

# Evaluating Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers

2021-2022 Statewide Evaluation Report

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This report provides a comprehensive overview of the previous detailed network- and site-level data summaries provided to the Arkansas State Department of Education during the 2021-2022 program year.

2021-2022 Site and Network Survey Data Summaries, delivered September 2022

2021-2022 SAPQA and YPQA Network and Site Reports available in [Scores Reporter](#)

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## Executive Summary

Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) distributes federal funds to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21 CCLC) in high-need areas each year to provide academic activities, enrichment activities, and family engagement services in support of student success. ADE 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs are designed on the evidence-based premise that high-quality staff practices, supported by strong organizational capacity and a culture of continuous quality improvement will achieve greater levels of youth attendance in the variety of academic, enrichment, and family engagement activities offered, providing opportunities to students to strengthen the academic and life skills needed to increase their confidence and readiness for classroom learning. To support this program theory, ADE has partnered with the Forum for Youth Investment's Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality since 2010 to operate the Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI) process, a data-driven continuous quality improvement system built on an annual cycle of assessment, program improvement planning, targeted training opportunities, and coaching.

To assess the impact of Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC engagement, Weikart's evaluation team designed, implemented, and analyzed data from program quality assessments, surveys, and program and school records submitted in response to federal requirements annually. In addition to data summaries provided throughout the year to inform quality improvement conversations, each year culminates with a summative evaluation report to document best practices and identify growth areas. This report summarizes data with the intent to document progress towards Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Goals and Objectives, identify essential practices that contribute to program quality improvement and student success, as well as recommend key priorities for improvement that can accelerate effective youth programming in Arkansas moving forward.

**Goal 1: Increase academic achievement in participants who regularly attend 21st CCLC programs;**

*Objective 1.1:* 60% of participants regularly attending the 21st CCLC program will increase OR stay in the Advanced or Proficient levels on the statewide assessment for English language/literacy and math.

*Objective 1.2:* 60% of participants regularly attending the 21st CCLC program will show improvement in classroom academic performance as reported on the ADE Statewide Information System.

**Summary**

28% of regularly attending students increased OR stayed in the Proficient or Advanced levels on the English Language Arts ACT Aspire assessment, and 33% of regularly attending students increased OR stayed in the Proficient or Advanced levels on the Math ACT Aspire assessment. While programs did not meet the statewide Objective 1.1 of 60% at proficiency, the percent of students reaching proficiency increased for Reading and remained stable for Math; results worth mentioning during such a challenging period of time for students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, in reviewing data for participants who did *not* regularly attend programming, proficiency rates varied widely. For instance, in Math, for students who participated in school-year programming for more than 30 days, their 2022 proficiency rate was nearly 10 percentage points greater than for students who attended fewer than 30 days.

Also for the 2021-2022 program year, 59% of regularly attending students improved in classroom academic performance (i.e., GPA) as reported on the ADE Statewide Information System. This rate nearly meets the 60% objective set by ADE for the school year.

**Goal 2: Increase non-academic achievement in participants who regularly attend 21st CCLC programs**

*Objective 2.1:* 75% of youth attending 21st CCLC programs will report high levels of social and emotional skills, as reported on the youth survey administered by the Weikart Center

*Objective 2.2:* 75% of youth attending 21st CCLC programs will report high levels of positive academic habits, as reported on the youth survey administered by the Weikart Center.

**Summary**

Almost 96% of Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs had attending youth report high levels of social and emotional skills and academic habits for the 2021-22 program year, as did 100% of caregivers, continuing trends from previous years. Combined with program assessments, staff surveys, and family feedback, one hundred percent of Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs had families report that their child was doing well in school this year. Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs provide students with a rich learning environment full of supportive staff who assist with homework completion, provide new activities that align with youth interests and connect to school day content, and promote positive and productive relationships among peers. This data suggests that Arkansas 21st CCLC students continue to develop skills that will help them be successful in school, work, and life.

### Goal 3: Offer quality activities to all youth attending the program.

*Objective 3.1:* All 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs will offer homework help time to 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participants.

*Objective 3.2:* All 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs will offer academic (beyond homework help) and enrichment activities.

*Objective 3.3:* Every data collection term, 90% of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs will offer quality activities to families of participating students.

*Objective 3.4:* All programs will fully engage and complete all elements of the YPQI.

*Objective 3.5:* 75% of programs will score a 3.90 or higher on the ITS as measured by the YPQA or School-Age PQA.

#### *Summary*

Aligned with statewide Objectives 3.1 and 3.2, 95% of sites had students report that they are offered homework help time during programming, and 100% of programs reported offering activities tied to Literacy, STEM and Academic Enrichment. Of those programs offering Academic Enrichment, 98% also offered Well-Rounded Activities, like arts and music programing, service learning and youth leadership.

In response to ADE Objective 3.3, only 40% of sites offered activities for families throughout the year, though reports of family engagement were high. Ninety-two percent of caregivers agreed that there are program staff available at programs to talk to about their child, and 83% agreed that program staff can connect them to resources.

Aligned with ADE Objective 3.4, nearly all Grantee Directors fully engaged and completed all elements of the YPQI process. These include participating in a consensus scoring of the Program Quality Assessment, conversations to determine Program Improvement Plans for the site, providing coaching to their staff, and participating in professional development to strengthen programming. The one exception included a director who did not attend the consensus meeting to score the PQA. Importantly, when engagement was examined by position, Grantee Directors and Site Coordinators reported significantly greater participation in the YPQI process in comparison to afterschool staff.

For ADE Objective 3.5, 56% of Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs provided high-quality experiences, defined as a score of 3.9 or higher, for participating students each year based on their self-assessment PQA scores. Similar to national trends, programs on average tended to report higher scores in Safe and Supportive Environment practices than in the Interaction and Engagement domains. When observing PQA scale scores longitudinally, prior to the Covid pandemic as compared to 2021-2022 school year, several scales had averages consistently below 3.7 and indicated areas for growth. These scales fall under the Interaction and Engagement domains, which suggests that additional training and coaching on staff practices aligned to these domains would support program quality improvement throughout ADE 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs.

In response to these overall trends among Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs and to guide recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic, the following recommendations are offered:

❖ **Utilize training and coaching supports to promote higher-order aspects of positive youth development programming.**

Higher order aspects of positive youth development programming, as articulated in the scales of the Interaction and Engagement domains in the PQA, include providing young people with opportunities for collaboration, planning, choice, and reflection. Although incorporating these elements into programming may not be intuitive, with some ideas and intentionality, they can be readily incorporated into 21<sup>st</sup> Century programs and promote deeper learning and engagement in young people. Simple ideas for helping young people reflect on their learning, make choices, or plan their activities are taught in the Weikart Center's Planning and Reflection workshop and can take up minimal program time. Other workshops such as Building Community or Cooperative Learning provide practical ideas that can improve scores in the Interactive domain. Engaging direct staff in relevant professional development opportunities is ideal, but managers can also utilize staff meetings or brief coaching interchanges to provide staff with easy ways to increase young people's opportunities for constructive collaboration, leadership, and engaging in higher order thinking skills.

❖ **Review training efforts tied to the scoring of PQA self-assessments to ensure scores are valid and reliable.**

With the wide variation in PQA scores given for the same programs on their self-assessment and external assessment, opportunities for continued calibration over the course of the year, beyond the initial training, would be beneficial. While external assessments and self-assessments may capture staff practices at different points of time and self-assessment scores capture practices in a wider scope of offerings, it's worth noting the discrepancies in scores provided, especially for higher-order aspects of youth programming. It may be that these higher order practices are happening *sometimes* and being reflected in higher self-assessment scores, but not happening in every program offering or the offering observed by an external assessor. It also may be staff are less skilled than external assessors in accurately recognizing variation in some of the higher order practices, as they have had less training and experience with them. Our experience is that when staff have more training on scoring the tool and/or have more professional development training on how to implement practices within a particular domain, the self-assessment scores tend to move close to external assessment scores.

❖ **Reinforce that organizational climate directly impacts point-of-service program implementation by staff.**

Staff and Manager data collected through the Weikart Center's survey suite capture multifaceted information on organizational context, including organizational practices, values and staff experiences of the organizational setting. Patterns of significance were observed tying organizational measures to measures of high-quality program implementation, reinforcing the idea that in order to work effectively with youth, staff and managers require a supportive organizational context. This is

especially important for practices associated with the Interaction domain of the PQA, like those promoting youth Belonging and Leadership.

❖ **Continue staff recruitment efforts that prioritize a workforce representative of the youth being served by Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs.**

Recent research examining environmental contributors to youth outcomes suggests that students are more likely to report positive attitudes towards learning and achieve academic outcomes when there is a strong match in both race/ethnicity and gender between students and teachers.<sup>1,2</sup> Given the value of having shared demographics and lived experiences between students and staff within a learning environment, Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs may benefit by intentionally hiring a workforce who is representative of the students served, both in race and gender. In reviewing student survey responses tied to their program experiences, Native-American students reported lower scores on multiple measures, including ones tied to belonging and positive adult interactions. Across all programs, only 5 staff identified as Native-American on their surveys, which suggests this may be a particular group of adults who could relate and improve the program experience of participants. Further, 90% of staff identify as female while half of students served are male, and far fewer staff identify as Hispanic than students.

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<sup>1</sup> Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 45, 44-52.

<sup>2</sup> Egalite, A. J., & Kisida, B. (2018). The effects of teacher match on students' academic perceptions and attitudes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 40(1), 59-81.

## Program Background

In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was reauthorized and the responsibility for distributing federal funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) was shifted to each state. These dollars are intended to fund afterschool programs that are in high poverty areas or in low-achieving schools. Grants are awarded to applicants whose main goals are to:

1. Provide opportunities for **academic enrichment**, including tutorial services to help students meet the challenging state academic standards.
2. Offer students a broad array of **additional services, programs and activities** designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program.
3. Offer families of participating students opportunities for active and **meaningful engagement in their children's education**, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

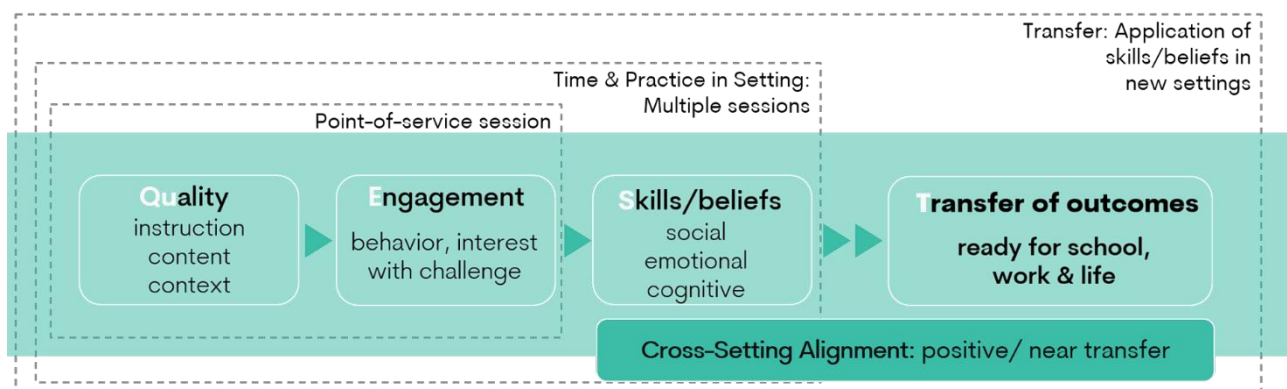
In alignment with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), each year the State Education Agency (SEA) must report on specific indicators designed to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of each funded program. This data is collected for each term and reported using the 21APR online portal monitored by the U.S. Department of Education. Additionally, SEAs must conduct comprehensive annual evaluations of their 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs that are made available for public consumption.

For the 2021-2022 program year, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) distributed 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding to 37 unique grantees (e.g., school districts, community-based organizations) who were responsible for grant management for the 59 unique sites (e.g., elementary school program, local clubhouse) where youth programming took place. Of these, 50 sites offered services during the school year, with 4 of those and an additional 2 providing summer programming as well. ADE provides guidance, supportive resources, and technical assistance throughout the year to support high-quality programming across the state and ensure compliance with federal requirements.

## **Arkansas 21st Century Community Learning Centers**

Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs operate on the evidence-based premise that frequent, regular attendance in high-quality out-of-school time programs (**Quality**) leads to program engagement (**Engagement**), and to the acquisition of essential 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills (**Skills**), which in turn contribute to greater success in college, career, and life (**Transfer**). The Quality-Engagement-Skills-Transfer model is called QuEST (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1. QuEST Model**



Combined with the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Annual Performance Reporting requirements, the Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program framework begins with high-quality out-of-school-time programming (**Table 1**). If students are provided high-quality programs (e.g., high-quality staff practices supported by strong organizational capacity and a culture of continuous quality improvement) then Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC will see higher levels of youth attendance in the variety of academic, enrichment, and family engagement activities offered. If activities offered are both high-quality and engaging, then students will have more opportunities to improve the skills required to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as social and emotional behaviors and academic efficacy, which will prepare youth to be more confident and interested in school day content. These students will then show up to the classroom ready to learn, leading them to greater gains in academic performance and post-secondary success.

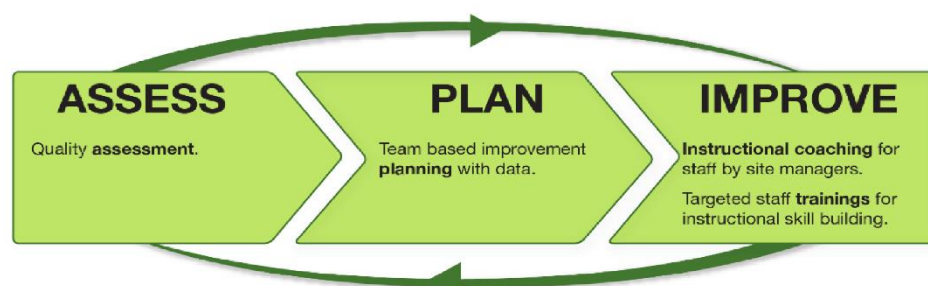
**Table 1. Arkansas 21st CCLC Program Framework**

Quality	Engagement	Skill	Transfer Outcomes
Organizational Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• Student Recruitment</li> <li>• Communication &amp; Collaboration</li> </ul>	Program Attendance	Homework Completion	Academic Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English/Reading</li> <li>• Math</li> </ul>
YPQI Fidelity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Planning with Data</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Coaching</li> </ul>	Academic Support	Social & Emotional Skills	College & Career Readiness
Youth Program Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe Environment</li> <li>• Supportive Environment</li> <li>• Interaction</li> <li>• Engagement</li> </ul>	Enrichment Activities	Academic Efficacy	
	Family Engagement		

Since 2010, ADE has partnered with the Forum’s Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality to implement the Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI) process, a data-driven continuous improvement process centered on four core staff practices. First, managers and staff are trained to use the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) that aligns best with their program and coordinate self- and external assessments of instructional quality at their sites. Next, staff participate in a Planning with Data workshop leaving them empowered with a drafted improvement plan to implement program quality improvements at their site. Third, managers and staff attend aligned trainings (e.g., Youth Work Methods Workshops, Quality Coaching) to strengthen skills and support quality practices. Finally, managers and other identified coaches provide technical assistance and ongoing support to program staff.<sup>3,4</sup> The YPQI process embeds a culture of continuous assessment, planning, and improvement in program quality (**Figure 2**).

In 2012, the partnership expanded to include ongoing evaluation and data support for Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs. Now, in addition to the standard YPQI process, the Weikart research team designs protocols to guide data collection and submission of the GPRA requirements, supports PQA data collection and reporting through Weikart’s Scores Reporter system, and leverages the Leading Indicators framework, a suite of surveys for managers, staff, students, and families, to provide comprehensive and interpretable data to support site-level quality improvement and system-level planning. Expanding on these site-reports, the Weikart team produces a summative evaluation report at the end of each year analyzing all data sources together. This statewide aggregate report not only fulfills the evaluation requirements set forth by the U.S. Department of Education, but also offers recommendations that will assist ADE in making strategic decisions about how resources are targeted to support program improvement and student success.

**Figure 2. Youth Program Quality Improvement**



<sup>3</sup> Smith, C., Akiva, T., Sugar, S., Lo, Y. J., Frank, K.A., Peck, S. C., Cortina, K.S. & Devaney, T. (2012). Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study, Washington, D.C.: Forum for Youth Investment.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, C., & Hohmann, C. (2005). Full findings from the youth program quality assessment validation study. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

The 2021-2022 program year began with the virtual Summer Conference for new and returning grantees focused on grant requirements and compliance. Program quality and evaluation supports kicked off virtually in August with an orientation session, differentiated for new and returning grantees. This orientation established expectations and timelines for the year and provided the opportunity to reflect on and celebrate successes from the previous year (**Table 2**). In September, an Introduction to Program Quality Assessment live workshop was hosted virtually for all grantees and programs, with new staff participating in PQA Basics and returning staff completing Beyond PQA Basics. From late September to November 19, 2021, all sites were expected to complete a self-assessment using the Youth or School-Age PQA to collect objective data about staff-youth interactions within programs at each site. Additional external assessments were conducted by the Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC leadership team to provide a more objective and reliable perspective on program quality. In January 2022, grantees and sites participated in a virtual Planning with Data workshop to review their program strengths and growth opportunities and subsequently submit a Program Improvement Plan detailing goals, timelines, necessary resources, and staffing supports to achieve desired improvements.

To support these goals, managers and staff had access to ongoing training opportunities throughout the year to improve targeted instructional skills. Grantee Directors and Site Coordinators were offered a live virtual leadership workshop in October and January to support their coaching skill development, with the expectation that they provide ongoing quality coaching to site staff throughout the program year. All staff also had access to online self-paced Youth Work Methods throughout the year to support identified program improvements. Supplemented by ongoing technical assistance and embedded coaching supports provided by the Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC leadership team as well as take-it back agendas, these opportunities were made available to all participating programs to reinforce continuous improvement practices.

**Table 2. 2021-2022 ADE 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Project Timeline**

Activity	Timeline	Aligned Data Collection
Summer Programming	May 2021 – August 2021	
Afterschool Programming	August 2021– May 2022	
Summer Conference	July 14-15, 2021	
Ongoing TA and Coaching	September 2021-May 2022	
Annual Performance Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer: June – August 2021</li> <li>• Fall: August – December 2021</li> <li>• Spring: January – May 2022</li> </ul> *Training webinar September 29, 2021	Attendance Staffing Academic, Enrichment & Family Activities
Program Quality Assessments	September – November 2021 *Training webinar October 27, 2021	Self and External YPQA and SAPQA
Professional Development PQA Basics/Beyond PQA Basics Coaching Leaders Planning with Data Youth Work Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• September 14-15, 2021; September 22, 2021</li> <li>• October 6, 2021; January 29, 2022</li> <li>• January 18, 2022</li> <li>• January 25, 2022</li> <li>• Online self-paced courses available all year</li> </ul>	Training Evaluation Surveys
Leading Indicator Surveys	March 3 – April 29, 2022 *Training webinar March 3, 2022	Site Coordinator/ Grantee Director Afterschool Teacher/Youth Workers Youth Family School Day Teacher

In 2012, the partnership expanded to include ongoing evaluation and data support for Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs. The Weikart research team designs protocols to guide data collection and submission of the GPRA requirements, supports PQA data collection and reporting through Weikart's Scores Reporter system, and leverages the Leading Indicators framework, a suite of surveys for managers, staff, students, and families, to provide comprehensive and interpretable data to support site-level quality improvement and system-level planning. Expanding on these site-reports, the Weikart team produces a summative evaluation report at the end of each year analyzing all data sources together. This statewide aggregate report not only fulfills the evaluation requirements set forth by the U.S. Department of Education, but also offers recommendations that will assist ADE in making strategic decisions about how resources are targeted to support program improvement and student success.

## Evaluation Design

To assess the impact of Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC engagement, the annual evaluation examines improvements in program quality, youth engagement in academic and enrichment activities, and the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills among participating PreK-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. These findings are then examined alongside the Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Statewide Goals and Objectives to assess annual performance and progress (Table 3).

**Table 3. Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Statewide Goals and Objectives**

<b>Goal 1: Increase academic achievement in participants who regularly attend 21st CCLC programs.</b>
<i>Objective 1.1:</i> 60% of participants regularly attending the 21st CCLC program will increase OR stay in the Advanced or Proficient levels on the statewide assessment for English language/literacy and math.
<i>Objective 1.2:</i> 60% of participants regularly attending the 21st CCLC program will show improvement in classroom academic performance as reported on the ADE Statewide Information System.
<b>Goal 2: Increase non-academic achievement in participants who regularly attend 21st CCLC programs</b>
<i>Objective 2.1:</i> 75% of youth attending 21st CCLC programs will report high levels of social and emotional skills, as reported on the youth survey administered by the Weikart Center
<i>Objective 2.2:</i> 75% of youth attending 21st CCLC programs will report high levels of positive academic habits, as reported on the youth survey administered by the Weikart Center.
<b>Goal 3: Offer quality activities to all youth attending the program.</b>
<i>Objective 3.1:</i> All 21st CCLC programs will offer homework help time to 21st CCLC participants.
<i>Objective 3.2:</i> All 21st CCLC programs will offer academic (beyond homework help) and enrichment activities.
<i>Objective 3.3:</i> Every data collection term, 90% of 21st CCLC programs will offer quality activities to families of participating students.
<i>Objective 3.4:</i> All programs will fully engage and complete all elements of the YPQI.
<i>Objective 3.5:</i> 75% of programs will score a 3.90 or higher on the Instructional Total Score (ITS) as measured by the YPQA or School-Age PQA.

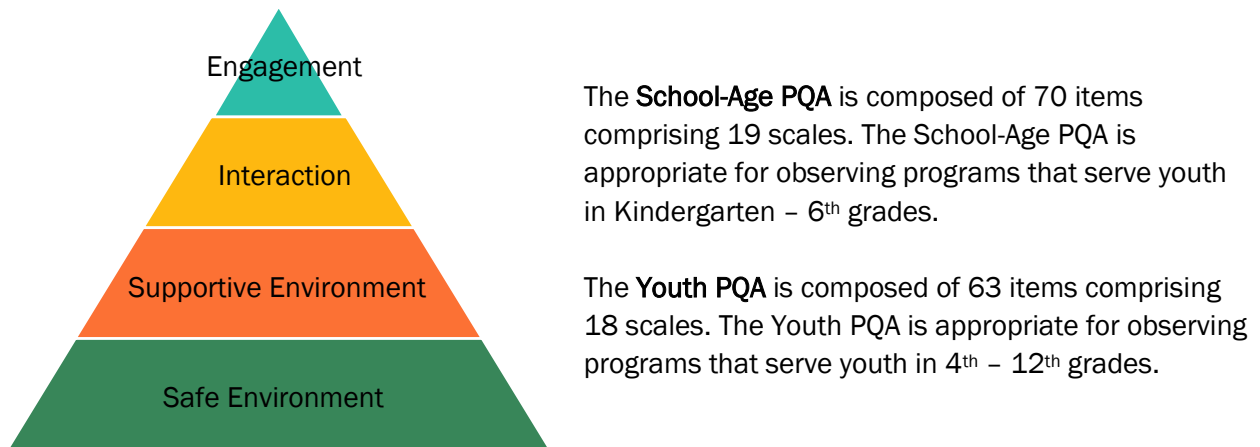
## Performance Measures

Multiple data sources were collected from participating sites to evaluate the impact of ADE programs each year. Until the addition of external assessment in 2021, sites were expected to submit self-assessment PQA data each fall, Grantee Director/Site Coordinator, Afterschool Teacher/Youth Worker, Family and Youth surveys each spring, and youth participation, staffing, activities, family engagement and Reading and Math proficiency assessment data for each term in alignment with the Annual Performance Reporting requirements.

### Program Quality Assessment

The PQA is a validated, observation-based instrument designed to evaluate the quality of K-12 youth programs and identify staff training needs. PQA data spans four domains of program quality: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs used both the School-Age PQA and the Youth PQA to collect site performance data.

Figure 3. Pyramid of Program Quality



To collect self-assessment data, an internal team was selected at each site to observe staff practices using the PQA. After observations, teams have a scoring meeting to discuss their notes and come to a consensus on the score for each item on the tool. Each item is scored using a 1-3-5 measurement scale, where 1 generally represents the absence of a practice or the presence of a poor practice, 3 represents the informal presence of the practice or availability of the practice to only some youth, and 5 represents intentional delivery of the highest quality practices. Final scores are entered into Scores Reporter, a Weikart Center online data collection platform.

The primary purpose of the PQA is to measure *instructional quality*, defined as the extent to which programs promote positive youth development through evidence-based staff practices implemented consistently across youth activities. Instructional quality, measured by the Instructional Total Score (ITS), is composed of ratings of staff practice at the point of service, or when staff or youth interact during the program. The ITS is a composite score of three out of the four quality domains: a structured environment facilitated through guidance and encouragement (i.e., Supportive Environment), opportunities for leadership and collaboration (i.e., Interaction), and the capacity to promote planning and reflection (i.e., Engagement).

### Annual Performance Reporting

The online federal data collection system (21APR) was designed to collect required site operations data across seven key program areas including: Centers, Activities, Staffing, Families, Participation

and Outcomes, and Program Attendance, outlined in alignment with the GPRA Indicators. The Weikart Center collects data at three timepoints throughout the program year (summer, fall, and spring) for input into the online 21APR platform in accordance with federally mandated deadlines. To complete data collection tied to Activities, Staffing and Family Engagement, grantees submitted tracking forms to the Weikart Center. Program Attendance and Outcomes monitoring were completed using Arkansas' AS21 website, which utilizes Cayen program management software.

### *Leading Indicator Surveys*

Grantee directors, site coordinators, afterschool teachers/youth workers, students, and families were invited to complete surveys to share feedback on their experience during the program year (**Table 4**). Specifically, these surveys informed our understanding of Organizational Context, Instructional Context, External Relationships, Youth Skills, and Family Satisfaction. Online surveys were administered via Qualtrics. The Weikart Center provided sites with weekly audits to monitor survey completion.

**Table 4. 2021-2022 Leading Indicator Surveys**

Survey	Intended Audience	Length
Grantee Director/Site Coordinator	Individual(s) responsible for site operations.	108 items
Afterschool Teacher/ Youth Worker	Staff responsible for providing direct programming to youth.	120 items
Family	All parents/guardians of youth attending the afterschool programs (regardless of youth age)	59 items
Youth	Youth in grades 4 through 12 who attended the afterschool programs <sup>5</sup>	50 items

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<sup>5</sup> Surveys are directed only at this age group because the survey method is not developmentally appropriate for children in third grade or lower.

## Evaluation Sample

Each year, all participating sites were expected to submit the required data for each term they were approved to offer programs. Almost all sites submitted the required 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC annual performance data on program activities, family services, and attendance to the US Department of Education each term and completed their self PQA (Table 5).

**Table 5. Participation by Calendar Year, 2019-2022**

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Grantees	55	49	43	26
Sites	81	75	68	59
<b>PQA</b>				
External	N/A	N/A	40% sites	27% sites
Self	80% sites	100% sites	100% sites	99% sites
<b>Surveys</b>				
Manager	128 (93% sites)	132 (96% sites)	110 (86% sites)	120 (100% sites)
Staff	573 (94% sites)	657 (96% sites)	473 (94% sites)	591 (100% sites)
Student	3,617 (96% sites)	945 (36% sites)	1,496 (92% sites)	2,587 (99% sites)
Family	1,719 (90% sites)	545 (33% sites)	550 (71% sites)	1,006 (97% sites)
<b>APR</b>				
Program Attendance (fall + spring)	11,776 students (88% sites)	13,245 students (97% sites)	7,548 students (100% sites)	9,660 students (99% sites)
ELA Test Scores	7,932 students (85% sites)	N/A*	N/A*	6,401 students (99% sites)
Math Test Scores	7,939 students (85% sites)	N/A*	N/A*	6,401 students (99% sites)

\*State testing was disrupted in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

\*\* Decatur did not submit PQA data. Decatur did not submit student surveys; McCrory and Cedar Mountain did not submit Family surveys. Clinton Jr and high school, Decatur, Maddux Elementary, McCrory Elementary, and Riverside Club K-4 was unavailable for APR monitoring data collection.

During the 2021-2022 program year Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program served a total of 9,660 students, steadily increasing from the number of participating students served the previous year. In alignment with 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC federal requirements, programs continued to serve the most vulnerable students each year. For example, most students received a free and/or reduced-price lunch (86%) and many required English Language Learning supports (15%) or were categorized as Special Needs (13%; Table 6). Based on their 2022 ACT Aspire scores, most students needed additional academic supports to reach grade-level performance. In Reading, of those students with test score data

available, 76% did not meet proficiency. In Math, of those students with test score data available, 66% did not meet proficiency.

**Table 6. Student Demographic Characteristics, 2022**

<b>Grade</b>	PreK-5 <sup>th</sup>	55%
	6 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup>	45%
<b>Race</b>	White	46%
	Hispanic or Latino	18%
	Black/African American	24%
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	8%
	Two or more races	3%
	Asian	<1%
	Native American/Native Alaskan	<1%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	51%
	Female	49%
<b>English Language Learner</b>	Yes	15%
<b>Free and Reduced Lunch</b>	Yes	86%
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	Yes	13%

In terms of demographics, most participating students were White (46%), Hispanic (18%), or Black/African American (24%). Comparatively, demographic data submitted through the Leading Indicators surveys showed that managers and staff members at Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC sites were primarily White (70%) and African American (23%), female (90%), and had either a Master's (52%) or Bachelor's (22%) degree in 2022. Recent research examining environmental contributors to youth outcomes suggests that students are more likely to report positive attitudes towards learning and achieve academic outcomes when there is a strong match in both race/ethnicity and gender between students and teachers.<sup>6,7</sup> Given the value of having shared demographics and lived experiences between students and staff within a learning environment, Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs may benefit by intentionally hiring a workforce who is representative of the students served, both in race and gender.

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<sup>6</sup> Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 45, 44-52.

<sup>7</sup> Egalite, A. J., & Kisida, B. (2018). The effects of teacher match on students' academic perceptions and attitudes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 40(1), 59-81.

## Evaluation Results

### Quality

Consistent implementation of high-quality instructional practices across sites requires clear leadership and support from Grantee Directors around program operations, quality standards and YPQI expectations, and available resources for staff support and development. Through annual submission of the PQA and Leading Indicator surveys, data measuring Organizational Context, Program Context, CQI implementation, External Relationships (i.e., with families and schools), Youth Outcomes, and self-assessed Program Quality (i.e., Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interactive Environment, Engaging Environment) were examined to assess the organizational setting and quality of Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs.

#### *Instructional Quality*

Research within the youth development field has established the significant relationship between high-quality programs and youth outcomes. Studies have shown that youth programs with the highest instructional practices, meaning those that prioritize a safe environment, supportive relationships, positive staff-youth interactions, and active learning principles are more likely to promote youth engagement and attendance, which in turn promotes youth skill development across multiple domains, such as academic, social-emotional, and behavioral skills.<sup>8</sup>

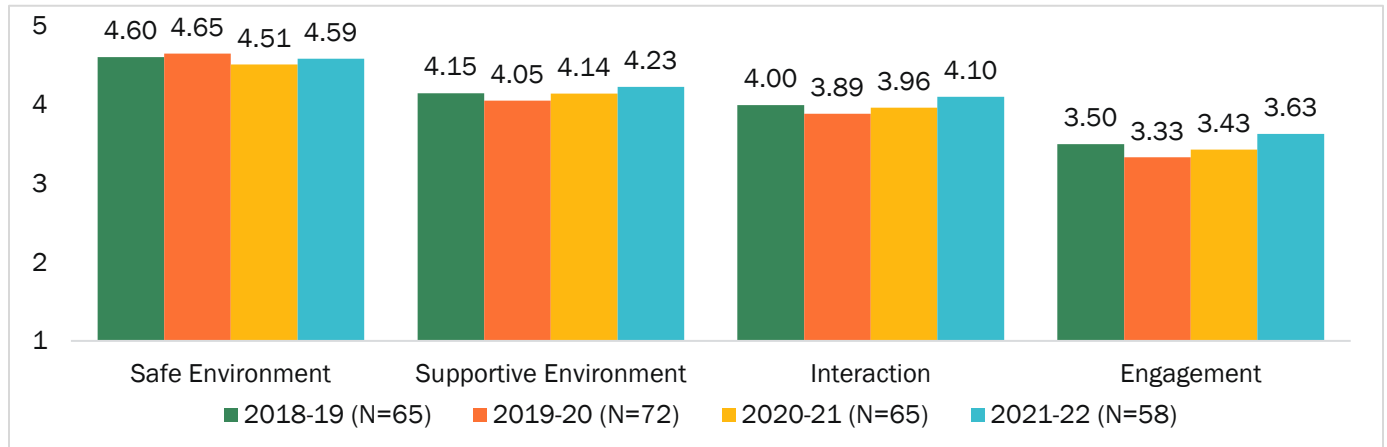
The Instructional Total Score (ITS; comprised of the Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement domains) is used as a measure of high-quality instructional practice. In the 2021-2022 program year, the average self-assessment ITS score was 3.9. **In response to ADE Objective 3.5, 56% of sites achieved an average ITS score of 3.90 or higher on their YPQA or School-Age PQA self assessment.**

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<sup>8</sup> Durlak, J., & Weissberg, R. (2010). A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45(3-4), 294-309.

While the ITS provides a broad understanding of instructional quality, self-assessment scores were also examined by domain to gather more nuanced information within the program context. **Despite challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, PQA self-assessment scores remained high each year, with sustained increases observed in 2022 (Figure 3).**

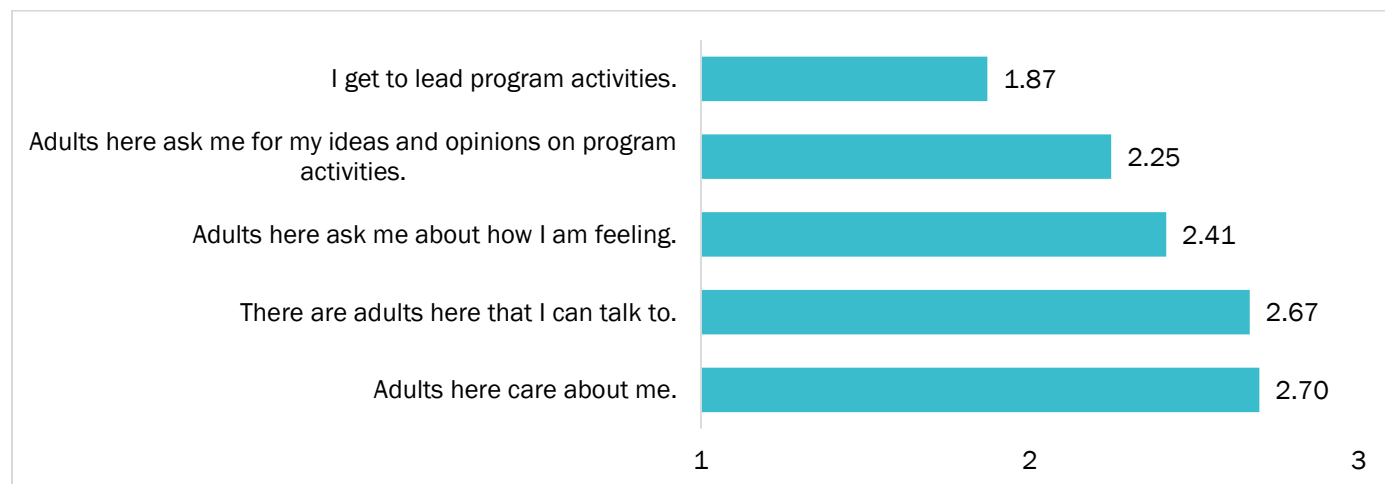
**Figure 4. Self-Assessment PQA Domain Scores by Calendar Year, 2019-2022**



On the self-assessments, all PQA domains received an average score of 3 or higher regardless of year, indicating that most instructional practices were observed some of the time and/or for some of the students since 2018-2019 program year. Aligned with national trends, instructional practices within the Safe Environment and Supportive Environment domains were strongest, with lower staff practices reported within the Interaction and Engagement domains. This pattern is common among all YPQI networks as providing an interactive and engaging program environment for youth requires an advanced set of staff practices and can be more difficult to achieve compared to establishing a Safe and Supportive Environment.

Students agreed that Safe and Supportive instructional practices are more common than Interactive and Engaging practices (Figure 5).

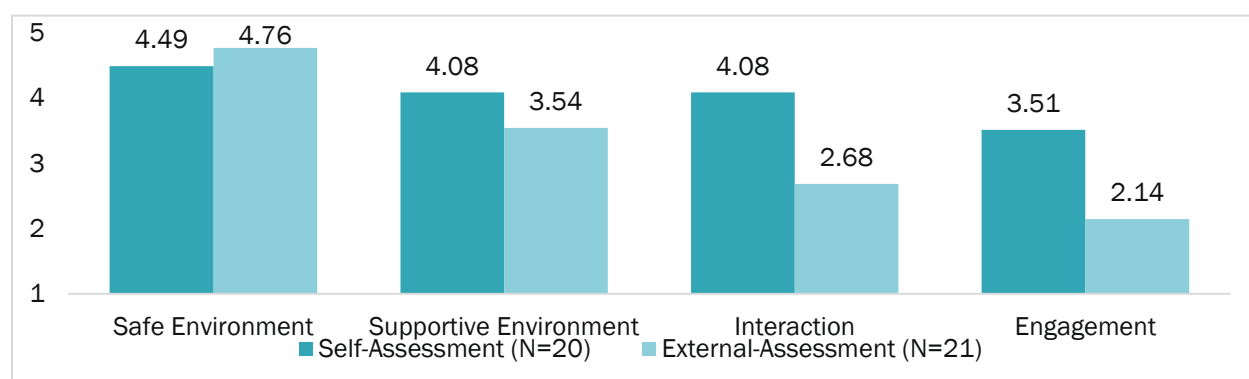
**Figure 5. Student Perspectives on Program Quality, 2022 (n=2,587)**



Scale: 1 = Not at all true; 2 = Somewhat true; 3 = Very true

In reviewing data from the PQA assessments scored by an external assessor during the 2021-2022 program year, there is a clear divergence of scores as the practices become more complex. Figure 6 includes PQA domain scores for programs that participated in both a self- and externally-scored assessment in the 2021-2022 program year. In reviewing external assessments using the YPQA or School-Age PQA, only 1 site met the threshold of 3.9 for their ITS.

**Figure 6. 2021-2022 PQA Domain Scores for Self- and External Assessments**



Changes in self-assessment PQA scale scores from 2018-19 through 2021-22 were examined to identify areas of consistent strength, areas needing growth or improvement and areas showing change from prior to the Covid pandemic. (See Table 7.) PQA scales with averages above 4.25

across years were identified as stable strengths in programming across program years. Scales that had averages consistently below 3.7 and were identified as areas for needing growth across program years. Other scales did not perform consistently over time, demonstrating some level of improvement or decline between the two program years. Two scales demonstrating *significant* growth during this time frame were Warm Welcome and Reframing Conflict. Note that scores are calculated across the network at two points in time; therefore, these network averages represent varying sets of programs, which could also cause shifts in scores. This comprehensive examination of both domain and scale scores suggests that **additional training and coaching on staff practices aligned to the Interaction and Engagement domains would support program quality improvements throughout ADE 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs.**

**Table 7. PQA Strengths and Opportunities**

	PQA Scales (Self-Assessment)
Strengths	Emotional Safety Healthy Environment Emergency Preparedness Accommodating Environment Nourishment Warm Welcome Session Flow Adult Interactions (SAPQA Only)
Significant Improvements	Warm Welcome* Reframing Conflict*
Growth Areas	Leadership Planning Reflection

### *Organizational Quality*

Consistent implementation of high-quality instructional practices across sites requires clarity and support from Grantee Directors around YPQI expectations and available resources. Combining guidance from the US Department of Education and the goals and objectives communicated from Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC leadership, grantees and sites were well-informed and supported to implement all four components of the YPQI intervention, providing a strong foundation for high-quality academic, enrichment, and family services that promote student readiness for academic success.

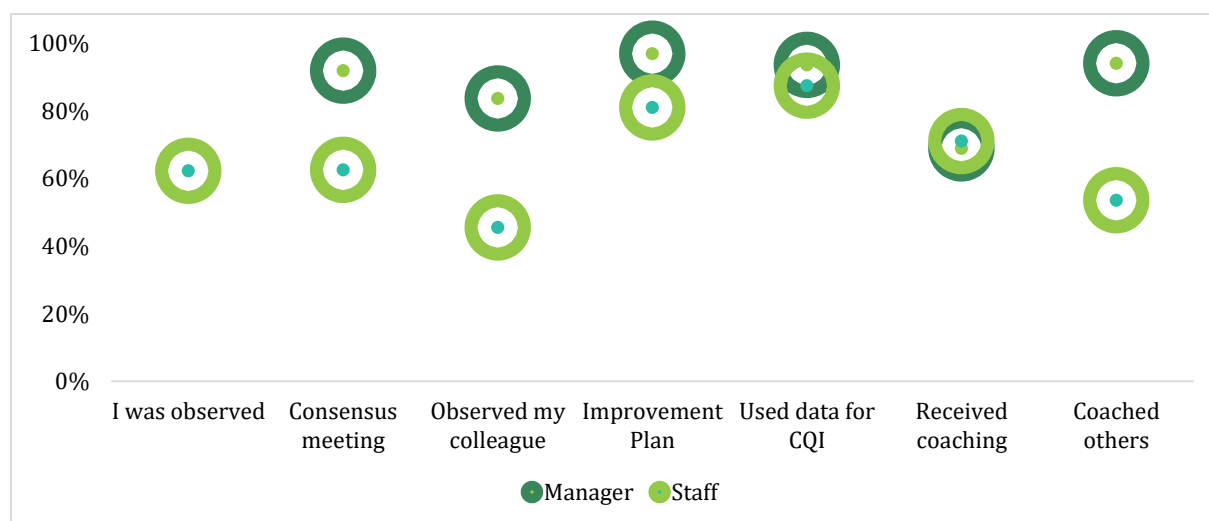
Survey data from Grantee Directors/Site Coordinators, afterschool teachers/youth workers, families, and youth were collected each year to examine staff implementation of the Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program model. Complemented by APR data regarding program activities, staffing and youth performance, survey responses about YPQI fidelity, instructional context, and youth experiences were

analyzed to confirm that Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs had the necessary resources to provide positive developmental opportunities for all participating youth.

### YPQI Fidelity

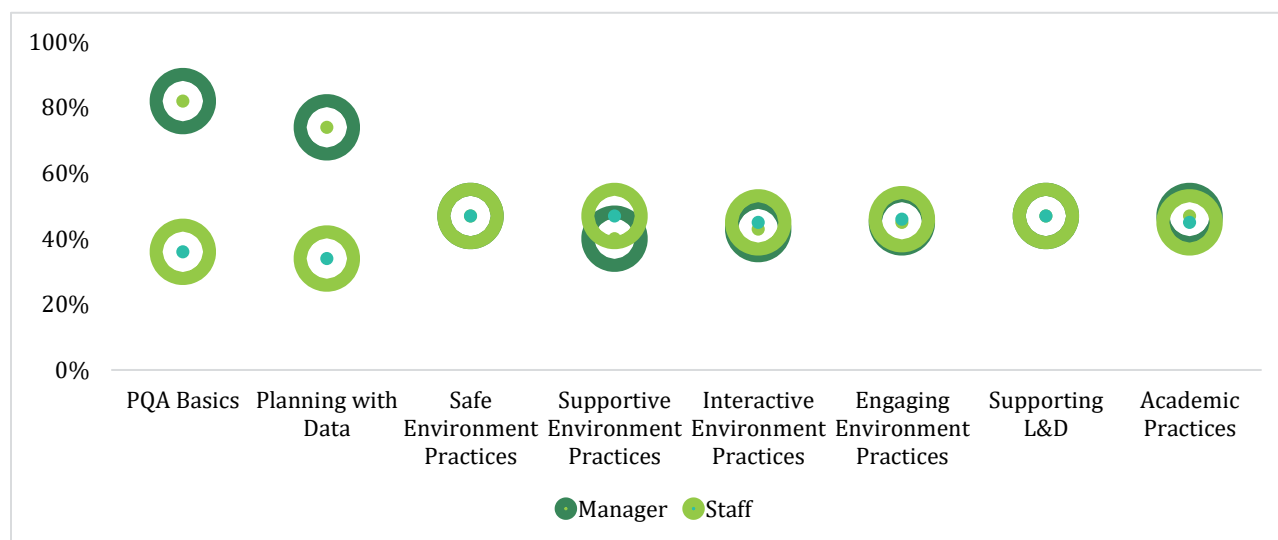
As described above, the four staff practices central to YPQI implementation are program quality assessment, data-driven improvement planning, coaching, and training. **Aligned with ADE Objective 3.4, all Grantee Directors fully engaged and completed all elements of YPQI.** However, when engagement was examined by position, **Grantee Directors and Site Coordinators reported significantly greater participation in the YPQI process in comparison to afterschool staff (Figure 7).**

Figure 7. Staff Engagement in YPQI Practices, 2022



Additional questions were examined to understand the extent to which staff participated in the various training opportunities provided to support YPQI. The 2022 survey data showed that there was a noticeable difference in participation by position for the PQA Basics and the Planning with Data trainings, but participation was comparable across role for the other trainings offered over the course of the year (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Staff Engagement in YPQI Trainings, 2022

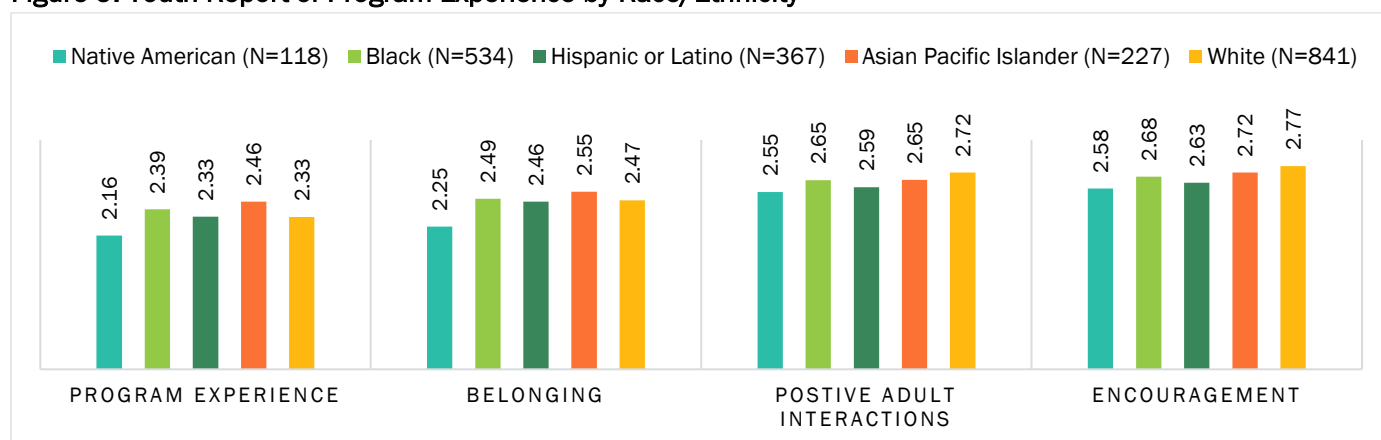


Additional analyses were conducted on Staff and Manager self-reported data from the Leading Indicator surveys and site self-assessment PQA data to explore the relationship between organizational quality and program quality (see summary of associations in Table C in the Technical Appendix). Overall, Staff and Manager reports of Organizational Practices, Values, and Experiences had the strongest positive relationship with Program Quality in the Interactive Environment domain. This pattern clearly illustrates that higher reports of Organizational Practices, Experiences, and Values are related to higher quality programming. Further review of the associations between Organizational Context measures and the scales *within* the Interactive domain on the PQA revealed noteworthy patterns in the relationship. For instance, there was a strong association between the Organizational Practices measures (both Staff and Manager reports) and the Belonging and Leadership scales. In other words, **when Staff and Managers experienced an organizational context that included staff collaboration, effective supervision, reserved planning time, manageable student: staff ratios, and perceived fair wages, they could more deeply engage with youth to promote program practices associated with the Interaction domain, such as youth Belonging and opportunities for youth Leadership.** Similar relationships held between Organizational Experiences, which captures aspects of the organizational climate like shared decision-making, feeling a sense of belonging at work, and experiencing joy and purpose at work, and the Collaboration and Leadership scales on the PQA.

Analyses conducted for the 2020-2021 evaluation of ADE 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs suggested racial equity gaps in access to high-quality youth programming based on PQA self-assessment scores. Beginning this summer, the Weikart Center will begin exploring potential cultural differences in the scoring of the PQA and implications on the interpretation of program quality across racial-ethnic groups. For this year's evaluation report, youth reports of program experience were disaggregated by

race-ethnicity to better understand subgroup differences in program quality. The Program Experience measure consisted of 21 survey questions and asked students to identify how true each statement was about their time in the program. Sample items included, “I get to try new things I have never done before,” “I feel safe to speak up when I see others being treated unfairly,” and “I get along well with other students here.” While this was a global measure, there were also individual questions that were analyzed tied to Belonging, Positive Adult Interactions and Encouragement. Significant differences were found across the racial groups, with Native-American youth scoring consistently lower than the other groups (Figure 9) With the exception of Native-American students, programs were providing BIPOC and white students comparably positive program experiences and feelings of Belonging. BIPOC youth were, however, less likely to experience positive, encouraging relationships with individual staff members, though these differences were not statistically significant.

**Figure 9: Youth Report of Program Experience by Race/Ethnicity**



Scale: 1=Not at all true, 2=Somewhat true, 3=Very true

Given the limited size of the samples, scores for Multi-Racial and Middle-Eastern students were not included in this analysis.

### Quality Summary

Approximately half of Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs provided high-quality experiences, defined as a score of 3.9 or higher on the PQA assessment. This number was reduced to 1 site when reviewing the PQA scores from an external assessor. In reviewing data from pre-Covid state to the present, programs continued to show strengths in the Safe and Supportive domains of the PQA, but showed room for improvement in practices connected to the Interaction and Engagement domains, especially in relation to leadership, planning and reflection.

For the 2021-2022 evaluation, youth surveys were more deeply explored to better understand how student subgroups reported on their program experience. During this programming year, there were significant differences in student responses based on race-ethnicity; these differences appear to be driven largely by lower scores provided by youth identifying as Native-American.

While the majority of programs engaged in all elements of the YPQI process each year, the data suggest that Afterschool Teachers/Youth Workers were less likely to participate than Directors/Managers. Organizational practices that encourage and allow for full engagement across all staff within programs can help to reinforce best practices in positive youth development programming. The connection between organizational context and stronger practices at the point of service was demonstrated through a detailed analysis of multiple aspects of organizational quality, including organizational practices, experiences and values as reported by staff and managers. All had a significant positive association with the Interactive domain on the PQA, suggesting that a higher quality organizational environment can promote stronger programming.

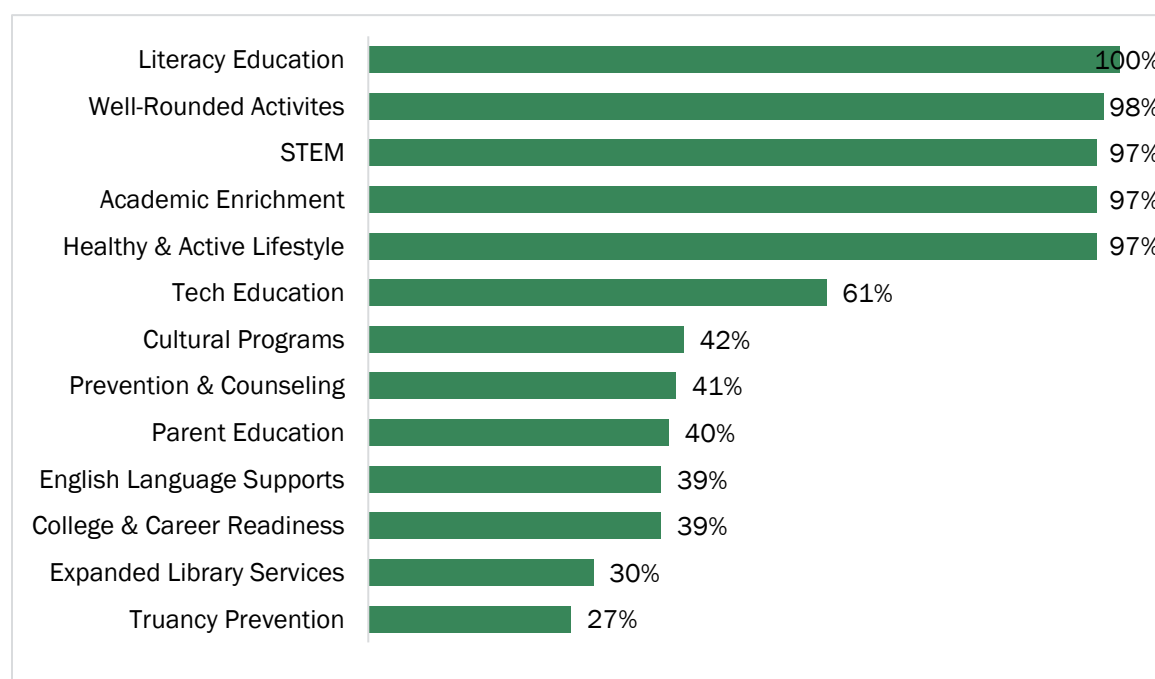
## Engagement

### *Academic and Enrichment Activities*

The priorities of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding are to provide students with academic and enrichment activities that will promote youth skills aligned to school-day success. For each APR term, staff reported on the different types of academic, enrichment, and character education activities that were offered. Like previous years, sites prioritized academic activities, including Literacy Education, Academic Enrichment, and STEM, along with activities that fall into the “Well-Rounded Activities” category, like

service learning, arts and music, and youth leadership programming (Figure 9). **Aligned with statewide Objectives 3.1 and 3.2, 95% of sites had students report that they are offered homework help time during programming, and 100% of programs reported offering activities tied to Literacy, STEM and Academic Enrichment. Of those programs offering Academic Enrichment, 98% also offered Well-Rounded Activities and nearly 40% offered Cultural Programs.**

**Figure 10. Program Activities, 2022**

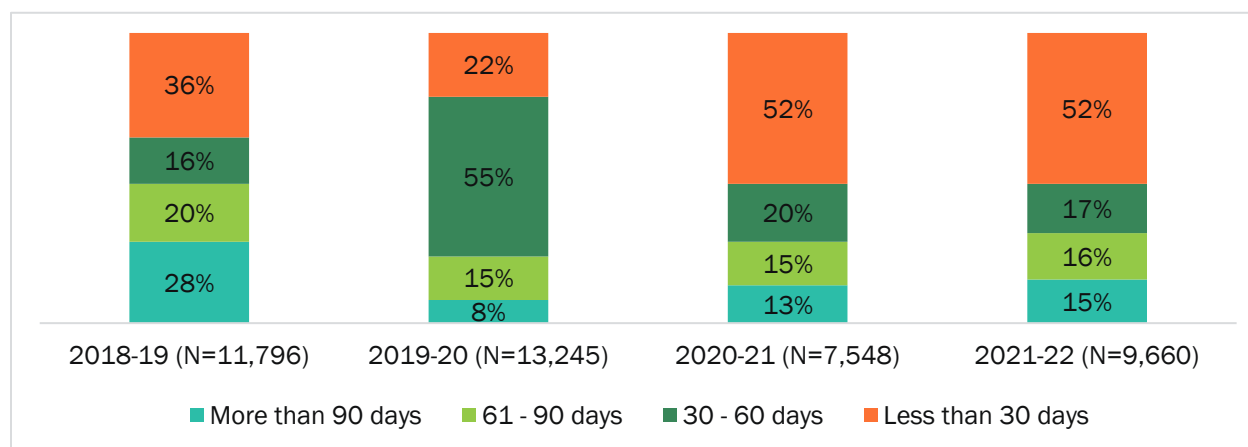


### *Program Attendance*

For the desired program impacts to be achieved, youth must attend the program frequently and consistently throughout the year<sup>9</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted program operations in 2020 and 2021, contributing to lower-than-normal attendance patterns. **Reduced attendance patterns were maintained into the 2021-2022 program year, with over half of students attending the program for less than 30 days, and fewer students enrolled than in years prior to the pandemic (Figure 11).**

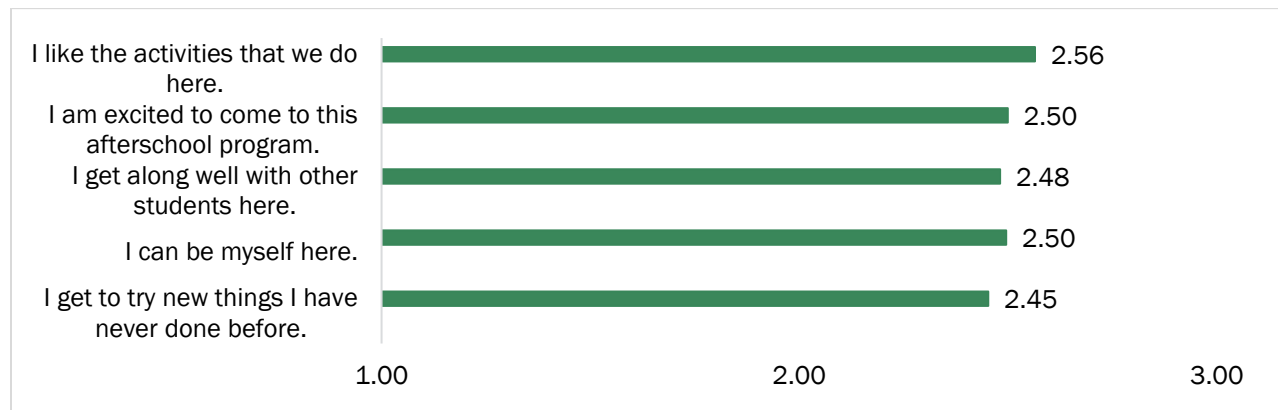
<sup>9</sup> Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., & Pierce, K. M. (2007). Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs. Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

**Figure 11. School Year Program Attendance, 2019-2022**



Students who did participate continued to report **high levels of satisfaction with the activities offered** and noted they were excited to attend the program, got along well with other students, were themselves, and tried new things (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Student Satisfaction, 2022 (n=2,587)**

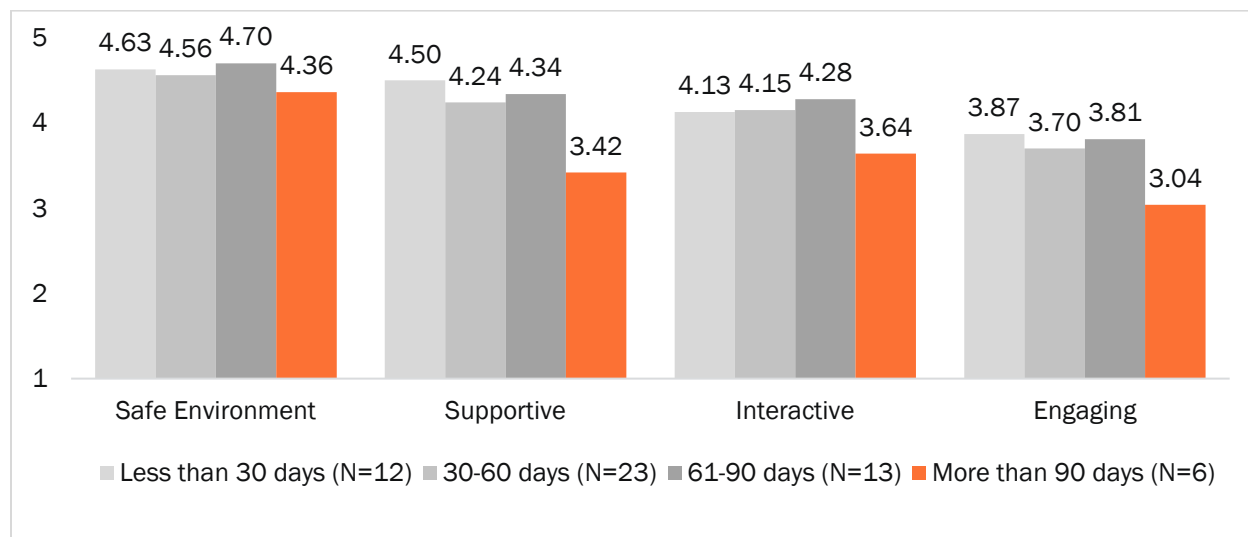


Scale: 1=Not at all true, 2=Somewhat true, 3=Very true

Additional analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between attendance and program quality. Data from the 2018-2019 program year showed that students who attended 90 days or more through the school year were significantly more likely to attend higher-quality programs. For the 2021-2022 program year, the association between attendance and program quality was in the opposite direction; higher program attendance was observed for programs with lower scores on program quality, though differences in PQA scores were not significant except for in the Supportive domain. While this relationship is simply correlational, in other words, we could not assign students to attend a specific amount of programming or randomize program quality, it's worth exploring

whether higher attendance rates are present in programs that while providing consistent after-school care, are potentially not providing as high-quality programming.

**Figure 13 Relationship between PQA Self-Assessment and Attendance, 2021-2022**

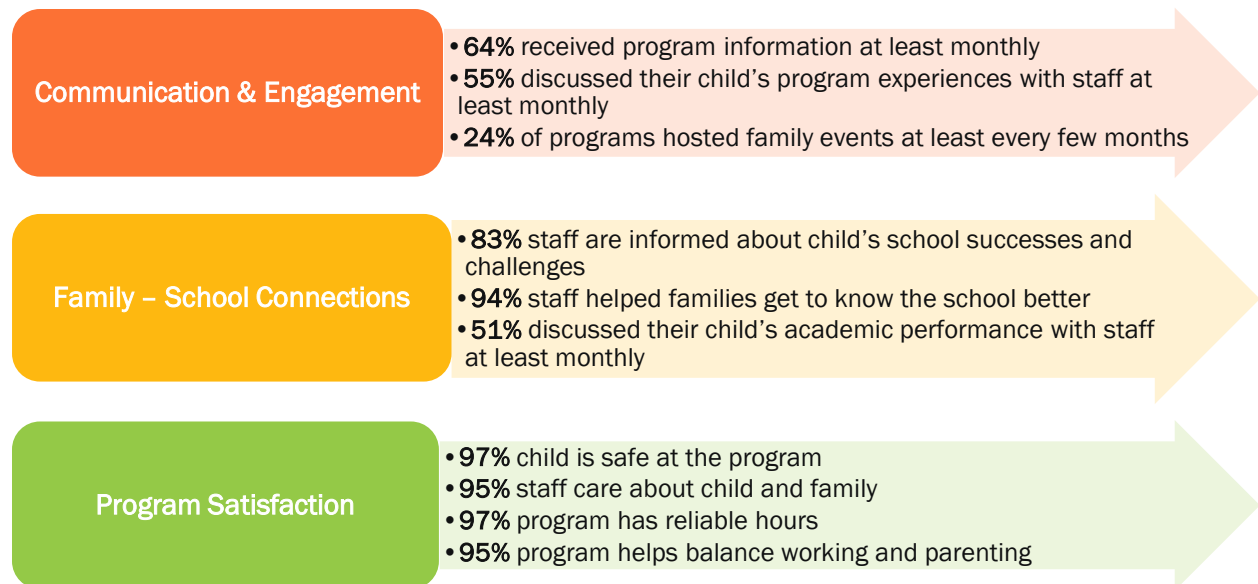


Note: these analyses were conducted at both the student- and program-level. This chart summarizes data at the program-level.

### *Family Engagement*

In addition to youth activities and in response to ADE Objective 3.3, 40% of sites hosted Parent Education activities throughout the year. While these efforts reached only a portion of caregivers, sites were also expected to offer active and meaningful family engagement opportunities in support of youth academic success. **Families reported high levels of satisfaction with programs in 2022**, with almost all families agreeing that staff cared about their child and family (95%), that their child was excited to attend the program (70%), and that program staff were well informed of their child's progress in school (83%; Figure 13). Of note, 92% of caregivers agreed that there are program staff available at programs to talk to about their child, and 83% agreed that program staff can connect them to resources.

Figure 14. Family Engagement, 2022



Families' confidence in care and satisfaction with school connections remained high and did not appear to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Families' satisfaction with communication continues to be an opportunity for improvement**, with 2022 survey responses showing that only 64% of families received program information each month and only 55% of families connecting with program staff at least monthly.

### **Engagement Summary**

As outlined in statewide objectives 3.1 and 3.2, all programs offered Academic activities during the 2021-2022 program year, in addition to a selection of enrichment activities. While enrollment and attendance rates are still less than they were prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, they have improved year over year and students and families still report high levels of satisfaction with what's being offered.

Consideration should be given to the negative association between program quality scores and attendance rates, suggesting that programs with lower attended days by students have higher scores across PQA domains, especially in the Supportive domain. Unexpected relationships often stem from questions about measurement; combined with earlier data showing significant differences in PQA scoring by programs and external assessors, continued calibration and training around the PQA is recommended. Moreover, this association could be driven by highly attended programs that are providing important childcare resources, but not necessarily strong youth development programming as measured by the PQA.

Skill Development

Instructional Rigor

The critical connection between high quality 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programming and student academic achievement is the point-of-service interactions where staff practices are responsive to a student’s individual needs. While self-assessment of program quality is a valued perspective, it is equally important to check in with students to see if their program experiences align with 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program expectations. When asked about the instructional context and content provided during program activities, **most students reported that the academic support provided, and instructional rigor of program activities was supportive of their academic development (Figure 15).** These reports align well with staff agreement that time is spent doing homework (88%), and students (78%) reporting that program staff understand their homework and that they are able to complete their homework during programs hours.

Figure 15. Youth Reported Academic Support and Instructional Rigor, 2022



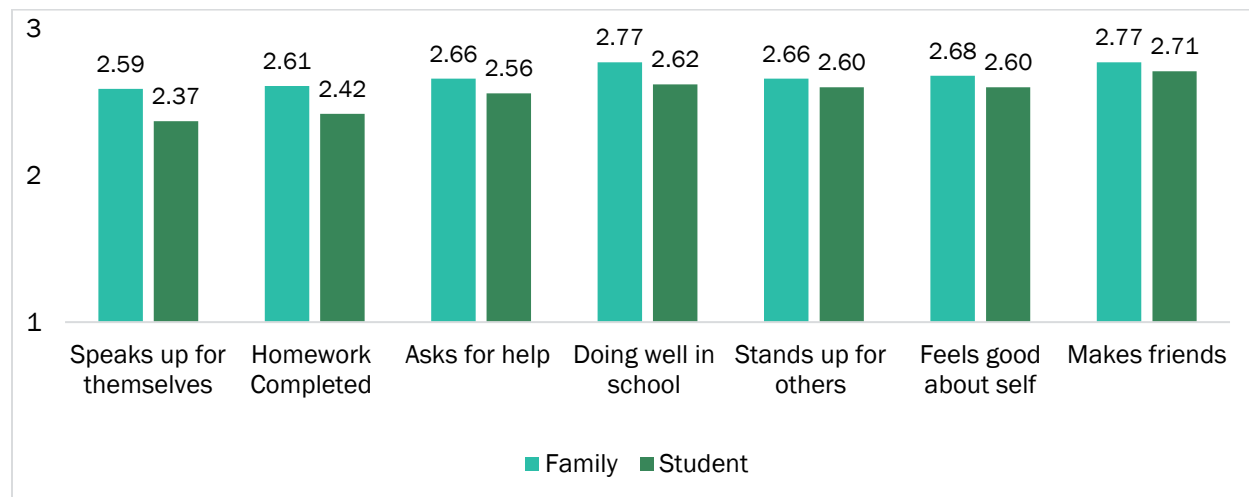
Youth’s 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Skills

The development of social and emotional learning, critical thinking, and leadership skills is similar to a muscle; the more youth practice them, the stronger and more easily accessible they become. When youth have consistent opportunities for teamwork, problem solving and communication, and are supported through intentional activities and staff practices, the skills and confidence gained can be transferred to other settings that allow youth to achieve success across multiple contexts and be better prepared for post-secondary life.

**Successfully achieving Objective 2.1, 96% of youth attending Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs reported high levels of social and emotional skills, as did 100% of their caregivers,** measured by an average response of somewhat true or very true across indicators. **Successfully achieving Objective 2.2, 97%**

of youth and 100% of their caregivers agreed that they're doing well in school this year. On average, most families and students acknowledged youth strengths in their ability to make friends and ask for help when needed, as well as feeling good about themselves and standing up for others (**Figure 16**). Aligned with existing literature supporting the relationship between social and emotional skills and academic achievement<sup>10</sup>, this data suggests that Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC students continue to develop skills that will help them be successful in school, work, and life.

**Figure 16. Student Skill Development, 2022**



Scale: 1=Not at all true, 2=Somewhat true, 3=Very true

Averages calculated at the site level before calculating network-wide averages.

<sup>10</sup> Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child development*, 82(1), 405-432.

### **Skill Development Summary**

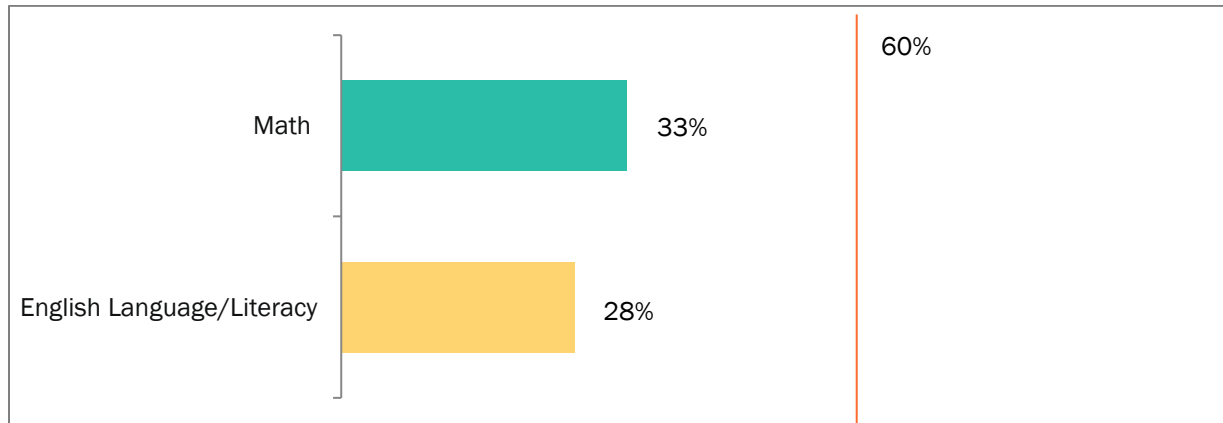
As reported by students, Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs provide them with a rich learning environment full of supportive staff who assist with homework completion, provide new activities that align with youth interests and connect to school-day content, and promote positive and productive relationships among peers.

Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs also provide opportunities to develop and practice important life skills, such as advocating for oneself and forming new friendships. At the conclusion of programming, students and families report almost unanimously that students are doing well in school and excelling on a multifaceted measure of student skill development.

## Transfer Outcomes

For the 2021-2022 program year, 28% of regularly attending students increased OR stayed in the Proficient or Advanced levels on the English Language Arts ACT Aspire assessment and 33% of regularly attending students increased OR stayed in the Proficient or Advanced levels on the Math ACT Aspire assessment.

**Figure 17. Academic Proficiency Levels**



Of note, 76% of students entering the program did not meet proficiency on the English Language Arts ACT Aspire assessment in the spring of 2021; 72% did not meet proficiency on the Math ACT Aspire assessment. At the state level, 64% of students did not meet proficiency in Math and 63% did not meet proficiency in ELA (Arkansas Department of Education, [DESE website](#)). Program participants represent an academically at-risk group in that their proficiency levels upon entry are nearly ten percentage points lower than the state-wide average. Participation in programming is but one contributor to Covid recovery efforts during this 2021-2022 school year<sup>11</sup>. While programs did not meet the statewide Objective 1.1 of 60% at proficiency, **the percent of students reaching proficiency increased for Reading and remained stable for Math**; results worth mentioning during such a challenging period of time for students. Additionally, in reviewing data for participants who did *not* regularly attend programming, proficiency rates varied widely. For instance, in Math, for students who participated in school-year programming for more than 30 days, their 2022 proficiency rate was nearly 10 percentage points greater than for students who attended fewer than 30 days.

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<sup>11</sup> 2022 Aspire test results show gains over 2021 but lag below pre-pandemic levels. Arkansas Democrat Gazette. Cynthia Howell. 7.19.22

For the 2021-2022 program year, **59% of regularly attending high-school students improved in classroom academic performance** (i.e., GPA) as reported on the ADE Statewide Information System. This rate nearly meets the 60% objective set by ADE for the school year. With two-thirds of students entering the program with a final GPA below 3.0 from the prior school year, improved classroom academic performance suggests improved classroom engagement, which can eventually translate to increased test scores.

### **Transfer Outcomes Summary**

Given that 100% of programs reported devoting substantial time to academic activities, 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs play a significant role in students' academic achievement. The availability of year-over-year ACT Aspire results in the Spring of 2022 revealed lower academic performance state-wide than in the Spring of 2019. While upward trends do exist between 2021 and 2022 generally, students were especially slow to rebound in English. In reviewing data for regularly attending students during the 2021-2022 school year, proficiency rates improved for English Language Arts and remained stable for Math. Further, 59% of regularly attending high-school students had improved classroom academic performance, which suggests improved classroom engagement that can contribute to many aspects of the desired academic

## Recommendations

To assess the impact of Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs, this report examined data collected on YPQI implementation fidelity, program quality, youth and family engagement, as well as skill development and academic outcomes for participating PreK-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. In addition to detailing strong indicators of high-quality youth programming, there are several key areas of focus that can continue strengthening these developmental programs for students.

### ❖ **Utilize training and coaching supports to promote higher-order aspects of positive youth development programming.**

Higher order aspects of positive youth development programming, as articulated in the scales of the Interaction and Engagement domains in the PQA, include providing young people with opportunities for collaboration, planning, choice, and reflection. Although incorporating these elements into programming may not be intuitive, with some ideas and intentionality, they can be readily incorporated into 21<sup>st</sup> Century programs and promote deeper learning and engagement in young people. Simple ideas for helping young people reflect on their learning, make choices, or plan their activities are taught in the Weikart Center's Planning and Reflection workshop and can take up minimal program time. Other workshops such as Building Community or Cooperative Learning provide practical ideas that can improve scores in the Interactive domain. Engaging direct staff in relevant professional development opportunities is ideal, but managers can also utilize staff meetings or brief coaching interchanges to provide staff with easy ways to increase young people's opportunities for constructive collaboration, leadership, and engaging in higher order thinking skills.

### ❖ **Review training efforts tied to the scoring of PQA self-assessments to ensure scores are valid and reliable.**

With the wide variation in PQA scores given for the same programs on their self-assessment and external assessment, opportunities for continued calibration over the course of the year, beyond the initial training, would be beneficial. While external assessments and self-assessments may capture staff practices at different points of time and self-assessment scores capture practices in a wider scope of offerings, it's worth noting the discrepancies in scores provided, especially for higher-order aspects of youth programming. It may be that these higher order practices are happening *sometimes* and being reflected in higher self-assessment scores, but not happening in every program offering or the offering observed by an external assessor. It also may be staff are less skilled than external assessors in accurately recognizing variation in some of the higher order practices, as they have had less training and experience with them. Our experience is that when staff have more training on scoring the tool and/or have more professional development training on how to implement practices within a particular domain, the self-assessment scores tend to move close to external assessment scores.

### ❖ **Reinforce that organizational climate directly impacts point-of-service program implementation by staff.**

Staff and Manager data collected through the Weikart Center's survey suite capture multifaceted information on organizational context, including organizational practices, values and staff experiences of the organizational setting. Patterns of significance were observed tying organizational measures to measures of high-quality program implementation, reinforcing the idea that in order to work effectively with youth, staff and managers require a supportive organizational context. This is especially important for practices associated with the Interaction domain of the PQA, like those promoting youth Belonging and Leadership.

❖ **Continue staff recruitment efforts that prioritize a workforce representative of the youth being served by Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs.**

Recent research examining environmental contributors to youth outcomes suggests that students are more likely to report positive attitudes towards learning and achieve academic outcomes when there is a strong match in both race/ethnicity and gender between students and teachers.<sup>12,13</sup> Given the value of having shared demographics and lived experiences between students and staff within a learning environment, Arkansas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs may benefit by intentionally hiring a workforce who is representative of the students served, both in race and gender. In reviewing student survey responses tied to their program experiences, Native-American students reported lower scores on multiple measures, including ones tied to belonging and positive adult interactions. Across all programs, only 5 staff identified as Native-American on their surveys, which suggests this may be a particular group of adults who could relate and improve the program experience of participants. Further, 90% of staff identify as female while half of students served are male, and far fewer staff identify as Hispanic than students.

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<sup>12</sup> Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., & Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 45, 44-52.

<sup>13</sup> Egalite, A. J., & Kisida, B. (2018). The effects of teacher match on students' academic perceptions and attitudes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 40(1), 59-81.

## Technical Appendix

Correlation analyses were conducted to determine if there was an association between measures of Organizational Context and Program Quality. Analyses were conducted from Staff and Manager self-reported data on the Leading Indicator survey and site self-assessment PQA data during the 2021-2022 program year.

**Table A. Correlation Analyses Depicting Relationship between Organizational Context and Program Quality, 2021-2022**

	Supportive Domain	Interactive Domain.	Engaging Domain	Belonging	Collaboration YPQA Only	Leadership	Adult Interaction
Org Practice S	.269*	.431**	0.264	.356**	0.300	.392**	0.262
Org Practice M	.307*	.479**	.311*	.386**	0.345	.433**	0.220
Org Values S	0.160	.378**	0.235	0.163	.549*	0.247	0.173
Org Values M	0.105	.318*	0.220	0.122	0.382	0.189	0.155
Org Experience S	0.153	.427**	0.099	0.206	.590*	.412**	0.230
Org Experience M	0.155	.413**	0.096	0.216	.595*	.367**	0.231

S denotes Staff surveys. M denotes Manager surveys

ANOVA models were conducted to assess whether there were significant mean differences between attendance categorical groups and PQA scales or domains. Four categorical attendance groups were utilized including those attending 1-29 days, 30-50 days, 61-90 days, and 91+ days. Each site was assigned an attendance category based on the average attendance, pulled from the Annual Performance Data, of students within the site. Self-assessment PQA data was then used to examine whether there were significant mean differences between sites by attendance category. Generally, sites with students that attended the program 90 days or more scored lower on the PQA self-assessment than sites with students attending fewer days. Mean difference in self-assessment PQA data were significant in the Supportive Environment Domain, attributed largely to the significant mean differences in the Encouragement scale. There were two other scales with significant mean differences, Managing Feelings and Choice, but there were no significant post-hoc comparisons.

**Table B. Comparison of PQA Self-Assessment Score Means for Site Groupings by Average Attendance**

	Attendance Groups					Sig. Contrasts
	1-29 days (N=12)	30-59 days (N=23)	60-89 days (N=13)	90+ days (N=6)	ANOVA	
<b>Safe Environment</b>	4.63	4.56	4.70	4.36	$F(3, 50) = 1.243, p = .304$	
<b>Supportive Domain</b>	4.50	4.24	4.34	3.42	$F(3, 50) = 6.930, p = .001$	90+ days < 1-29 days, 30-60, 61-90
<i>Encouragement Scale</i>	4.24	3.81	4.03	2.58	$F(3, 48) = 6.045, p = .001$	90+ days < 1-29 days, 30-60, 61-90
<b>Interactive Domain</b>	4.13	4.15	4.28	3.64	$F(3, 47) = 1.375, p = .262$	
<i>Managing Feelings Scale (SAPQA Only)</i>	3.50	4.58	4.31	3.60	$F(3, 21) = 1.356, p = .025$	No Significant contrast
<b>Engaging Domain</b>	3.87	3.70	3.81	3.04	$F(3, 46) = 1.722, p = .166$	
<i>Choice Scale</i>	4.45	3.57	4.23	3.25	$F(3, 43) = 3.001, p = .041$	No Significant contrast

**Table C. List of ADE sites with Indigenous Youth**

Site	Count
Boys and Girls Club of McGehee	2
Carver Elementary	1
Cedar Mountain	1
Cedar Ridge SD Site	7
Cedarville Elementary and Middle Schools	1
Chicot Elementary	1
Drew Central Elementary School	2
Drew Central Middle School	7
Elementary High	1
Fountain Lake Elementary	8
Gravette Upper Elementary	3
Harrisburg Elementary School	7
Hermitage Elementary School	5
Jessieville Middle and High School	1
JO Kelly Middle School	3
Judsonia Elementary	6
Life Skills for Youth Site	1
Maddux Elementary	3
Midland Elementary School	7
Monticello Elementary	1
Monticello Intermediate	3
Pangburn High School	11
Quitman Elementary	1
Rector Elementary	3
Riverside Club K-4	11
Rogers Club	5
Sonora Elementary School	5
Sonora Middle School	2
Springdale High School	2
Turnbow Elementary	3
Weiner Elementary School	2
Westside Elementary	1
Yelville-Summit Elementary and High School	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>

**Table D. List of ADE sites with Indigenous Staff**

Site	Count
McRory Elementary	1
Harrisburg	2
Midland Elementary	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>

