

- To provide academic enrichment opportunities outside of the regular school day to help students, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools, meet state and local performance standards in core academic subjects.
- To offer students a broad array of services, programs, and activities to complement academics, such as drug and violence prevention; counseling programs; art, music, and recreation programs; technology education; and character education.
- To offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers in Virginia**

Every year, applicants apply for competitive 21st CCLC grant funds through the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Those awarded the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC money are part of the three-

year grant cycle and are required by VDOE to participate in data collection, monitoring, and evaluation. Programs provide students with academic and enrichment opportunities before and/or after school, and some offer programs during the summer as well. Collaboration with parents of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC students and community partners is also expected within these programs.

### **Evaluation Objectives and Questions**

States, as the recipients of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funds, are responsible for providing comprehensive evaluations of their programs. CREP was contracted by the VDOE to conduct a statewide evaluation and to assess the extent to which local grantees met the following defined programmatic objectives:

Objective 1: Improve student academic achievement in reading.

Objective 2: Improve student academic achievement in mathematics.

Objective 3: Provide opportunities for family engagement.

To address the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC objectives, CREP's evaluation is structured around the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the Virginia 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant program and level of participation by students?
2. To what degree did centers meet Virginia's objectives for the program?
3. What is the impact of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program participation on students' school-day attendance?
4. What "promising practices" regarding the achievement of required objectives were identified?

### **COVID-19**

In early 2020, The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. In response, the government ordered school building closures across the country, including in Virginia, ending all in-person learning for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. The pandemic continued to create mass disruption for the 2020-2021 school year as individual states and school districts navigated in-person, virtual, and remote learning options, as well as impromptu quarantines. This affected the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC evaluation, and those effects will be noted throughout the report.



## Methods

### Participants

The 2020-2021 evaluation included 126 programs within a three-year grant cycle (Cohorts 15R, 17, 18, & 19) with a select number of programs in Cohort 16 (n = 12) granted a fourth year by VDOE as a result of pandemic related challenges. The after-school population consisted of (a) grantees and/or site coordinators, (b) school-day teachers and administrators from participating schools, (c) after-school teachers, (d) volunteers, (e) student participants, and (f) the parents/guardians of student participants. The study population, along with others associated with the program, is discussed in detail in the report section *Center and Participant Characteristics* found on page 14.

### Instrumentation

During the 2020-2021 school year, data were collected from three main sources: (a) The online Annual Local Evaluation Survey (ALERT), (b) the Virginia Annual Performance Report (VAPR), and (c) the Teacher Survey. The Student Perceptual Survey was not administered.

**Annual Local Evaluation Report Template (ALERT).** A grantee is required to submit an annual ALERT for each center after a full year of program implementation. Grantees with multiple sites serving different students at each site must complete a separate ALERT for each site. The self-reporting tool was opened for approximately two months during the summer of 2021. Its purpose is to gather data regarding measurable objectives, activities, and outcomes. Grantees were also asked to describe the “promising practices” they found most helpful, and to provide challenges they faced while implementing the program. It is important to note that grantees reported their individual levels of success in meeting objectives based on their own pre-determined criteria (vs. an objective measure).

**Virginia Annual Performance Report (VAPR).** Grantees submit VAPR data for each 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC student to VDOE through a web-based system called Transact (formerly Cayen). The self-reported data includes 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC student grade outcomes, student attendance, family participation, program activities, and program staffing. The VAPR is required by the United States Department of Education (DOE) in order to track the annual progress of the state’s 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs, and is based on the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measure established by congress.

**Teacher Survey.** The Teacher Survey, also submitted online in Transact, was designed to collect information from the regular school-day teacher about changes in behavior and homework completion for each 21st CCLC student who attended the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program 30 days or more.

**Student Perceptual Survey.** The Student Perceptual Survey was developed to give students the opportunity to anonymously provide their perceptions of the 21st CCLC program, and a means to report benefits they attribute to their program attendance. Students in grades 3-12 who participated in the program 30 or more days (i.e., were substantially served) are asked to complete the survey. VDOE cancelled the administration of this survey at the end of the 2020-2021 school year as a result of the pandemic.

### Analyses

Data were analyzed from three main sources: (a) the online Annual Local Evaluation Survey (ALERT), (b) the Virginia Annual Performance Report (VAPR) Survey, and (c) the Teacher Survey. These sources are summarized by evaluation question in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Summary of Instruments and Data Sources by Evaluation Question**

Evaluation Question	Data Sources
What is the nature of the 21st CCLC programs and level of participation by students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALERT</li> <li>• Virginia Annual Performance Report (VAPR)</li> <li>• Teacher Survey</li> </ul>
To what degree did centers meet Virginia’s objectives for the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALERT</li> <li>• Virginia Annual Performance Report (VAPR)</li> <li>• Teacher Survey</li> </ul>
What is the impact of 21st CCLC program participation on students’ school-day attendance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Survey</li> </ul>
What “promising practices” regarding the achievement of required objectives were identified by centers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALERT</li> </ul>

**Statistical Analysis of Student Achievement and School-day Attendance.** In the past, analyses of data from the Standards of Learning (SOL) and Virginia Alternative Assessment Program (VAAP) were conducted to determine the extent to which local grantees met programmatic objectives related to improved academic achievement in reading and mathematics. However, for the 2019-2020 school year, SOL and VAAP test data were not available due to the

cancellation of Commonwealth assessments resulting from COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures. Also, an analysis of two years of available school-day attendance was not conducted because methods for recording and collecting attendance data for 2020-2021, when most schools were offering virtual school or a hybrid approach, could have varied considerably by school.

## Center and Participant Characteristics

Center and participant characteristics are entered by grantees in the online TransAct system. While in the years past summer programs were offered by all 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC centers, fewer summer programs in 2020 were offered due to COVID-19 school closures and safety measures enforced by the school divisions. Therefore, 60 centers completed a report for summer 2020, and 138 centers completed a report for the 2020-2021 regular school year. Specific staff, student, family member, and activities are described below.

### Staff

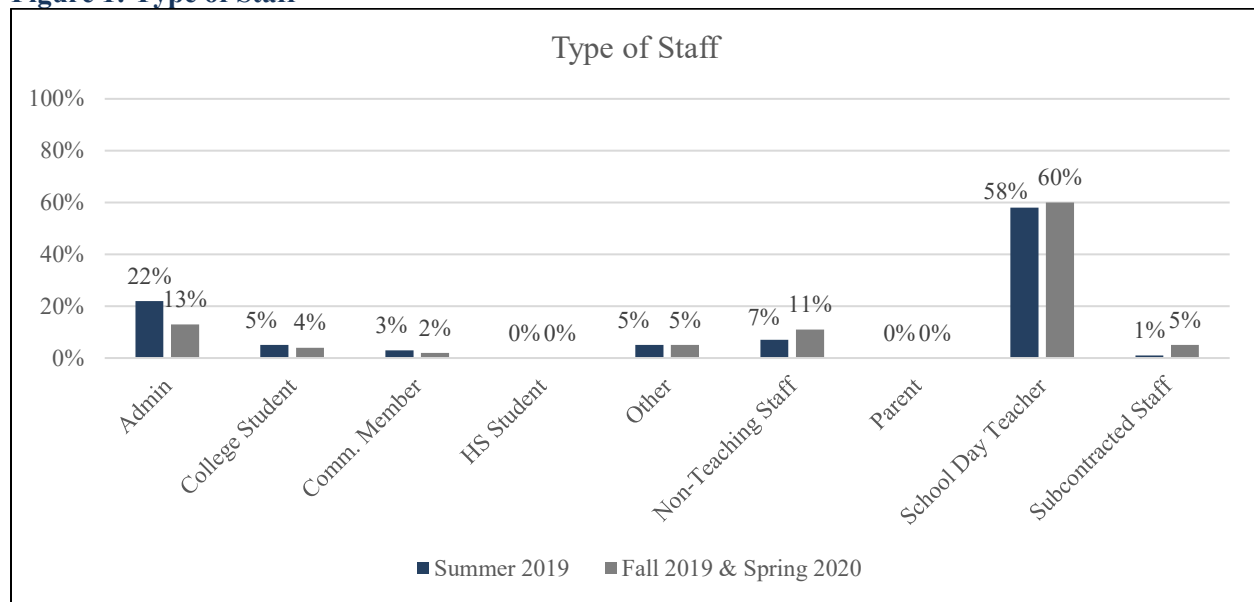
As seen in Table 2, 98% of the staff were paid and 2% were volunteers for both Summer 2020 and the regular school year (2020-2021). In the past, volunteers represented a higher percentage of the staff (closer to 20%); however, the percentage of volunteers may have been lower because of COVID-19 concerns and safety measures.

**Table 2: Paid and Volunteer Staff**

Term	<u>Paid</u>		<u>Volunteer</u>		Total # of staff
	Number	%	Number	%	
Summer 2020	387	98%	6	2%	393
Fall 2020 and Spring 2021	1680	98%	39	2%	1719

School-day teachers were the most common staff member working in the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs during both terms (Figure 1). Administrators and non-teaching school staff were the next most common type of staff. Parents did not participate for either term.

**Figure 1: Type of Staff**



## Students

**Summer 2020 Program.** During the summer of 2020, a total of 2,154 students in Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade attended 21st CCLC, which is approximately 3,500 students lower than the 2019 summer program enrollment.

It should be noted that nearly all of the Virginia 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC summer programs run less than 30 days with very few offering more than 30 days or programming; therefore, as shown in Table 4, the majority (99%) of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC student participants fell in the attendance category of 1-29 days. Most students were in grades three through eight (74%), with grade six and seven having the largest number of student participants. Pre-kindergarten and high school students (9-12) had the lowest number of participants (See Table 5). According to VDOE, most of the grants received and awarded are for upper elementary and middle school grades.

**Table 3. Summer Student Attendance by Days Served**

Attendance Day Category	Number	Percentage
1-29 days	2,135	99%
30-59 days	19	1%
60-89 days	0	0%

90+ days	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,154</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4. Summer Student Attendance by Grade Level**

Grade Level	Number	Percentage
Pre-kindergarten	2	0%
Kindergarten	41	2%
1st grade	116	5%
2nd grade	150	7%
3rd grade	220	10%
4th grade	252	12%
5th grade	196	9%
6th grade	343	16%
7th grade	334	16%
8th grade	236	11%
9th grade	171	8%
10th grade	35	2%
11th grade	24	1%
12th grade	34	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,154</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Demographics.** The summer demographic information collected in the VAPR reflect slightly more female participants than males (Table 6). The ethnic groups with the highest percentage of students served were Black (32%), White (29%), and Hispanic (18%).

Approximately 13% of students had limited English proficiency, 52% were reported as eligible for free/reduced-price lunch, and 10% of students served had a special need.

**Table 5. Summer Student Demographics**

Student Demographics	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	1,027	48%
Female	1,082	50%
Unknown	45	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,154</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian	5	0%

<b>Student Demographics</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Asian	115	5%
Black	699	32%
Hispanic	393	18%
Pacific Islander	3	0%
White	624	29%
Multiracial	90	4%
Unknown	225	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,154</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Population Specifics</b>		
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	272	13%
Free/Reduced Lunch	1,128	52%
Special Needs	216	10%

**Regular School Year Program.** Grantees reported that 11,027 students were in attendance at least one or more days during the 2020-2021 regular school year (Table 7). Of that, 34% were substantially served (i.e., attended 30 or more days). By comparison, the after-school attendance during the 2020-2021 regular school year was nearly half of what it was the prior school year (2019-2020).

**Table 6. Regular School Year Student Attendance by Days Served**

<b>Attendance Day Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1-29 days	7,268	66%
30-59 days	2,033	18%
60-89 days	1,020	9%
90+ days	706	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,027</b>	<b>100%</b>

Similar to the summer program, most students served were in grades three through eight (69%) (Table 8). Grades six, seven, and eight had the largest number of student participants. Also, pre-kindergarten and high school students (9-12) had the lowest number of participants.

**Table 7. Regular School Year Student Attendance by Grade Level**

Grade Level	Number	Percentage
Pre-kindergarten	120	1%
Kindergarten	500	5%
1st grade	724	7%
2nd grade	916	8%
3rd grade	1,137	10%
4th grade	1,201	11%
5th grade	1,118	10%
6th grade	1,319	12%
7th grade	1,487	13%
8th grade	1,385	13%
9th grade	336	3%
10th grade	284	3%
11th grade	278	3%
12th grade	222	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,027</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Demographics.** The 2020-2021 regular school year demographic information reflected slightly more female participants than male (Table 9). The ethnic groups with the highest percentage were White (50%), Black (26%), and Hispanic (13%). Approximately 8% of students had limited English proficiency, 71% qualified for free/reduced price lunch, and 14% had a special need. While many of the regular school year percentages are similar to the summer program, the largest differences are that (a) the regular school year program served a higher percentage of White students (50% during the regular school year versus 29% during the summer), as well as (b) a higher percentage of students that qualify for free and reduced lunch (71% during the regular school year versus 52% during the summer).

**Compared to the state.** When comparing the 21st CCLC student population to all the students served throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia for the 2020-2021 school year, the 21st CCLC student population was representative of the Commonwealth in some ways, but not others (See Table 9). Specifically, the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs served a slightly higher percentage of Black and White students, and a slightly lower percentage of Asian and Hispanic students. In



addition, the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs also served a much high percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced price lunch (Virginia Department of Education, 2020-2021).

**Table 8. 21st CCLC and State Regular School Year Student Demographics**

Student Demographics	CCLC Number Number	CCLC Percentage	Commonwealth Percentage <sup>1</sup>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	5,180	47%	51%
Female	5,752	52%	49%
Unknown	95	<1%	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,027</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,252,992</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
American Indian	24	0%	0%
Asian	299	3%	7%
Black	2,913	26%	22%
Hispanic	1,405	13%	17%
Pacific Islander	8	0%	0%
White	5,497	50%	46%
Multiracial	410	4%	6%
Unknown	471	4%	NA
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,027</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Population Specifics</b>			
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	900	8%	13%
Free/Reduced Lunch	7,776	71%	41%
Special Needs	1,527	14%	13%

## Family Members

The 21st CCLC programs also served family members of 21st CCLC students. Grantees reported a total of 33 family members who attended 21st CCLC programs during the summer of 2020, and 2,084 family members in attendance during the regular school year (2020-2021).

## Activities

A wide variety of activities were offered to students by 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC centers, including arts & music, college & career readiness, community/service learning, counseling programs, drug prevention, English language learner support, entrepreneurship, homework help, literacy,

<sup>1</sup> <https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/virginia-state-quality-profile#desktopTabs-3>

mentoring, physical activity, STEM, truancy prevention, tutoring, violence prevention, and youth leadership.

As seen in Table 10 STEM, arts & music, physical activity, and literacy were the activity types provided most often during the summer 2020. Those same activities, as well as tutoring, were the most chosen activities during the 2020-2021 regular school year. Violence prevention, truancy prevention, English language learners support, and drug prevention were the activities provided the least during both terms (summer 2020 and Fall 2020/Spring 2021).

**Table 9. Activities Offered by Semester**

Activity	Summer 2020	Fall 2020/Spring 2021
Arts & Music	35	89
College & Career Readiness	7	28
Community / Service Learning	8	41
Counseling Programs	8	24
Drug Prevention	0	9
English Language Learners Support	0	8
Entrepreneurship	4	16
Homework Help	6	76
Literacy	36	84
Mentoring	5	38
Physical Activity	35	87
STEM	42	105
Truancy Prevention	1	3
Tutoring	11	86
Violence Prevention	0	3
Youth Leadership	17	22

## Results

Grantees are required to address three objectives while implementing their 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program: 1) improve student achievement in reading/language arts; 2) improve student achievement in mathematics; and 3) provide opportunities for family engagement. The extent to which the centers, as a whole, met these objectives is presented below. While not one of the statewide objectives, an analysis of the Teacher Survey and a descriptive write-up of common themes found in the Promising Practices are also provided.

### **Objective 1 & 2 - Improve student achievement in reading/language arts & Improve student achievement in mathematics**

As previously stated, an analysis of data from the Standards of Learning (SOL) and Virginia **Alternate** Assessment Program (VAAP) were conducted in past years to determine program impacts on student achievement in reading and math. However, for the 2019-2020 school year, SOL and VAAP test data were not available due to the cancellation of Commonwealth assessments resulting from COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures. Therefore, only results from the VAPR were analyzed to address the first and second objective.

**VAPR:** During the first quarter of the regular school year, students are categorized as “needs to improve” in reading/language arts and mathematics if they have a grade of “C” or less. Third quarter grades are then reviewed to see if those “needs to improve” students who attended 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC 30 days or more either improved by one letter grade, or for grades that are reported by a percentage, had an increase of five percentage points. Those outcomes are reported below in Table 11 by grade level groupings (PreK-5 and 6-12) and days served by program.

Grantees reported that more than two-thirds of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC students in all attendance categories improved in both reading and math by the third quarter. Specifically, students who attended the program 90+ days had a slightly better chance of improving their grades than students who attended 30-59 days.

**Table 10. Student Grade Outcome Data**

Grade Category	Days served by program	Needs to Improve	Improved	% Improved
PreK-5th	Math 30-59 Days	697	492	71%
	Math 60-89 Days	347	250	72%
	Math 90+ Days	102	73	72%
	Read 30-59 Days	845	569	67%
	Read 60-89 Days	378	278	74%
	Read 90+ Days	135	96	71%
	<b>Total PK-5</b>	<b>2504</b>	<b>1758</b>	<b>70%</b>
	Days served by program	Needs to Improve	Improved	% Improved
6th-12th	Math 30-59 Days	580	393	68%
	Math 60-89 Days	163	99	61%
	Math 90+ Days	80	59	74%
	Read 30-59 Days	639	419	66%
	Read 60-89 Days	138	98	71%
	Read 90+ Days	74	55	74%
	<b>Total 6-12</b>	<b>1674</b>	<b>1123</b>	<b>67%</b>
		Needs to Improve	Improved	% Improved
PreK-12th	<b>OVERALL PK-12</b>	<b>4178</b>	<b>2881</b>	<b>69%</b>

**Objective 3 - Provide opportunities for family engagement.**

**VAPR:** A total of 33 family members attended 21st CCLC programs during the summer of 2020, which is a decrease of 95% from the previous summer ( $N=734$ ). Still, 2,084 family members attended during the regular school year (2020-2021), which is a 14% increase from the prior school year ( $N=1,823$ ).

**ALERT:** Grantees were asked to describe (a) the program’s measurable objective for family engagement, (b) the outcomes for that objective, and (c) Interactive Family Literacy activities that parents attended. When asked about types of family engagement activities the program provided, “Interactive Family Literacy” was the most common type chosen by grantees (Table 12).

**Table 11. Type of Family Engagement, 2020-2021**

Identify the types of family engagement activities the program provided: (Check all that apply)	Number	Percentage	Responses
Interactive Family Literacy	103	89%	116

Identify the types of family engagement activities the program provided: (Check all that apply)	Number	Percentage	Responses
Primary Teacher Training	63	54%	116
Economic Self-sufficiency Training	42	36%	116

Grantees were also asked in the ALERT if parent participation was a challenge. Most (92%) reported that parent participation was “somewhat of a challenge” or a “major challenge” (See Table 13).

**Table 12. Parent Participation, 2020-2021**

	Not a challenge	Somewhat of a challenge	Major challenge	Responses
Parent participation	8%	47%	45%	135

## 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Promising Practices

Hundreds of promising practices found to be effective in helping grantees meet their objectives were reported in the ALERT. The most frequently mentioned practices are discussed below, presented in order of the open-ended question they address, and organized by theme. This is followed by a discussion of the most prominent challenges grantees faced.

It is worth noting that many grantees repeatedly mentioned the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on all facets of their programming. This often led to programs being held virtually, not being held at all, or requiring innovation to continue providing best services to the communities they work with. The impact is more specifically documented below.

### 1) What activities or promising practices appeared to be most effective in helping to meet your subobjectives for improving student academic achievement in reading/language arts?

The top three promising practices in reading and language arts were academic support, literacy enrichment, and both small group work/strengthening literacy instructional practices.

In regard to **academic support**, the majority of grantees discussed the importance of tutoring and remediation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also highlighted both the need and effectiveness of one-on-one work and its usefulness in supporting literacy growth.

Academic support for reading also came in the form of homework assistance, as well as in state achievement test (SOL) preparation.

**Literacy enrichment** was most frequently characterized by online and in-person reading programs because of the need to offer both during the pandemic. Examples of online reading programs offered during times when students needed to meet virtually were IXL Reading/Writing, KidzLit, and Write Brain. The online reading programs were often described as essential supplemental literacy tools. When students could meet in-person, enrichment typically included opportunities like spelling bees, writing/book clubs, and mentor reading partnerships. It was also noted that many programs scaffolded literacy and reading activities into all their other projects and enrichment opportunities to reinforce foundational skills

**Small group work** and small group tutoring also aided in reading growth throughout the year. Students having environments where their voices could be heard, their questions could be answered, and where they received unique attention boosted reading morale. Similarly, the reading objective was bolstered by grantees/program facilitators strengthening students' and their own literacy instructional practices. For example, by conducting read-alouds, practicing writing skills, and developing reading comprehension abilities, students evidenced better reading achievement.

## 2) What activities or promising practices appeared to be most effective in helping to meet your subobjectives for improving student academic achievement in math?

The top three promising practices or activities in math were congruent with those of the reading objective: Academic support, math enrichment, and small group work.

**Academic support** for mathematics was heavily represented by tutoring, remediation, and homework help. Homework assistance typically occurred virtually, and options like Homework Help Hotlines were made available to students. Individualized support was also a common academic support theme, where students were able to not only receive assistance in areas of math where they were struggling, but also building confidence in navigating mathematics.

**Math enrichment** had a diverse spread of programs, materials, and resources used to strengthen students' abilities. For example, virtual programs like IXL Math, STEM-based math projects, and math game websites were beneficial. In person, math manipulatives, math clubs,

and incorporating math into other activities (such as cooking or physical education) strengthened students' capabilities in mathematics.

**Small group activities** and small group instruction were once again essential to many programs in reaching their math objective. Having both small group assistants and conducting math group projects in smaller teams supported students in a personal and stress-reduced environment.

It is worth mentioning that grantees felt strengthening math instructional practices provided consistent growth for students towards their math goals. Incorporating topics like math literacy, word problems, and number sense improved understanding of mathematics, which can often become overwhelming for students.

### **3) What activities or promising practices appeared to be most effective in helping to meet your subobjectives for family engagement?**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, reaching the family engagement objective was even more difficult for many programs, and those who were successful had to find innovative methods to involve family members in their programming. That being said, the most frequently reported promising practices still included family engagement events, family systems support, and family enrichment.

**Family engagement events** often saw less attendance due to safety protocols--if they occurred at all. When in-person meetings were not advisable, programs held virtual family nights, virtual game nights, and conducted virtual family literacy/numeracy nights to keep families engaged. When programs could invite their families to attend events in-person, those same events occurred, alongside events like family meals and program-family relationship building meetings.

Both students and their families struggled throughout the ongoing pandemic, so **family systems supports** were relied on heavily when provided by programs. For example, providing food and nutritional assistance, helping families make "ends meet", and providing mental health services were essential. Given the nuanced situation of family members needing to be involved in their student's education more than ever, programs were able to provide crucial support training sessions, like how to navigate technology, how to parent during a pandemic, and how to help their student further their academic goals (e.g., FAFSA enrollment training). Grantees

reported that parents/guardians were able to attend program-provided events revolving around essential life skills topics like financial independence, GED enrollment, and parent resource management.

Also, engaging **enrichment activities** were still available for family members to participate in with their youths. Grantees indicated that activities utilizing hands-on and interactive activities saw the best turn-out and received the best feedback. These activities included events like STEM activities, cooking classes, family literacy activities, and virtual field trips.

#### 4) What activities or promising practices appeared to be most effective in helping to meet the program's objective for providing enrichment opportunities?

The top three enrichment activities that helped programs in meeting their enrichment objectives included media/arts activities, STEM activities, and physical activities. Similar to the family engagement objective, programs had to be innovative in the ways that they provided enrichment opportunities for students and their families given the ever-changing transitions between in-person and virtual programming.

Some of the most frequently observed enrichment activities that helped in meeting the enrichment goal involved **media, arts, and music**. Music classes, musical performances, and musical theater got students involved in exciting enrichment activities while also exposing them to cultural knowledge. More modern examples of this involvement included disc jockeying (becoming classroom DJs), having talent showcases, and holding arts and crafts classes.

Similarly, **STEM activities** were highly requested and utilized by most students/programs. Flying Classroom, which incorporates STEM education while exploring unique global interactions, was highlighted by many programs as being beneficial in exposing students to real-world STEM applications while maintaining student interest. Other STEM programs involving science, math, and technology, such as robotics programs or coding clubs, further developed students' interest in pursuing STEM enrichment.

Creative methods of involving **physical activities** were one of the most frequently mentioned enrichment opportunities by grantees, even in the face of the restrictive ongoing pandemic. When students were available to meet in person, opportunities like running clubs, health and wellness seminars, and sports clubs provided opportunities to enhance both academic



and physical enrichment. In virtual settings, activities like yoga, karate, and discussing healthy habits provided students information about the importance of physicality.

#### **5) What activities or promising practices appeared to be most effective in helping to meet the program's objective for providing character education?**

Character development was heavily supported and evidenced by many promising practices. Specifically, character development occurred most frequently through enrichment opportunities, socio-emotional learning, and engagement with others. The strong shift towards socio-emotional development likely stemmed from necessity, due to the pandemic, to support a healthy emotional and behavioral response during unprecedented times.

**Enrichment activities** were diverse in nature, ranging from more typical enrichment opportunities like sports clubs and STEM programming, to more unique programs tailored to specific needs, such as life skills training and emotional support groups. For example, many grantees utilized programs like Boys to Men, SMART Moves, or Real Girlz to provide mentoring opportunities that incorporated life skills training, sexual health education, and drug and alcohol abuse education. Other programs like the YMCA or 4H Club also provided mentorship chances where students could work directly with role models that could potentially keep them on a successful path.

**Socio-emotional development** has been a topic of focus both in and out of the schools for ensuring that students' mental health and wellbeing are acknowledged, while simultaneously providing strategies to reinforce good practices in emotional stability. Programs incorporated daily socio-emotional practices, such as meditation, yoga, and communicating emotions to others into their programming when possible. Many grantees were able to provide counseling support to students and families, develop positive self-esteem, and prevent behavioral issues from occurring by practicing introspection. Furthermore, topics like instilling a growth mindset and practicing mindfulness helped develop character strengths that students maintained throughout the year. Tangible materials, such as using the Calm phone app or reading Chicken Soup for the Soul, were reported to provide outlets that were engaging and interesting to students.

Another beneficial source of character development was **student engagement** with other people, whether they be teachers, mentors, family members, or classmates. Students learned to cooperate with others and see opposing perspectives, even during events like physical activities

or while playing academic games. Performing team-building exercises allowed students to practice their communication skills, evidence their socio-emotional techniques, and learn to work with others who were different than themselves.

**6) What activities or promising practices appeared to be most effective in helping to meet your subobjectives for improving community partnerships?**

As mentioned previously, many grantees reported having difficulty maintaining or gaining new partnership and community opportunities given COVID-19 protocols and restrictions. For example, many programs that had long-time partnerships could not utilize them due to safety constraints. Many programs that secured partnerships prior to the start of the year had to put them on hold until in-person programming could progress. The most frequently reported promising practices for meeting the community partnership goals were strong communication practices, outreach to continue current programming, and utilizing virtual programming.

In a time when face-to-face meetings were difficult to maintain, grantees formulated new methods of **communication** to continue their relationships with partners and community members. Open communication was essential in securing community support for programming, coinciding with encouraging networking connections with new community resources. For example, virtual communication (Zoom meetings, emails, and phone calls) was used more often to build and maintain repertoires, which helped community partners feel involved, even from a distance. Similarly, many community partners were able to transition their programming into a virtual format, which allowed for instantaneous feedback and more accessibility for many student attendees. Monthly newsletters and frequent virtual meetings also allowed grantees to further their relationships with partners (or potential partners) in a minimally invasive manner.

While it can be difficult to start new partnerships, it was sometimes easier to receive **continued support** from seasoned community partners during the pandemic. Partners were often asked for specific necessities for students (e.g., food, school materials, clothing, etc.), and they went beyond their usual programming protocols. Grantees highlighted how flexible many of their current community partners were in their willingness to alter their usual programming to meet the needs of students, including making virtual materials, sending prepared supplies home with students, and offering in-kind programming.

## 7) What activities or promising practices appeared to be most effective in helping to meet the program’s “other” objective?

There was a variety of methods through which grantees met the “Other” objective, ranging from academic support to enrichment activities. The “Other” promising practices align strongly with the previous objectives, but serve to emphasize how crucial these programming facets were to the overall implementation of their mission.

**Enrichment activities** once again stood out as one of the most frequently utilized forms of student support. These opportunities ranged from physical activities, such as dance, yoga, and running clubs, to STEM based programs, like robotics clubs, nature clubs, and science groups. Students were also able to participate in fine arts enrichment, like theater, music, and art programs. Other programs aided in character development, like the Gator Club Leadership Group, which provided students a space to learn servant leadership skills. Many grantees provided occasions to develop life skills, such as money management, drug and alcohol avoidance information, and even how to recognize the signs of human trafficking. Academic-based programming was also common, such as debate clubs, summer academies, book clubs, and writing classes.

**Socio-emotional development** was paramount in meeting the “Other” goal as well. Many programs had students meet in small groups to discuss their feelings, what they were struggling with, and to talk about how they navigate their problems. Most grantees had integrated socio-emotional lessons into their programming, which allowed students to build their self-esteem, emotional verbiage, and understanding of others’ problems. Since so many students being served are at-risk youth, the ability to discuss “real-world” problems outside of their academic settings was reported to be beneficial in helping students with their behavioral issues and emotional stability.

Finally, **academic support** was a powerful promising practice in helping to meet the program objective. Homework help, tutoring, and remediation helped students maintain their educational status quo. Foundational literacy support was provided for many students who may have been struggling due to a loss of learning. Full-day programming was also offered for many students, where they could be supported both virtually and in-person to fill in any gaps stemming from school-based instruction. Virtual tools like Zoom and online programs like Kahoot allowed

students to develop their academic skills while being engaged with technology. Peer homework help and schoolteacher mentoring helped build experience and confidence in academic abilities.

#### 8) What is the main challenge operating the program?

Grantees were also asked about the main challenge operating the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program during the 2020-2021 school year. COVID-19, the pandemic, and their effects were most commonly mentioned. Common themes included attendance (parent and student), virtual environment, staffing, restrictions due to COVID-19, retention, and family engagement.

Some specific things that affected **attendance** included no internet or poor internet connection, screen fatigue, technology challenges, lack of participation, and parent work schedules. One grantee specifically wrote, “Screen fatigue was a concern of parents since students were spending so many hours a day working synchronously and asynchronously completing assignments.” Most mentioned parent participation and **family engagement** as lacking more this year than previous years. Grantees also reported that trying to build and maintain a strong relationship with students and families virtually as opposed to in-person affected the **retention** rate.

Being creative in a **virtual environment**, by offering a large variety of activities to keep students engaged, was mentioned as a challenge. Activities had to transfer well to the online platform. For in-person programs, social distancing and limiting the number of students in a classroom to comply with **restrictions due to COVID-19** affected how many students could attend the after-school program. For instance, a grantee wrote, “Social distancing guidelines and safety concerns due to COVID-19 severally limited program offerings.”

Also, programs were **short staffed** because of teacher turnover, difficulty finding assistants, and quarantines. A few also mentioned teacher burnout as an operating challenge, as well as getting staff onboard with the new rules and regulations that surrounded COVID-19. With the low number of staff, one grantee reported that they were “limited on the number of students that could attend each day.” It is required by VDOE that all programs maintain a certain staff to student ratio.

## Teacher Survey

Regular school-day teachers are asked to complete one survey for each 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC student who was substantially served (i.e., 30 days or more). Ideally 3,759 surveys would have been completed for the 2020-2021 school year, one per 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC student who attended 30 days or more.

- 3,759 surveys were distributed
- 3,050 surveys were returned
- Therefore, 81% of substantially served 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC students are represented in the results from this survey. See Table 24.

**Table 13. Teacher Survey Participation**

Grade Category	Number of Surveys Distributed	Number of Surveys Returned	% of Return
PreK – 5 <sup>th</sup>	2,578	2,017	78%
6 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>	1,181	1,033	87%
<b>PreK-12th</b>	<b>3,759</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>81%</b>

Over two-thirds of substantially served 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC students were reported as improving their behavior and homework participation over the school year (see Table 25). According to the results, the longer the student participated in the program in general, the more likely they were to improve in both homework participation and behavior. However, in some cases, the percentage was the same across groups and dropped in one case (6-12 HW participation).

**Table 14. 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Student Outcomes**

Grade Category	Days served by program	Number of Students	% HW Part. Improved	% Behavior Improved
PreK-5 <sup>th</sup>	(30-59 Days)	1,060	82%	79%
	(60-89 Days)	535	85%	79%
	(90+ Days)	422	88%	84%
6 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	(30-59 Days)	601	77%	78%
	(60-89 Days)	314	76%	78%
	(90+ Days)	118	91%	90%
<b>PreK-12th</b>	<b>OVERALL PK-12th</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>80%</b>

## Conclusions

Overall conclusions are presented below by evaluation question.

### *What is the nature of the Virginia 21st CCLC grant program and level of participation by students?*

The effects the pandemic had on the nature of the program and the level of student participation was reflected in the data. VAPR data showed that after-school attendance during summer and the regular school year was approximately half of what it was the prior school year (2019-2020). Perceptual student data, which may lend additional insight into the nature of the 21st CCLC programs, were not collected at the end of the 2020-2021 school year because VDOE felt the survey would add too much of a burden and challenge to the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC staff and students who were already challenged by the various alternative modes of learning during the pandemic (i.e., virtual and remote learning). Still, there were many commonalities when compared to previous years. The majority of the students who attended the program attended less than 30 days and were in grades three through eight. Most student were either White or Black. Over two-thirds qualified for free/reduced price lunch.

Most 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC staff were paid school day teachers or administrators. Though, unlike previous years, there were very few volunteers. Teacher turn-over and burnout were mentioned as a challenge by grantees.

Centers offered a wide variety of activities to students and their families. More than 200 activities were offered in the summer across 60 centers, and more than 700 activities across 138 centers were offered during the regular school year. STEM, arts & music, physical activity, and literacy were the activity types provided most often. Academic support, literacy enrichment, and small group work were common practices used within the centers to improve student academic achievement. Grantees noted that programs had to be innovative in how they provided opportunities for students and their families given the ever-changing transitions between in-person and virtual programming. Teacher Survey data showed that the majority of substantially served 21st CCLC students improved in behavior and homework participation over the school year.

***To what degree did centers meet Virginia’s objectives for the program?***

Without student achievement data from 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 available, it is difficult to determine if the first two objectives were met (improve student academic achievement in reading and math). However, based on the grantee reported VAPR data, more than two-thirds of students who were categorized as “needs to improve” in the first quarter improved in both reading and math by the third quarter. Also, students who attended the program 90+ days had a slightly better chance of improving their grades than student who attended 30-59 days.

Although centers provided opportunities for family engagement (Objective 3) there was low parent participation in the summer of 2020. However, parent participation increased during the regular school year. When comparing 2020-2021 parent participation numbers to 2019-2020, this year’s numbers had increased. Still, about half of centers reported parent participation as “somewhat of a problem” and a little less than half reported it as a “major problem.” Grantees also reported in the ALERT that the family engagement objective was even more difficult due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Those who were somewhat successful reported the need to find innovative methods to involve family members. The most frequently reported promising practices adopted by programs included family in-person or virtual engagement events, family systems support, and family enrichment.

***What is the impact of 21st CCLC program participation on students’ school-day attendance?***

As previously mentioned, a two-year analysis of available school-day attendance data was not conducted because methods for recording and collecting attendance data for 2020-2021, when most schools were offering online school or a hybrid approach, could have varied considerably by school. Without the results from these data, it is difficult to determine if this objective was met.

***What promising practices regarding the achievement of required objectives were identified by centers?***

Among comments about promising practices submitted by grantees across the six subjects (math and reading/language arts; family engagement; enrichment opportunities; character education; and community partnerships), the most heavily emphasized “promising practices” addressed three broad areas. First and most prominently were practices that supported the students. These can be broken into three types: Support for academic performance;

enrichment activities; and use of small groups. The second broad group of practices encompassed family engagement through events (virtual or in-person), support, and enrichment. Finally, there were practices such as strong communication, outreach to continue current programming, and utilizing virtual programming aimed at improving and maintaining community partnerships.



## References

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