21st Century
Community Learning Centers
Evaluation Report
September 2020

Alabama State Department of Education
Federal Programs

Prepared by the
External Evaluation Team for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers:

Dr. Laura Hodges
Dr. Dionne Rosser-Mims
Dr. Shannon M. Bland
Dr. Eva Marie Kane
Dr. Michael McCormick
Dr. Sherrionda Crawford
Dr. Patrick Faircloth
Dr. Shirley Farrell
Dr. April Upshaw

Troy University
College of Education

2020
This report was prepared for the Alabama State Department of Education under Contract U2O0579 by the College of Education at Troy University. Dr. Laura Hodges, Dr. Dionne Rosser-Mims, and Dr. Shannon Bland served as the primary evaluators for this project. Dr. Shannon Bland and Dr. Eva Marie Kane served as primary authors for this report. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE).

**Governor**

Kay Ivey

**Alabama State Department of Education**

Dr. Eric Mackey– State Superintendent
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **Executive Summary** .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 4
- **External Evaluation Team** .................................................................................................................................................................................. 5
- **Evaluation Design Overview** .................................................................................................................................................................................. 5
  - *Evaluation of Program Goals* .................................................................................................................................................................................. 5
  - *Implementation* .............................................................................................................................................................................................. 6
- **Summary of Results** ............................................................................................................................................................................................ 7
  - *Grantees* ................................................................................................................................................................................................ 7
  - *Student Population* ............................................................................................................................................................................................ 8
  - *Operations* ................................................................................................................................................................................................ 8
  - *Needs* ................................................................................................................................................................................................... 9
- **Limitations** .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 12
- **Conclusions and Recommendations** ......................................................................................................................................................................... 12
- **Appendix A: External Evaluation Team Qualifications** .......................................................................................................................................................... 14
- **Appendix B: Logic Model** ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 15
- **Appendix C: Staff Needs Survey** .................................................................................................................................................................................. 16
Executive Summary

The federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) competitive grant program provides expanded academic enrichment opportunities and services for at-risk or impoverished children and youth. Academic enrichment activities, tutorial services, and family involvement through 21st CCLC programs are designed to help students meet local and state academic standards in subjects such as reading and math. In addition, 21st CCLC programs provide youth development activities, service learning, drug and violence prevention programs, physical fitness and wellness programs, financial literacy programs, environmental literacy, technology education programs, art, music, counseling, internship programs and other ties to an in-demand industry sector for high school students that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.

The purpose of this evaluation is to gain a deeper understanding about what effect these programs are having on the academic and social development of Alabama’s 21st CCLC participants. As part of the 21st CCLC initiative, these centers are required to offer at least four days of academic enrichment (particularly in the areas of reading and math) each week. Alabama’s programs are also required to support parental involvement (i.e., opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education, including literacy and educational development) and partner with other organizations and businesses in the area. Additionally, the 21st CCLC programs of Alabama have three main goals as their focus for improvement: academic, behavior, and attendance. The aim of Alabama’s 21st CCLC programs is not only to improve academic standing as it relates to grades and standardized test scores, but also to positively impact students’ behavior and attendance during the regular school day.

Studies have consistently shown that students who are involved in afterschool and summer academic programs are better positioned for learning success than those who are not involved. We are pleased to present the findings from the 2019-2020 year. These data further provide evidence of the need for quality academic and enrichment programs for students in high-poverty and low-performing schools.
Troy University’s College of Education, has worked in conjunction with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) to collect and compile these data.

**External Evaluation Team**

Troy University’s College of Education is contracted through the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) to collect data about the impact of 21st Century Community Learning Center programs. The contractual responsibilities of the evaluation team include collecting data, analyzing data, and compiling the comprehensive external evaluation reports each year. More specifically, the external evaluation team is contractually required to facilitate and design a statewide external evaluation plan to support the ALSDE 21st CCLC grant program as mandated by Title IV part B legislation. The scope of work will result in an external evaluation plan focused on the effectiveness and quality of ALSDE’s 21st CCLC administrative and state-level activities. The evaluation team and qualifications, along with the logic model of evaluation implementation can be found in Appendices A and B respectively.

**Evaluation Design Overview**

This report includes the evaluation of Spring 2020-Summer 2020 year of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers in Alabama which includes information from the 120 site locations for cohorts 13 and 14. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, were collected via Qualtrics, a data management software, to gather information to provide a holistic picture of each program’s needs and services provided to both students and community. Descriptive statistics throughout the report are calculated on the programs/sites that provided data on a given measure. For example, if only 90 programs/sites out of the total 120 provided data, then the percentages are only based on the data obtained from those 90 programs/sites. This method preserves the statistical integrity of the data collected.

**Evaluation of Program Goals**

The evaluation of the 2019-2020 program year of the Alabama 21st CCLCs is based on data collected from grantees in Cohorts 13 and 14. Each cohort is eligible for three years of funding with the
option to reapply after their final year. Programs are required to report on program impact annually. Specifically, data on academic achievement, behavior, and regular school day attendance are required to be reported annually.

The evaluation of Alabama’s 21st CCLCs are based on the three overarching goals that include:

- Participants in 21st CCLC programs will demonstrate educational and social benefits and exhibit positive behavioral changes.
- Each 21st CCLC will offer high-quality enrichment opportunities that positively impact student outcomes such as school attendance and academic performance. This will also result in decreased disciplinary sanctions or other adverse behaviors.
- The 21st CCLCs will establish a relationship with parents, community organizations, and schools that will provide ongoing partnerships of mutual support.

Regarding students, the external evaluation team collects quantitative data pertaining to student GPA, math and literacy grades, attendance, behavior, program demographics, student engagement, and parent perception of their child’s satisfaction attending their afterschool program. Additionally, the external evaluation team makes site visits to program locations to collect qualitative data regarding program operations and student engagement. An important responsibility of the evaluation team is to collect information regarding staff needs to determine where programs are excelling and where deficits may lie in their abilities to meet overarching goals of 21st CCLC programs.

Implementation

Regarding this 2019-2020 evaluation report, only findings from the Staff Needs Survey will be reported due to the COVID-19 statewide shutdown impacting teacher/staff accessibility and program implementation.

---

1 Specific student data were not collected for the 2019-2020 report due to statewide shutdown during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2 Statewide closures hindered the external evaluation team’s ability to conduct site visits to collect qualitative data.
Implementation of the instrument to measure staff needs was facilitated Fall 2020 to measure previous cohort needs for award year 2019-2020 (Appendix C). The focus of the *Staff Needs* instrument included staff perception of program strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and needs. Additionally, the instrument asked staff to comment on the impact of COVID-19 and the facilitation of programs due to statewide shutdowns and social-distancing guidelines. The survey instrument was disseminated via email to cohort listervs. Data were collected via Qualtrics, a data management software.

**Summary of Results**

**Grantees**

In this report, cohorts 13 and 14 were evaluated, consisting of a total of 120 grantee locations serving 146 individual schools or physical locations. Cohort 13 is comprised of 66 sites while cohort 14 is made up of 54 sites. Data were collected from 511 total staff members who work directly with their respective 21st CCLC program, including 209 staff at programs that were active during summer 2020 and 282 from program staff that were not active during summer 2020\(^3\). Specific data regarding participation rate of the 120 grantee locations is not available due to data not disaggregated based on site location/name\(^4\).

---

\(^3\) Twenty participants did not answer this specific question regarding Summer 2020 implementation.  
\(^4\) A large percentage of sample did not provide their location site/name.
Data were collected from all staff including Program/Site Directors (12%), Site Coordinators (10.5%), Assistant Program/Site Directors (1%), staff (68%), and other (8%) (Figure 1).

**Student Population**

Data regarding demographics of programs were not able to be obtained for the 2019-2020 award year due to the statewide shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The shutdown caused inaccessibility to program staff, teacher, students, and parents.

**Operations**

During the Spring of 2020, both in-school and out-of-school programs were shut down for a period of time due to the COVID-19 pandemic mandated by Governor Kay Ivey. After time, programs had the option to continue virtually or remain closed until the following school year (2020-2021). Some programs opted to continue their program remotely or under new social-distancing safe guidelines. Of the data collected for the staff needs survey for the 2019-2020 award year, 57% of staff reported their programs opted to
not implement a summer program, while 42.5% of staff reported their program continued in Summer 2020.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an evolution in how students are engaged in afterschool programs presented itself. Of the programs that opted-in for a summer program, staff were asked the method in which they implemented their summer programs. Results indicate that the majority of programs provided services through Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) while others facilitated services face-to-face under social-distancing guidelines. A small percent (8%) choice to provide services through a mixture of both virtual and face-to-face (Figure 2).

Needs

Overall, staff reported that their needs are met and they are satisfied with their program’s operations. Results indicate there is a strong agreement regarding survey items in almost all areas. Programs are satisfied with management, policies, procedures, and resources. However, lowest agreement was seen in areas connected to communication with in-school teacher, parent involvement, and professional development (Table 1). Additionally, programs that were active during Summer 2020 reported no decline in support relative to programs that were active prior to the pandemic.
Comparing perceptions of staff and directors selecting a “Strongly Agree” response indicated statistical significance in the five following trends:

- Program directors view communication between after school and school to be lower (4.19) than staff (4.50, p=.03)
- Trend toward staff feeling that orientations were less thorough (p=.088)
- Trend toward staff feeling that programs were less supported (p=.093)
• Trend toward a view that there is worse balance between academic and enrichment activities in virtual programs (p=.088)
• Trend toward a view that communication between staff and site directors is lower in virtual programs (p=.096)

Participants were asked to indicate their top training requests/needs. Results indicated program staff’s top interests were to have more training in STEM education and engaging students in Virtual Learning Environments (Figure 3). Other top choices from the 16 options included training in how to engage parents, how to implement art and music, and more training on behavior management.

Figure 3: Staff top desired trainings

Participants were asked to reflect on their greatest success and challenges as a program. The collected qualitative data pertaining to challenges mirrored the quantitative data from participants requests/needs with staff desired trainings, and struggling with virtual learning environments. Another major theme concerning challenges was staff’s ability to maintain health and safety due to COVID-19 and social-distancing guidelines. However, many program staff were proud of their success in their ability to keep students engaged as well as seeing students succeed outside of the program.

Lastly, when asked about how programs could be further improved, the previously mentioned themes reappeared: parental involvement, communication, and virtual learning environments. Many program staff reported the desire to have better involvement and engagement from parents. They also desire to have more efficient communication among staff as well as parents. Finally, to be successful, programs desire a way to better engage students in the virtual learning environment.
Limitations

During Spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the shutdown of schools and programs both nationwide and statewide. This limitation forced the external evaluation team to halt all evaluation and planning. Although some data were able to be collected, a holistic picture of 21st CCLC programs in Alabama could not be obtained. Therefore, this external evaluation report is not a comprehensive evaluation of the program’s overall objectives and overarching goals. This report for 2019-2020 award year is limited to reporting staff needs only.

Additionally, Hurricane Sally in Fall 2020 hindered program participation in the external evaluator’s Staff Needs Survey from several site locations due to lack of power and school closures during our main period of data collection. Although this delayed data collection from several site locations, the external evaluation team was able to collect data from 511 staff across the state allowing the team to have a large enough sample size to make inferences/conclusions that should generalize to the larger population of afterschool programs within the state of Alabama.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although evaluation for the 2019-2020 award year was difficult due to the COVID-19 statewide closures, valuable information was collected which captured a picture of program staff’s ability to be flexible and remain overall satisfied with the work of their respective 21st CCLC program.

Results indicate that staff need more relevant professional development to better support their program students. STEM engagement, an imperative element in education, is essential in students’ abilities to develop critical 21st century skills that they carry over into adulthood. Afterschool spaces are essential in the implementation of integrative STEM activities, and furthermore, afterschool spaces are the perfect setting for this type of activity. Implementing STEM in afterschool spaces provides a low-pressure environment where students have the freedom to fail without penalty of low grades. Failure is an important factor that helps students develop critical thinking skills. However, until educators in both in-school and afterschool time feel confident to implement such activities, students will not be able to reap
the benefits. Alabama’s 21st CCLC staff greatly desire to have more training in STEM engagement. Therefore, a top-level immediate recommendation would be to provide access to more quality professional development regarding STEM.

Additionally, based on both qualitative and quantitative results, the theme of Virtual Learning Environments was prominent throughout the data. Programs were challenged by the need to immediately switch to an uncommon way of providing afterschool programming. They were flexible and transitioned quickly, but staff continue to struggle with engaging their students and parents through the virtual space. For the future award year of 2020-2021, 37% of responses indicated they would be implementing a virtual afterschool program. Therefore, a second top-level recommendation and immediate need would be to provide training opportunities and support regarding transitioning afterschool to virtual platforms.

Regarding the results of agreement on staff perceptions of their program, there is a large disconnect between how program directors perceive their program from how their staff perceive their program. This may be due to the different responsibilities pertaining to each member’s role in the program. Programs could benefit by providing strategies for better communication among staff and program directors.

Overall, the pandemic presented 2019-2020 grantees with a unique set of circumstances. However, staff rose to the challenge and reported great successes for the year. This unique time also brought awareness to new ways of providing afterschool learning to Alabama’s K-12 students through virtual learning platforms. These new pathways to engage students also come with new desires for better training and support to continue to make 21st CCLCs successful.
Appendix A

External Evaluation Team Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Laura Hodges</td>
<td>Co-PI, Professor, Counseling, Rehabilitation &amp; Interpreter Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Dionne Rosser-Mims</td>
<td>Co-PI, Dean, College of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Shannon M. Bland</td>
<td>Co-PI, Professor, Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy Hobbs</td>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorthea Dow</td>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Sherrionda Crawford</td>
<td>Professor, Counseling, Rehabilitation &amp; Interpreter Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Patrick Faircloth</td>
<td>Professor, Counseling, Rehabilitation &amp; Interpreter Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Shirley Farrell</td>
<td>Professor, Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Eva Kane</td>
<td>Professor, Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Michael McCormick</td>
<td>Professor, Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. April Upshaw</td>
<td>Professor, Counseling, Rehabilitation &amp; Interpreter Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INPUTS</td>
<td>Outputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources invested that allow the group to achieve the desired outcomes</td>
<td>Activities conducted or products created that reach the targeted participants or populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What we invest</strong></td>
<td><strong>What we do</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Data-driven evaluations of the facilitation of 21st century programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Surveys to parents, community partners, students, staff, teachers, interviews, onsite/virtual visits (observations), attendance, grades, progress monitoring achievement data, behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Evaluating How supported by ALSDE and TPI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Staff</td>
<td>Evaluating the communication between grantees, TPI, and ALSDE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Surveys/interviews of ALSDE and TPI regarding support and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project:** 21ccc grantee evaluations  
**Goal:** Evaluate and recommend effectiveness of communication and support and program operations and satisfaction based on evidence/findings
Appendix C

Staff Needs Survey

21st CCLC- Staff Needs Survey 20-21

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q14 School Name or Program name:

________________________________________________________________

Q15 Which cohort is your program a part of?

○ 13  (1)

○ 14  (2)

Q16 As part of the program, what is your title?

○ Program/Site Director  (1)

○ Assistant program/site Director  (3)

○ Site coordinator  (2)

○ staff  (4)

○ Other  (5) ____________________________________________________
Q1 For the following statements, choose how strongly you agree or disagree:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Applicable/Don’t Know (1)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Disagree (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>There are sufficient materials/resources to support program activities. (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Staff are given a thorough orientation to the program and job responsibilities before starting. (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>There are program policies and procedures in place to protect the safety of all children and staff. (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Staff receive adequate ongoing support to make their work environment a positive and enjoyable place to be (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Staff training needs are surveyed and relevant professional development is provided. (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Staff/child ratios allow staff to meet the needs of all children. (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. The site director displays sound and effective management of the site and staff. (7)

8. Staff feel valued. (8)

9. There is good communication between the site director and the staff. (9)

10. There is good communication between the afterschool program and the school day teachers. (10)

11. The students seem to enjoy participating in the program. (11)

12. The program takes into consideration the needs of students and their families. (12)

13. Parent engagement activities are based on parent surveys. (13)

14. There is a good balance between academic and enrichment activities in the program. (14)
15. The program helps student improve academically. (15)

16. The program focuses on improving student behavior through character building, leadership, anti-bullying, etc. activities and curriculums. (16)
Q2 Check the areas in which you would like training: (Please add any other areas not on the list)

☐ Behavior Management (1)
☐ Programming Ideas (2)
☐ STEM activities (3)
☐ Helping students with homework (4)
☐ Helping students with reading (5)
☐ Helping students with math (6)
☐ Art and music ideas (7)
☐ Parent engagement (8)
☐ P.E. and wellness activities (9)
☐ Connecting afterschool with the School Day (10)
☐ Communicating with parents (11)
☐ scheduling (12)
☐ working with children with disabilities (13)
☐ Afterschool in virtual learning environments (14)
☐ Other (15) ____________________________________________
Q3 What format will your program be in for the 2020-2021 school year? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Afterschool- Face to Face (1)
- [ ] Afterschool-Virtual (2)
- [ ] Summer- Face to Face (3)
- [ ] Summer-Virtual (4)
- [ ] No program/TBD for Fall 2020 (5)
- [ ] No program/TBD for Spring 2021 (6)
- [ ] No program/TBD for Summer 2021 (7)

Q4 Virtual Learning: If you plan to implement a virtual learning environment for your afterschool program, please elaborate on your plans/activities.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Q5 What are your greatest successes?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Q6 What are your biggest challenges?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Q7 What are your suggestions for program improvement? How can you/your program be better supported?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Q8 In summer 2020, did you implement a summer program:

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If in summer 2020, did you implement a summer program: = No

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1
Q9 What method(s) were used to deliver the Summer 2020 program?

- Virtual  (1)
- Face to Face  (2)
- Both Virtual and Face to Face  (3)

Q10 In what ways did COVID impact your program implementation during Summer 2020?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Q11 If you implemented face-to-face summer programming during Summer 2020, what precautions/guidelines were taken to insure social distancing/safety due to COVID?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Q12 Does your program have the technology support/infrastructure to successfully implement a virtual summer program? Discuss your program technology needs and students'/community technology needs.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
Q13 Discuss the objectives/activities/curriculum you implemented for your Summer 2020 program. Specify whether the activities were done virtually or face-to-face.