Evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers in North Dakota 2020-2021

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Executive Summary

Three primary methods were used to collect the data for this evaluation. Site directors entered data on attendance, demographics, programming, and teacher-reported program impacts into the US Department of Education's 21APR online platform. Research assistants used the CLASS tool to conduct systematic observations of interactions between program staff and their students. Observations were conducted at 25 sites across the state, including urban and rural areas. Interrater reliability between observers was high, as indicated by an overall agreement rate of 92.1%. Survey data was also collected through an online platform. Teachers (N = 286), parents (N = 587), children (N = 1,637), and community partners (N = 45) completed surveys from late January through late June 2021 regarding their perceptions of the program.

The 132 21st CCLCs in North Dakota served 2,645 regular attendees, along with 1,143 non-regular attendees. Participants were fairly evenly split between males and females. About two-thirds were white, and the largest non-white group was American Indian or Alaska Native, at 14.2%. A large majority of participants were in grades PreK to 5, about one-third received free or reduced-price lunch, and about 11% had special needs. STEM activities were the most common type of activities offered by programs, followed by physical activity, homework help, and literacy activities.

According to teacher reports, 91% of participants improved in homework completion and class participation over the school year. Regarding student behavior, teachers reported that 96% of participants in grades 6-12 and 84% of elementary participants improved, for an overall improvement rate of 86%.

On the surveys, strong majorities of children, parents, teachers, and community partners endorsed every positive statement about the program. All groups of respondents agreed that safety, the activities, and the academic support that programs provide were the best and most important aspects of the programs. Most respondents had no concerns about the program and no suggestions for improvement. Among the few who did indicate some areas of concern, issues related to resources, communication, and behavior management were the most prevalent.

The observations showed that the 21st CCLCs in North Dakota provided high levels of emotional support and were also strong in classroom organization. Sessions including several grade levels may be even stronger in these areas than single-grade sessions. The centers were much weaker in providing instructional support and lagged slightly behind regular school classrooms in this area. Science sessions, in particular, were stronger in instructional support, and this finding may provide a starting point for trainings on how staff can strengthen their work in this area. In addition to focusing training efforts, the use of the CLASS across the state also provided a common language and set of goals for 21st CCLC staff. Further research is needed to determine whether improvements in CLASS scores in 21st CCLCs will be seen after training occurs, and, if so, whether those improvements will in turn translate into positive learning outcomes for children.

Background

More than 1.6 million children and youth in the U.S. attend 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs), federally funded afterschool programs available in each state particularly for students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2020). These 10,125 centers are intended to do much more than provide supervision and safety for children after school while their parents are still at work. Their mission includes academic support and enrichment, social and emotional learning, drug and violence prevention, and physical activity and nutrition education (Afterschool Alliance, 2021). In North Dakota the 21st CCLC programs are administered by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and operated locally through grants awarded by the DPI.

Each state is mandated to conduct evaluations of its 21st CCLC programs. Thus, the North Dakota DPI contracted with North Dakota State University to conduct the statewide evaluation of 21st CCLCs in North Dakota in 2020-2021. As part of this contract, a revised evaluation plan was created in November 2020. In addition to the collection of the standard required Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) performance indicators, the plan included a pilot study of the use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, et al., 2008) as a tool to measure process outcomes, specifically focusing on the quality of staff-student interactions. The plan also called for the collection of survey data from teachers, parents, children, and community partners. This report fulfills another provision of the contract, which is to provide a final report evaluating the 21st CCLC programs in North Dakota.

Evaluation Methods and Measures

Three primary methods were used to collect the data for this evaluation. Site directors were required to enter data on attendance, demographics, programming, and teacher-reported program impacts into the US Department of Education's 21APR online platform. This information is necessary to fulfill the department's reporting requirements. However, it sheds very little light on the actual quality of the programs and does not help programs in pinpointing how they might be able to improve. For this reason, the DPI chose to include the use of systematic observations of interactions between program staff and their students. The CLASS tool was used to conduct these observations.

The CLASS has been used extensively in research on regular classroom instruction, and the U.S. Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (2021) uses the pre-K version for national evaluations of Head Start. But we can find no published reports of its use in out-of-school-time settings such as 21st CCLCs. With foundations in socioecological theories of development (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and constructivist theories of learning (e.g., Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978), the CLASS is a structured observation protocol that focuses on the interactions that take place between staff and students. It provides scores on ten dimensions,

which are grouped into three domains. The domain of Emotional Support includes the dimensions of Positive Climate, Negative Climate (reverse-scored), Teacher Sensitivity, and Regard for Student Perspectives. Classroom Organization includes the dimensions of Behavior Management, Productivity, and Instructional Learning Formats. Instructional Support includes Concept Development, Quality of Feedback, and Language Modeling (Pianta et al., 2008).

Observations were conducted at 25 sites across the state, including urban and rural areas. Prior to beginning observations, seven observers completed a two-day training in using the CLASS K-3 and then passed a test, achieving at least 80% agreement with master coders across all ten dimensions on each of five video-recorded classroom sessions. Agreement is defined as being within one point of each other. The NDSU IRB approved the study, and informed consent letters were sent to all teachers and parents.

Although only one observer is needed at each session, we chose to have two observers conduct each observation so that we could test for and ensure high reliability. At each site, observers observed for 20 minutes, taking notes on all interactions between staff and students. Then they spent 10 minutes reviewing their notes and determining a score for each of the 10 dimensions. They then repeated that cycle one more time. Doing only two observation cycles per session was an adaptation necessitated by the shortened hours of afterschool programs; when the CLASS is used in regular school classrooms, four to six of these cycles are standard (Pianta et al., 2008). The CLASS scores are based on the behavior of all of the adults in the room during the observation cycle; the observers did not necessarily focus on just one teacher or staff member. Both structured activities and unstructured free time were observed, as well as transitions. Only rooms including students from kindergarten to third grade were observed, to match the version of the CLASS observers were trained to use, and because that grade range is the most prevalent in 21st CCLCs in the state.

Scores on each dimension range from 1 to 7. Observers are trained to consider a number of different indicators for each dimension, and to categorize each indicator as being in the low, middle, or high range. If nearly all indicators for a dimension are within the low range, the dimension is scored as 1; medium range, 4; and high range, 7. If there is a mix of indicators from different ranges, then the dimension is scored with a 2, 3, 5, or 6, depending on whether the mix is predominantly in the low range with some middle, the middle range with some low, the middle range with some high, or in the high range with some middle, respectively.

Interrater reliability between observers was high, as indicated by an overall agreement rate of 92.1%. The CLASS manual reports average reliability of 87% across several national studies (Pianta et al., 2008). If the observers did choose different scores for a particular dimension, their scores were averaged.

For each session, scores across the two cycles were averaged to obtain a score for each of the ten dimensions, and then domain scores were calculated as means of their respective dimensions. Observers also recorded the grade level(s), format, and content of the session.

Survey data was also collected through an online platform. Teachers (N = 286), parents (N = 587), children (N = 1,637), and community partners (N = 45) completed surveys from late January through late June 2021 regarding their perceptions of the program. On the child surveys, a graphical and audio interface was used to assist young readers in understanding the questions and available responses.

Evaluation Results

Results from 21APR GRPA Measures

Center Types

Of the 132 Centers in North Dakota, 118 were in public schools, 10 were community based, 1 was faith-based, and 3 were of some other type.

People Served

Data submitted for fall of 2020 show that 21st CCLCs in North Dakota served 2,645 regular attendees (defined as attending 30 days or more during the school year), along with 1,143 non-regular attendees. See Table 1. Data are not yet complete for spring 2021. Data for summer 2020 show there were 1,018 children served. In addition, 7,041 adults and family members were served.

Table 1. *Attendees Served Based on Type, Fall 2020*

Attendees Served	**Number**	**Percentage**
Regular Student Attendees	2,645	22.3
Non-Regular Student Attendees	1,143	9.6
Summer Attendees	1,018	8.6
Total Student Attendees, Summer & Fall	4,806	40.6
Adults/Family Members	7,041	59.4
Total	**11,847**	**100**

The demographic data in Table 2 shows that the participants were fairly evenly split between males and females. About two-thirds were white, and the largest non-white group was American Indian or Alaska Native, at 14.2%. A large majority of participants were in grades PreK to 5, whereas just under 12% were in the upper grades. Only 1.6% were English Language Learners, about one-third received free or reduced-price lunch, and about 11% had special needs.

Table 2. *Participant Demographics, Fall 2020*

Group	Number	Percentage
Attendance		
< 30 Days	1143	30.2
30 – 59 Days	1517	40.0
60 – 89 Days	1092	28.8
>= 90 Days	36	1.0
Total	3788	100
Sex		
Male	1884	49.7
Female	1794	47.4
Unknown	110	2.9
Total	3788	100
Race/ Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	539	14.2
Asian	34	0.9
Black or African American	134	3.5
Hispanic or Latino	184	4.6
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	9	0.2
White	2542	67.1
Two or more races	192	5.1
Unknown	154	4.1
Total	3788	100
Grade Level		
PreK – 5	3412	88.3
6 – 12	451	11.7
Total	3863	100
English Language Learners	59	1.6
Free and Reduced Lunch	1286	33.9
Special Needs	411	10.9

Frequency and Duration of Activities Offered

STEM activities were the most common type of activities offered by programs and the most frequently offered, followed by physical activity, homework help, and literacy activities. See Table 3. The vast majority of programs offer these four types of activities more than once per week. The next most common types of activities were arts and music, mentoring, and college and career readiness. In the 21APR system, programs were also asked to indicate whether each activity also qualified as "college and career readiness," and 184 activities (56% of the total) were marked as such.

Table 3. *Frequency of Activity Offerings*

Activity Type	More than once/week	More than once/month	Monthly	Once per term
Academic				
STEM	77	4	0	1
Literacy	43	4	0	0
English Language Learners' Support	1	0	0	0
Entrepreneurship	0	0	1	1
Arts & Music	15	3	0	0
Violence Prevention	0	1	0	0
Truancy Prevention	0	0	2	0
Other Activities				
Homework Help	47	1	0	0
Physical Activity	65	1	0	0
Community/Service Learning	4	1	1	1
Mentoring	14	0	0	0
Drug Prevention	0	1	2	0
Counseling Programs	1	0	0	0
Youth Leadership	3	0	1	0
College & Career Readiness	15	0	0	0

Most STEM activities lasted 1-2 hours each, whereas most other activities lasted under one hour. Homework help was fairly evenly split between under one hour and 1-2 hours. See Table 4. A small number of STEM and literacy activities lasted 2-4 hours.

Table 4. *Time Spent on Activities*

	More than once/week			More than monthly	
Activity Type	**2-4 hours**	**1-2 hours**	**< 1 hour**	**1-2 hours**	**< 1 hour**
Academic					
STEM[a]	9	50	17	0	4
Literacy[b]	3	9	31	0	3
English Language	0	0	1	0	0
Learners' Support					
Entrepreneurship	0	0	0	0	0
Arts & Music	0	3	12	3	0
Violence Prevention	0	0	0	1	0
Truancy Prevention	0	0	0	0	0
Other Activities					
Homework Help	1	24	22	1	0
Physical Activity	0	13	52	1	0
Community/Service	0	1	3	1	0
Learning					
Mentoring	0	3	11	0	0
Drug Prevention	0	0	0	1	0
Counseling Programs	0	0	1	0	0
Youth Leadership	0	0	3	0	0
College & Career	1	6	8	0	0
Readiness					

[a]One program reported STEM more than once/week for 4 hours.
[b]One program reported Literacy more than monthly for 2-4 hours.
Note. All programs that reported an activity monthly or once per term reported the time spent as 1-2 hours.

Staffing of Programs

Roughly a quarter of paid staff members at the 21st CCLCs were college students, a fifth were school day teachers, and another fifth were subcontracted staff. See Table 5. Of the volunteers, nearly all were college students.

Table 5. *Number and Percentage of Paid and Volunteer Staff of Each Type*

	Paid Staff		Volunteer Staff	
Staffing Type	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Administrators	41	7.1	0	0
College Students	147	25.3	60	96.8
Community Members	34	5.9	2	3.2
High School Students	9	1.6	0	0
Parents	0	0	0	0
School Day Teachers	110	19.0	0	0
Other Non-teaching School Staff	96	16.6	0	0
Subcontracted Staff	119	20.5	0	0
Other	24	4.1	0	0
Total	580	100	62	100

Outcome Measures

According to teacher reports, 91% of participants improved in homework completion and class participation over the school year. See Table 6. There was little difference in this rate of improvement between the elementary and upper grade levels. Regarding student behavior, teachers reported that 96% of participants in grades 6-12 and 84% of elementary participants improved, for an overall improvement rate of 86%.

Table 6. *Teacher-reported Improvement among Regular Attendees on 21APR GRPA Measures*

Improvement Shown in:	**Elementary**	**Grades 6-12**	**Overall**
Homework completion and class participation	90%	93%	91%
Student Behavior	84%	96%	86%

Note. Elementary $N = 682$. Grades 6-12 $N = 108$. Overall $N = 790$.

Results from Surveys of Teachers, Parents, Children, and Partners

In addition to the overall results reported below, graphs of survey results broken down by grantee (region) are presented in the Appendix.

Parent Surveys

Of the 587 parents responding on the parent survey, strong majorities agreed with every positive statement about the program. See Table 7. The highest levels of agreement were with the statement "I would refer a friend or relative's child to the program" (96%) and "The program offers a safe setting" (93%). The highest level of disagreement, at 8%, was with the statement "The program relates closely to content taught during the school day." The most frequent responses of "Neither agree nor disagree" occurred on the questions of whether the child's reading and math had improved as a result of participating in the program, with 37% and 35%, respectively, choosing the neutral response.

Table 7. *Frequencies of Responses on the Parent Survey*

Question on Parent Survey	% Agree	% Disagree
Child's reading improved	57	6
Child's math improved	59	6
Child's attitude towards school improved	73	3
Program relates closely to content taught during school day	63	8
Program offers variety of activities to help them learn	86	4
Program offers a safe setting	93	3
Happy with communication from staff	83	7
Staff have warm, positive relationships with students	89	3
I can make suggestions or voice concerns to staff or leaders	83	5
Would refer a friend or relative's child	96	1
Child satisfied with program	89	2
Parent satisfied with program	87	3

Note. $N = 587$. "Strongly agree" and "Agree" responses were combined in the % Agree column. "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree" responses were combined in the % Disagree column. "Neutral" responses are not shown but can be computed as the percentages in the two columns subtracted from 100.

The parent survey also included some questions eliciting open-ended responses, which we grouped into categories. More detailed lists of these responses are presented in the Appendix. Of the 369 parents responding with aspects of the program they were satisfied with, the top three most common responses had to do with the program's activities, safety, and provision of academic support. See Table 8.

Table 8. *Aspects of the Program Parents Were Satisfied With*

Aspect of the Program	Number	Percentage
Activities	101	27.4
Safety	91	24.7
Academic support	83	22.5
Structure and operation of the program	33	8.9
Parents like all aspects of the program	32	8.7
Communication	29	7.9

Note. N = 369. Parents' open-ended responses were coded into these categories.

On the question eliciting aspects of the program parents were dissatisfied with, 204 parents responded, but 159 of them (78%) said they had no concerns. See Table 9 and the Appendix. The top concern of the rest was behavior management, with 11 parents mentioning issues such as unfair handling of misbehavior, allowing children to be disruptive, and failure to address bullying.

Table 9. *Aspects of the Program Parents Were Dissatisfied With*

Aspect of the Program	Number	Percentage
Parents had no concerns	159	77.9
Behavior management	11	5.4
Program schedule	7	3.4
Technology use	6	2.9
Communication	6	2.9
Attitudes of staff	4	2.0
Homework	4	2.0
COVID-19 impacted the operation of the program	3	1.5
Staffing	2	1.0
Snacks provided	2	1.0
Individualized Education Program accommodations	1	0.5

Note. N = 204. Parents' open-ended responses were coded into these categories.

When asked if they had recommendations for improvement of the program, 191 parents responded, but 133 of them (70%) said they had no suggestions. See Table 10 and the Appendix. The most common suggestions among the rest focused on the provision of additional resources, such as tutoring programs, outside activities, and changing activities each year to avoid redundancy. Another set of responses had to do with the program schedule, primarily asking for more flexibility.

Table 10. *Parents' Recommendations for the Improvement of the Program*

Recommendation to improve the following:	**Number**	**Percentage**
Parents had no suggestions	133	69.6
Provision of additional resources	20	10.5
Program schedule	14	7.3
Communication	11	5.8
Homework	6	3.1
Behavior management	4	2.1
Technology use	2	1.0
Snacks provided	1	0.5

Note. N = 191. Parents' open-ended responses were coded into these categories.

Teacher Surveys

Of the 286 teachers responding on the teacher survey, majorities agreed with all of the positive statements about the program. See Table 11. On the one statement that was not positively worded, "Program staff needs additional training," there was no response that captured a majority, but 44% disagreed and another 32% choose "Neither agree nor disagree." The most strongly endorsed statement was "The program is beneficial to students and families," with 93% agreement. The lowest levels of agreement (though still over 50%) and highest levels of disagreement (though still under 25%) came on three items about the communication of staff with them as teachers.

Table 11. *Frequencies of Responses on the Teacher Survey*

Question on Teacher Survey	% Agree	% Disagree
I have a good understanding of program goals	83	10
I have a good understanding of what program expects of me	73	14
Program relates closely to content taught during school day	63	12
Activities and curriculum are engaging	83	5
Staff communicates with me regularly regarding students' progress	53	23
Program staff needs additional training	24	44
I can make suggestions or voice concerns to staff	78	5
Program is beneficial to students and families	93	2
Satisfied with frequency of communication about academic progress	53	22
Satisfied with frequency of communication about behavioral progress	56	21
Program activities address students' behavioral needs	55	16
Program activities address students' academic needs	59	15

Note. N = 286. "Strongly agree" and "Agree" responses were combined in the % Agree column. "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree" responses were combined in the % Disagree column. "Neutral" responses are not shown but can be computed as the percentages in the two columns subtracted from 100.

The teacher survey also included some questions eliciting open-ended responses, which we grouped into categories. More detailed lists of these responses are presented in the Appendix. Of the 153 teachers responding with the benefits they saw in the program, the top three most common responses had to do with the program's activities, safety and support, and homework assistance. See Table 12. Those who listed activities mentioned that students engaged with others above and below their grade in activities that were not offered in their regular classrooms, and that some students enjoyed the program's STEAM activities rather than sports.

Table 12. *Teachers' Reports of the Benefits of the Program*

Benefit	Number	Percentage
Activities	78	51.0
Safety and support	34	22.2
Homework assistance	16	10.5
Student growth	15	9.8
Program structure and operations	5	3.3
No benefits observed	5	3.3

Note. N = 153. Teachers' open-ended responses were coded into these categories.

On the question eliciting aspects of the program parents were dissatisfied with, 104 teachers responded, but 63 of them (61%) said they had no concerns. See Table 13 and the Appendix. Among the rest, one category of top concerns was program structure and operations, including concerns about funding, lack of services for PreK, and mismatch of expectations between parents and the program. Another area of dissatisfaction was behavior management, including comments on a lack of consistent rule enforcement and lack of staff training on how to deal with misbehavior.

Table 13. *Aspects of the Program Teachers Were Dissatisfied With*

Aspect of the Program	**Number**	**Percentage**
Teachers had no concerns	63	60.6
Program structure and operation	13	12.5
Behavior management	13	12.5
Communication	10	9.6
Activities	5	4.8

Note. N = 104. Teachers' open-ended responses were coded into these categories.

When asked if they had recommendations for improvement of the program, 101 teachers responded, but 59 of them (58%) said they had no suggestions. See Table 14 and the Appendix. The most common suggestions among the rest focused on staff training, primarily around classroom management. Another set of responses had to do with the improving activities by providing more homework help, more activities for older youth, and more science, art, cooking, and field trips. Teachers also suggested that additional resources would allow the program to serve more children, and that frequency of communication of program staff with them regarding students' behavioral and academic goals could be improved.

Table 14. *Teachers' Recommendations for the Improvement of the Program*

Recommendation to improve the following:	**Number**	**Percentage**
Teachers had no suggestions	59	58.4
Staff training	13	12.9
Activities	11	10.9
Provision of additional resources	10	9.9
Communication	8	7.9

Note. N = 101. Teachers' open-ended responses were coded into these categories.

Child Surveys

Of the 1,637 children responding on the child survey, strong majorities agreed with every positive statement about the program. See Table 15. The highest levels of agreement were with the statement "I feel safe here in the program" (96%) and "I have friends here in the program" (95%). The lowest levels of agreement (though still over 75%) and highest levels of disagreement (though still under 12%) came on items asking if the activities they do in the program help them do math better and read better, and if they like school better because they go to the 21st CCLC after school. The highest frequency of neutral responses was on the item asking if the activities they do in the program help them do math better.

Table 15. *Frequencies of Responses on the Child Survey*

Question on Child Survey	% Agree	% Disagree
The activities I do here help me do math better	77	11
The activities I do here help me read better	82	10
I really like the activities we do here	93	4
The activities we do here help me learn new things	91	6
It's easy to ask a teacher for help here	92	5
The other kids in the program are nice to me	86	7
I have friends here in the program	95	3
I feel safe here in the program	96	3
I like to go here after school	89	7
I like school better because I go here after school	83	11

Note. N = 1,637. "Strongly agree" and "Agree" responses were combined in the % Agree column. "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree" responses were combined in the % Disagree column. "Neutral" responses are not shown but can be computed as the percentages in the two columns subtracted from 100.

The child survey also included some questions eliciting open-ended responses, which we grouped into categories. More detailed lists of these responses are presented in the Appendix. Of the 1,497 children who responded to the question asking them what they liked about the program, a majority mentioned activities. See Table 16. The top six activities they listed, in order of prevalence, are free time/recess, art, games, gym, reading, and STEM, with each being mentioned by at least 75 children. The fact that the program allowed them to spend time with their friends was also something children liked, with a few also listing the opportunity to make new friends. Children also mentioned how they liked being with the program staff, whom they described as kind and helpful.

Table 16. *Aspects of the Program Children Liked*

Aspect of the Program	Number	Percentage
Activities	929	62.1
Friendships	279	18.6
Caring relationships	130	8.7
Provision of snacks	101	6.7
Academic Support	58	3.9

Note. N = 1497. Children's open-ended responses were coded into these categories.

On the question of what things in the program they did not like, the majority of children who gave a response said there was nothing they did not like. See Table 17. Of the rest, just under a quarter listed something about the activities, including that they were boring or they didn't have any choices. The two specific activities listed the most as not liked were reading and spelling and going outside when it's cold. The next most prevalent category of aspects children disliked included negative behaviors of children toward each other, such as bullying and student disruptiveness.

Table 17. *Aspects of the Program Children Didn't Like*

Aspect of the Program	Number	Percentage
Nothing they didn't like	679	56.0
Activities	279	23.0
Negative behaviors	151	12.5
Leaving the program early	34	2.8
Snacks provided	31	2.6
The program sessions are long	28	2.3
COVID-19 impacted children's interactions with others	10	0.8

Note. N = 1212. Children's open-ended responses were coded into these categories.

Community Partner Surveys

Of the 45 community partners responding on the partner survey, strong majorities agreed with every positive statement about the program. See Table 18. The highest levels of agreement were with the statements "The program is beneficial to students and families" (93%) and "I am satisfied with the director or staff's interactions with me as a partner" (91%). The highest levels of disagreement (but still below 15%) were seen for the statements about the director or staff communicating with the partner regularly about the importance and impact of their involvement or contributions. The lowest level of agreement (at 73%) and highest level of neutral responses (at 20%) were for the statement "The program relates closely to content taught during the school day."

Table 18. *Frequencies of Responses on the Partner Survey*

Question on Partner Survey	% Agree	% Disagree
I have a good understanding of program goals	87	7
I have a good understanding of what program expects of me	89	7
Program relates closely to content taught during school day	73	7
Staff communicates with me regularly regarding importance of my involvement or contributions	78	11
Staff communicates with me regularly about impact or results of my involvement or contributions	78	13
I can make suggestions or voice concerns to staff	87	9
Program is beneficial to students and families	93	7
Satisfied with director or staff's interactions with me as a partner	91	4

Note. N = 45. "Strongly agree" and "Agree" responses were combined in the % Agree column. "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree" responses were combined in the % Disagree column. "Neutral" responses are not shown but can be computed as the percentages in the two columns subtracted from 100.

The partner survey also included some questions eliciting open-ended responses, which we grouped into categories. More detailed lists of these responses are presented in the Appendix. When asked how their organization contributes to the program, 23 partners responded. Of those, 10 said that they provide the program with additional resources, such as a location, staff, and snacks Another 9 indicated that they provided educational opportunities, such as field trips or guest visits to the program. Two partners provided community engagement opportunities, and two provided some funding to programs.

When asked what they saw as the benefits of the program, 38 partners responded. Of those, 16 mentioned how the program provided children with educational support and enrichment, such as homework assistance and engaging activities. Another 16 listed broader

ways that the program supported children and families by providing a safe environment and helping working parents with affordable afterschool childcare. These responses were largely paralleled in responses to a question asking for aspects of the program partners were satisfied with.

Partners also responded to a prompt asking them to describe any concerns they had about the program. Of the 26 partners responding, 22 had no concerns. The four listing a concern focused on the need for more difference in structure from the regular school day, more enrichment activities, more communication from staff, and more districts to have access to the program. There were also four partners responding with recommendations for program improvement, two focused on additional funding and two on communication.

Results from Observations using the CLASS tool

Statewide means on each CLASS domain and dimension are reported in Table 19, and scores are broken down by region in the Appendix. In the Emotional Support domain, the Positive Climate and Teacher Sensitivity dimensions were both in the high range, and the Negative Climate dimension, when reversed, had the best score of all the ten dimensions. Regard for Student Perspectives was the only dimension in this domain to fall in the middle range. Regard for Student Perspectives includes showing flexibility, incorporating students' ideas, following students' lead, allowing students choice, giving students responsibilities, encouraging their talk, eliciting their ideas, and allowing their movement. Taking these four dimensions together, the overall domain score for Emotional Support was 5.98, which rounds up to the high range. Other published studies using CLASS in K-5 classrooms in different regions around the country reported scores on these dimensions from the mid-4's to the mid-5's (and low-1's to low-2's for negative climate; Pianta et al., 2008). Thus, the 21st CCLCs in North Dakota performed comparably or better than regular classrooms in this domain.

The overall Classroom Organization score was just slightly lower, but still high enough to round up to the high range. Instructional Learning Formats was the only dimension in this domain to score below 5.5. This dimension focuses on ways in which the teacher maximizes the students' interest, engagement, and ability to learn. It includes effective facilitation, questioning, and use of a variety of modalities and materials. It is also indicated by the students showing active participation, listening, and focused attention. These scores are also consistent with published means from regular classrooms (Pianta et al., 2008).

On Instructional Support, regular school classrooms tend to score lower than in the other domains, generally in the low-middle to middle range (Pianta et al., 2008). The 21st CCLCs in North Dakota had similar but slightly lower scores, with all Instructional Support scores between 3.0 and 3.5.

Table 19. *Statewide Means on Each CLASS Domain and Dimension*

Domain or Dimension	***M***	***SD***
Emotional Support	5.98	0.68
Positive Climate	6.25	0.86
Negative Climate	1.18	0.41
Teacher Sensitivity	5.98	1.03
Regard for Student Perspectives	4.87	1.51
Classroom Organization	5.65	1.04
Behavior Management	5.84	1.21
Productivity	5.86	1.14
Instructional Learning Formats	5.23	1.34
Instructional Support	3.27	1.38
Concept Development	3.30	1.56
Quality of Feedback	3.36	1.41
Language Modeling	3.15	1.40

Note. 25 sites were observed. The CLASS scale runs from 1 to 7.

There were some differences in scores with respect to age composition and content of sessions. On two dimensions, Positive Climate and Behavior Management, classrooms with multiage groups scored significantly higher than those with single-age groups (See Figure 1). Comparing younger (K or 1st grade, separately or combined) with older (2nd or 3rd grade, separately or combined) students showed rooms with older students scored higher in Productivity and Instructional Learning Formats (See Figure 2).

Figure 1. *Multiage versus Same-age Sessions*

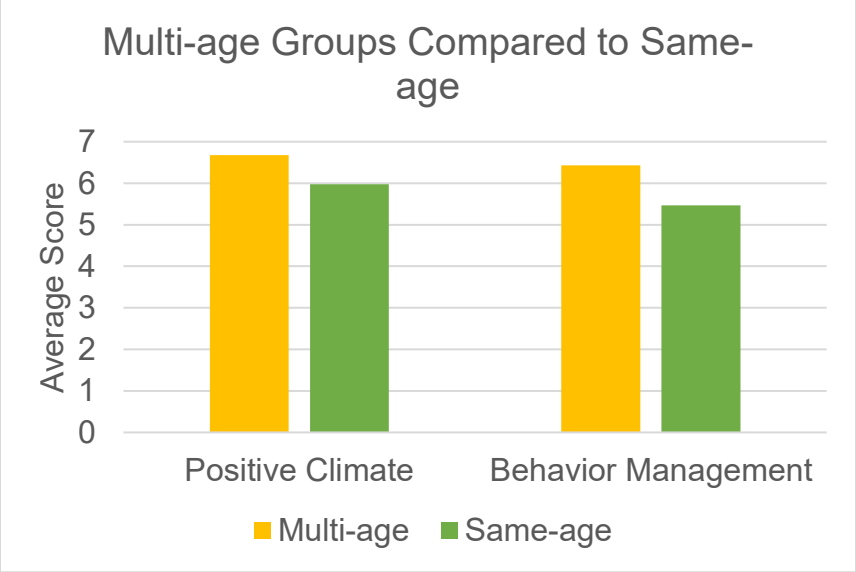
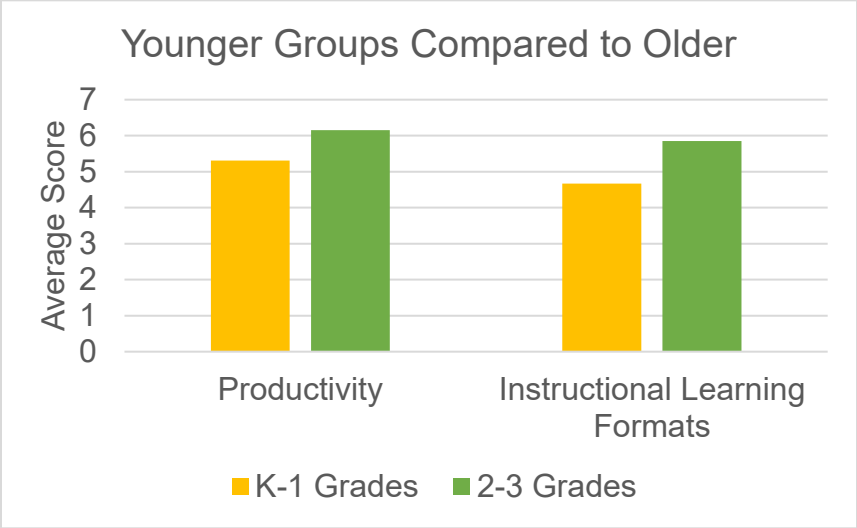


Figure 2. *Sessions with Younger versus Older Students*



Turning to the content of the sessions, those focused on math had significantly higher scores in Teacher Sensitivity and Productivity than sessions focused on anything else (See Figure 3). However, math sessions also had significantly lower scores in the Instructional Support domain and in all three dimensions included in it (See Figure 4).

Figure 3. *Math Compared to All Other Content*

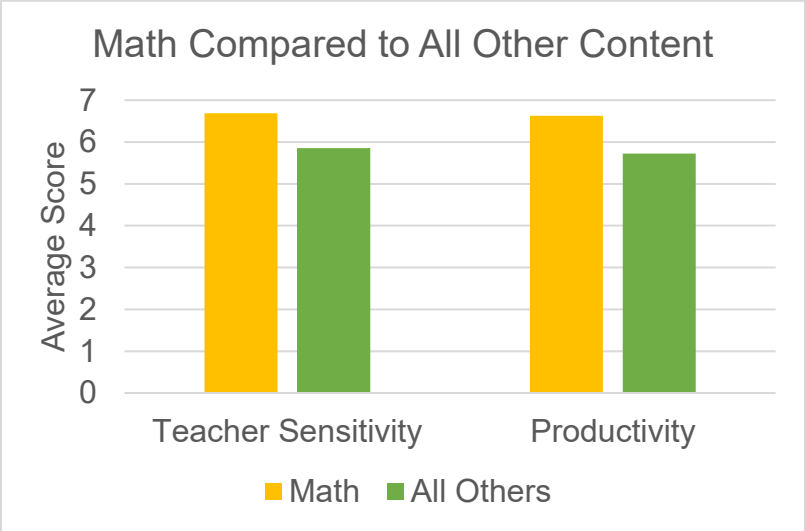
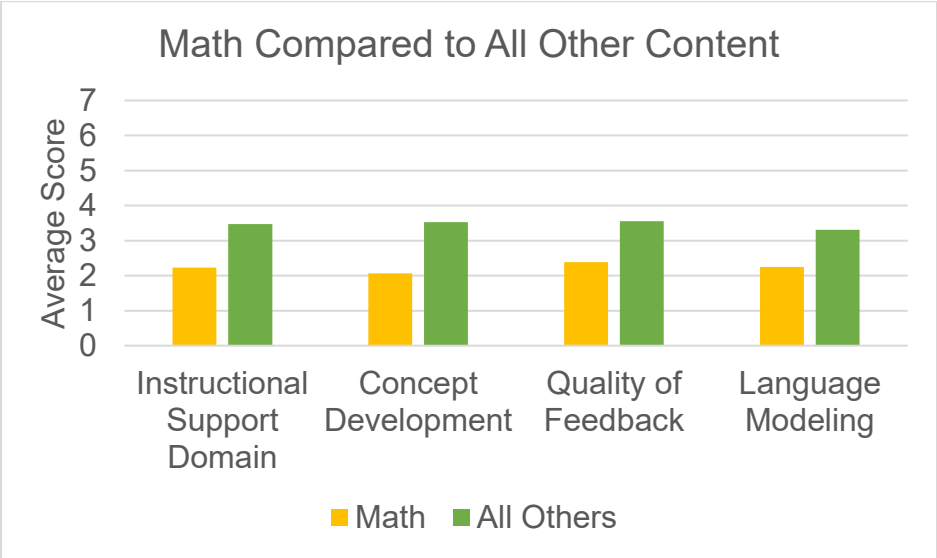


Figure 4. *Math Compared to All Other Content in Instructional Support*



On the other hand, sessions focused on science were unambiguously more positive than other sessions, with higher scores in the Classroom Organization and Instructional Support domains, the dimensions of Instructional Learning Formats and Positive Climate, and all of the dimensions in Instructional Support (See Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5. *Science Compared to All Other Content*

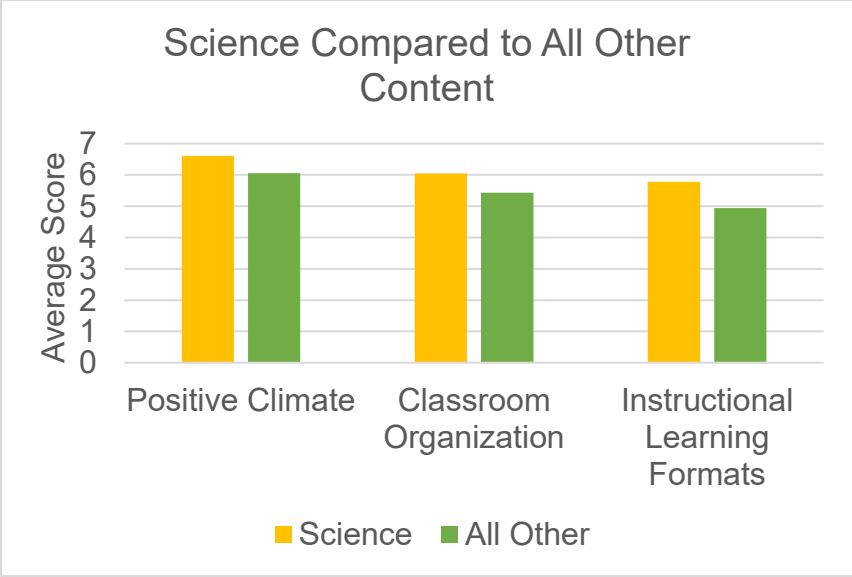
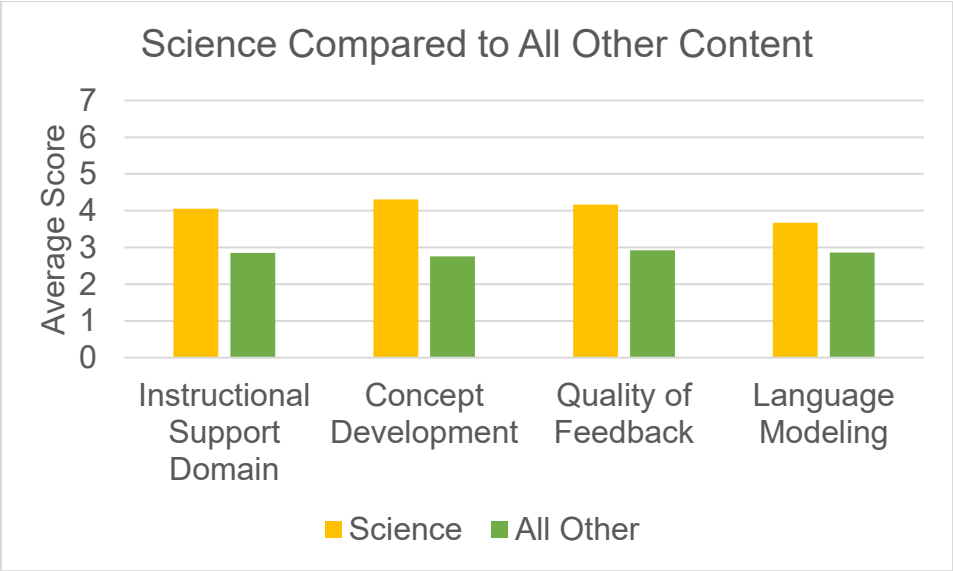


Figure 6. *Science Compared to All Other Content in Instructional Support*



Conclusions

Feasibility of the CLASS for 21st CCLC Evaluations

This pilot of the CLASS observation protocol showed that it can be used to reliably evaluate the learning environment in 21st CCLCs, and that the ranges of scores obtained in these programs are generally consistent with those in regular classrooms. Adaptations needed to be made to accommodate the different structure of 21st CCLCs, including observing for only two cycles per session instead of four. Further, at some sites, the second observation cycle within a session may have included different staff members than the first cycle.

These observations showed that the 21st CCLCs in North Dakota provided high levels of emotional support and were also strong in classroom organization. Sessions including several grade levels may be even stronger in these areas than single-grade sessions. The centers were much weaker in providing instructional support and lagged slightly behind regular school classrooms in this area. This outcome may not be surprising, given the different nature and purpose of 21st CCLCs compared to regular school classrooms. But it also points to opportunities for growth. The findings that science sessions, in particular, were stronger in instructional support may provide starting points for trainings on how staff can strengthen their work in this area. In addition to focusing training efforts, the use of the CLASS across the state also provided a common language and set of goals for 21st CCLC staff. Further research is needed to determine whether improvements in CLASS scores in 21st CCLCs will be seen after training occurs, and, if so, whether those improvements will in turn translate into positive learning outcomes for children.

Overview of Survey Results

As rated by their teachers, over 90% of the children attending 21st CCLCs in North Dakota improved in their homework completion and class participation. Over 85% improved in their behavior. Survey responses from the children, their parents, teachers, and community partners showed remarkable consistency. Strong majorities of every group endorsed every positive statement about the program. Nearly all parents said they would refer a friend or relative's child to the program. All groups of respondents also agreed that safety, the activities, and the academic support that programs provide were the best and most important aspects of the programs. The children also added that having this time to spend with their friends and with caring teachers was something they enjoyed. Adults should note that these social experiences are not just fun but are developmentally important as well. Most respondents had no concerns about the program and no suggestions for improvement. Among the few who did indicate some areas of concern, issues related to resources, communication, and behavior management were the most prevalent.

Acknowledgements

This report reflects the work of many people. The researchers would like to thank the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction for the opportunity to conduct this evaluation. In particular, Rebecca Eberhardt was supportive throughout the process, always finding a way to make things work. Kristin Knorr at the North Dakota Afterschool Network was also a tremendous resource on the use of the CLASS and in how it might inform professional development and staff training. The largest burden of data collection fell on the center directors who distributed our emails to parents, teachers, and partners and made sure children had access to our surveys. Without their commitment, not just to the students but also to this project, this evaluation would have failed. Finally, we thank the students, teachers, parents, and partners who were willing to share their experiences to help pave the way for those who come after them.

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