

FINAL 5 -YEAR EVALUATION REPORT

2021-2025

21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS PROGRAM

Project REACH

EGG HARBOR CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Egg Harbor City, New Jersey

OCTOBER, 2025



Prepared By:
**MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION
ASSOCIATES, INC.**
Newtown, PA

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The staff of Management and Evaluation Associates, Inc. (M and E) would like to acknowledge several program directors and site coordinators who have served the program during the last five years, including Ms. Alysha Garcia, Ms. Kristen Polisano, Mr. Simon Mohr, Ms. Nicole Goodwin, Mr. Jamahl Williams, Mr. Austin Gray, Ms. Bethel Mackiewicz Mr. Donnel Louis Dulay, Ms. Cindi Craig and Ms. Katie Minutella, all of whom provided support during this evaluation. We would also like to acknowledge the cooperation of the staff, parents, and students in the Egg Harbor City Community School.

Mary Beth Slivka
President

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Section</i>	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION	5
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY	5
Conceptual Framework for the Evaluation.....	5
Evaluation Methodology	7
Limitations of the Evaluation Effort.....	7
PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, DESCRIPTION, AND IMPLEMENTATION	7
Program Goals/Objectives.....	7
Program Description and Implementation.....	8
1. Program Administration	9
2. Recruitment, Enrollment, and Retention Strategies	9
3. Enrollments.....	10
4. Advisory Boards	10
5. Action Research Activities	12
6. Linkage between the After-School Program and the Regular School Day Curriculum and Teachers.....	13
7. Parent and Family Participation	17
8. Availability of Program Materials and Supplies	20
9. Feedback from Program Participants and Other Stakeholders.....	20
PROGRAM MEASURES AND OUTCOMES	27
Goal #1	27
Objective 1.1.....	27
Objective 1.2.....	29
Objective 1.3.....	34
Objective 1.4.....	37
Objective 1.5.....	38
Goal #2	43
Objective 2.1.....	43
Objective 2.2.....	44
Objective 2.3.....	44
Goal #3	45
Objective 3.1.....	45
Objective 3.2.....	45
Objective 3.3.....	46
Objective 3.4.....	46
OTHER INDICATORS OF PROGRAM SUCCESS	51
Significant Program Accomplishments	51
Significant Program Strengths.....	53
CHANGES IN PROGRAM DESIGN AND SIGNIFICANT TRENDS	56
SUMMARY PROGRAM CONCLUSION	56
PLAN FOR PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY	57

INTRODUCTION

This is a comprehensive 5-year, summary report of the Egg Harbor City 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program, REACH, for the years 2020-21 through 2024-25. The report narrative introduces the program and briefly describes the conceptual framework and methodology that guided the evaluation of the program over the past five years. Thereafter, the narrative presents the goals and objectives of the program and describes its design and implementation (e.g., its sites, enrollments, services and activities, professional development activities, and parent involvement). The *Measures and Outcomes* section presents and briefly discusses the data that have been collected about the program's activities and impact over the past five years. Finally, summary conclusions are offered about the extent to which the REACH program's services and activities exemplified excellence in after-school programming and achieved the desired program objectives and youth outcomes. All these data have been compiled and assembled from the annual progress reports that were previously submitted to the program director over the past five years, and which are incorporated *in toto* by reference into this report. As part of these sections, where applicable, any significant trends that have been observed during this period are also discussed.

As part of the overall evaluation effort, staff from Management and Evaluation Associates, Inc. (M and E) conducted planning sessions during the Fall of each program year with the program director to address program implementation issues and to confirm the scope of the evaluation activities (including site monitoring visits and other data collection activities) for each year. As part of the site monitoring efforts, interviews with the program director, site coordinators, instructional staff, and students, as well as surveys (administered to teachers, students, and parents) were conducted during the program year. The findings from these data collection efforts were reported each year in interim and final reports. Brief summaries of these findings are reported in the section entitled, *Program Description and Implementation*, which follows on p. 8.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework for the Evaluation

During the past five years, the model that guided the annual evaluations of this program was research-based and designed to review data within selected contextual areas, in light of stated goals, objectives, and indicators. Among the contextual areas were: learning environment (was it conducive for student engagement and learning?), levels of student engagement (i.e., cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral), and its intensity and program content (its curricular design and sequence, delivery and management, and support services). The evaluation, therefore, focused on positive changes in youth outcomes, including student achievement, social-emotional development, and character skills needed to foster a healthy and productive school climate, and pro-social attitudes and behaviors that would enable students to perform better in their regular school day programs and progress toward meaningful adult lives. The evaluation also assessed the engagement of parents in their children's education.

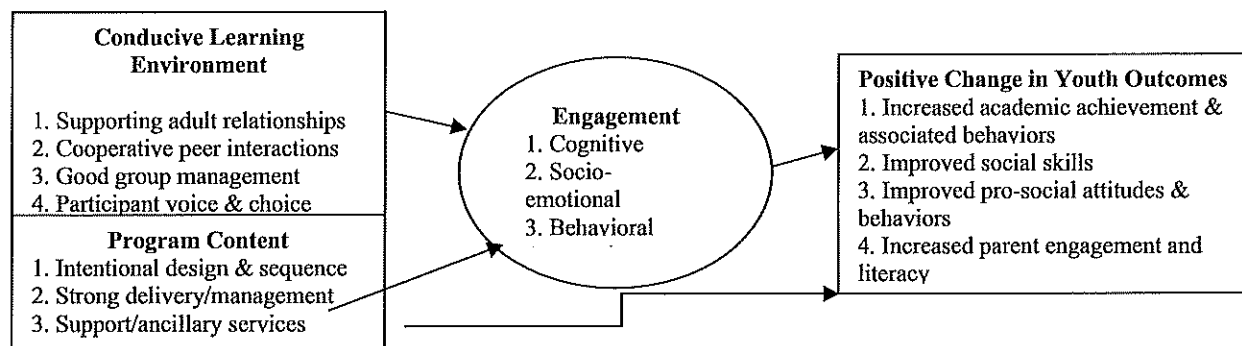


Figure 1: Grossman, J.B., Goldsmith, J., Sheldon, J., & Arbretton, A.J. (2009, Spring). Assessing after-school settings. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 121, 91.

The logic that underpins this model is predicated upon anticipated positive changes in youth outcomes (this is the dependent variable of the model). The factors (independent variables) that contributed to these anticipated outcomes are represented in the program’s learning environment, the program content, and the extent to which program participants (students) were actively engaged in the program. The independent and dependent variables are operationally defined as follows.

Learning Environment

In order for the program to be successful, there must be a *conducive learning environment* that includes supportive adult-student relationships, cooperative peer interactions, good group management (in a regular school day environment, this might better be known as classroom and activity management), and youth voice and choice.

Program Content

Effective programs are well-planned, well-implemented, and well-managed. The *content* of such programs is intentionally sequenced with empirically observable S.M.A.R.T.¹ objectives. Teachers are highly qualified and motivated and driven by an outcomes orientation. Instructional activities are clear and organized, provide for active (hands-on) participation by students, and are characterized by effective nurturing teacher-student interactions, appropriate support services, and meaningful and candid feedback about learning by teachers.

Engagement

Well-planned, well-implemented, and well-managed program content that is delivered in an environment conducive for learning that pro-actively *engages* students cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally will be successful. *Engagement* infers positive motivation and active participation (students have got to want to be there and want to actively participate; but they must also be aware of the objectives of what they’re doing). Furthermore, engagement is measured in terms of its intensity (as in consistent attendance), its duration (the length of continued participation), and its breadth (scope of activities).

Anticipated Changes in Youth Outcomes

Grossman et al. (2009) measure success in terms of the improvements that can be observed in the following youth outcomes: (a) cognitive learning (typically, but not limited to, language arts, mathematics, writing, etc.), (b) personal social skills, and (c) pro-social attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, because of its importance in the overall teaching and learning enterprise, the extent to

¹ Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound.

which parents are engaged in their children's education, as well as their own literacy skills, are also assessed.

Evaluation Methodology

Over the course of the current 5-year program cycle, M and E Associates, Inc. was engaged as the external consultant for the program and conducted evaluation studies each year. The data collection methodology for these evaluation efforts included the development and implementation of (a) monitoring visit interview guides, which provided data about the program environment, content, and levels of engagement, (b) stakeholder surveys, which also provided data about the program environment, as well as stakeholder perceptions of program impact, and (c) empirical data about students' academic performance, as measured by both report cards (when available) and standardized test performance (when available), attendance, and disciplinary behaviors. These latter data provided important and useful information about student outcomes and program impact.

Limitations of the Evaluation Effort

First, because of budgetary and contract restraints, this study does not include the early morning (a.m.) component of the REACH program; rather it focuses entirely on the after-school program. Second and perhaps more important, while every attempt has been made to ensure the overall validity and reliability of this evaluation study, some limitations were unavoidable. First, the subjects in the study, including the staff, students, and parents, were not randomly selected, thus limiting the generalizability of the study findings. Second, the student performance data were not generated by program staff but were collected from, and limited to, only school district records that were readily available to program staff. Accordingly, the validity of the data was not within the control of M and E or the 21st CCLC (Reach) program staff. Finally, while comparative statistics were collected and are presented for student performance, attendance, and disciplinary behaviors (e.g., NJSLA scores, attendance figures, and disciplinary measures) as well as certain features of the affective domain (via surveys and interviews) these data represent different student, staff, and parent cohorts over the years, which once again limits both the validity and generalizability of the findings.

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, DESCRIPTION, AND IMPLEMENTATION

Program Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To provide high-quality educational and enrichment programs that will enable students to improve academic achievement and promote positive behavior and appropriate social interaction with peers and adults.

Objective 1.1: The grantee will establish and maintain partnerships and collaborative relationships with schools, families, youth, and the community to enhance students' access to a variety of learning opportunities.

Objective 1.2: The grantee will adopt intentional strategies and research-based practices designed to support student skill building and mastery, both academically and from a youth development perspective.

Objective 1.3: The grantee will adopt practices to support the orientation, training, and development of afterschool staff in the adoption and use of intentional strategies and research-based practices to ensure program quality.

Objective 1.4: Students regularly participating in the program will be positively impacted in terms of performance on state assessments in language arts and mathematics.

Objective 1.5: Students regularly participating in the program will demonstrate improved school-day attendance, decreased disciplinary actions or other adverse behaviors, improved social-emotional functioning, and the development of 21st century skills.

Goal 2: To implement activities that promote parental involvement and provide opportunities for literacy and related educational development to the families of participating students.

Objective 2.1: The agency will establish collaborative relationships that offer opportunities for literacy and related educational activities to the families of participating students.

Objective 2.2: Parents participating in grant-funded activities will increase their involvement in the education of children under their care.

Objective 2.3: Grantees will adopt intentional strategies to communicate to parents and adult family members about program goals and objectives, activities, and their child's experience in the program.

Goal 3: To measure participants' progress and program effectiveness through monitoring and evaluating.

Objective 3.1: Throughout the grant period, the grantee will continually assess program quality and effectiveness and use this information to support quality improvement.

Objective 3.2: The grantee will work to obtain data on students' in-school progress in the areas of academic achievement, behavior, and social development and use this information to inform the design and delivery of programming.

Objective 3.3: Throughout the grant period, the grantee will adopt measures as needed within the program when data is not available from other sources to assess (a) youth engagement in program activities; (b) the academic and/or social-emotional needs of participating youth; and (c) program impact.

Objective 3.4: The grantee will measure the impact of the program on family members of participating students.

In addition, each objective also had a series of performance indicators that served as guides for the objectives. These indicators are described in the Electronic Web-Enabled Grant System (EWEG) report.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

During the current 5-year program cycle, the 21st CCLC Program (REACH) was conducted at the Spragg Elementary School² and the Egg Harbor City Community School in Egg Harbor City, New Jersey, with funding in the amounts that ranged from \$350,000 to \$400,000. Its recurring theme focused on civic engagement, and it served children (including those identified as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) in grades 3-8 from 7:20 a.m. to 8:20 a.m.³ and from approximately 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. each day. There were no students with physical disabilities, but the program director reported that some students had IEPs or 504 accommodations. No non-public school students

² After several years of participation, Project REACH discontinued 21st CCLC Program activities at Spragg Elementary School in the 2021-22 program year in favor of the EHC Community School.

³ See Limitations of the Study for an explanation about the early morning (a.m.) component of the program

participated in the program. In addition, a 4-week summer program was usually conducted in July of each year for students in grades 3-8, five days per week.

1. Program Administration

Throughout the current 5-year program cycle, the program endured several leadership changes. During the first year (2020-21) and into the beginning of the second year, the program was led by Ms. Alysha Garcia, who was assisted by Ms. Nicole Goodwin, who served as site coordinator. In Year 2 (2021-22), Mr. Simon Mohr began the year as program director. Mr. Mohr was succeeded, however, by a new program director who resigned after only a short period of time. Mr. Mohr subsequently returned to the program director position and shortly afterwards a former director, Ms. Alysha Garcia, was named to assist with program leadership duties. Throughout the remainder of the second year, the program co-directors exercised overall responsibility for all aspects of the program and were assisted by the site coordinator, Ms. Nicole Goodwin, who was responsible for operational coordination of the program's activities. In Year 3 (2022-23), Mr. Jamahl Williams and Bethel Mackiewicz served as program directors at different times during the program year and Nicole Goodwin and Simon Mohr served as site coordinators. In Year 4 (2023-24), Mr. Austin Gray served as program director, assisted by site coordinators Ms. Cindi Craig and Ms. Katie Minutella. Finally, in Year 5 (2024-25), Mr Austin Gray began the year serving as the program director followed by Sherry Emper for a short time. Ms. Jaelyn Willisroft (the district's Director of Special Projects) took over until Mr. Donnell Louis Dulay came on board and completed the year, assisted once again by site coordinators, Ms. Cindi Craig and Ms. Katie Minutella.

Throughout the 5-year span, the program directors maintained overall responsibility for all aspects of the program. The site coordinators assisted the program directors with operational coordination of the program's activities. In that regard, they worked closely with the program directors in all aspects of the program, including (among others) checking student attendance (in/out), scheduling, preparing class lists, organizing clubs and homework groups, creating Fun Friday lists and activities, planning parent engagement activities, managing student discipline (time out, walk & talk, etc.), checking staff attendance, acquiring substitutes as needed, monitoring students who needed extra time completing their homework, conducting discussions with families, and coordinating with club teachers about program activities.

2. Recruitment, Enrollment, and Retention Activities

Throughout the current 5-year program cycle, the following strategies were employed. During Year 1 (2020-21, the pandemic year), recruitment and enrollment were challenging. Nevertheless, and through the duration of the program, the program leadership and staff worked tirelessly to recruit, enroll, and retain students using the following strategies.

Recruitment: Students were recruited through various means. During the summer, students were notified about the regular school year before-school and after-school REACH programs and had the opportunity to sign up for the ensuing school year. Flyers and applications were also distributed both electronically and as hard copies, and the program director attended Back-to-School events during August/September to recruit new students from both Spragg Elementary and the Community School. The program director also visited each homeroom at both schools to provide students with information about the program as well as applications. Robo calls were made to students' homes, and all recruitment was done in both English and Spanish. Information about REACH events was detailed in weekly morning announcements, parent nights (e.g., Carnival Night, Back-to-School Night, conferences), ClassDojo, and Facebook postings, as well as phone calls to the homes of targeted students enrolled in the regular school day program. The program directors also worked

closely with regular school day staff, the Intervention and Referral System (I&RS) team, and the child-study team (CST) to reach students who might benefit from the program.

Enrollment: Parents of children in grades 2-7 were sent notifications via email, Blackboard, and ClassDojo regarding registration opportunities, and they received confirmation emails once their child’s application was accepted. The program director monitored the number of students in each grade so there would not be an uneven population in any grade level. Enrollment applications were also available in Spanish. Students were enrolled in the program once their parent/guardian completed an application for either or both the before-school and after-school programs. Applications could be completed in hard copy (i.e., pencil and paper) or electronically and were available in both English and Spanish. Students/families were notified of their acceptance or waitlist status by the program director. Enrollment was based on enrollment targets as well as student/staffing ratio.

Retention: REACH focused on retaining students by working closely with the Student Council to identify events, field trips, special activities, free play activities, and clubs based on students’ interests. Students in the program voiced their opinions about what programs and activities they favored, and there was a waiting list for Fun Fridays. Activities included Fun Fridays, escape rooms, kickball and basketball games, crafts, etc. These activities, as well as the strict attendance policy outlined in the handbook also helped with retention. Behavior management plans were also put in place for students who received two strikes in the program to help maintain their standing within the program. REACH also made many efforts to create events incorporating the students’ families and community members.

3. Enrollment History

Enrollments for the program site (for both the first and second half of the program year, where possible) are presented in the following table.

Table 1 - Program Enrollments (2021-25)

	2020-21 (Target =150)		2021-22 (Target =126)		2022-23 (Target =126)		2023-24 (Target =126)		2024-25 (Target =126)	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Spragg Elementary	11 (11)	8 (8)								
EHC Community	66 (26)	31 (N/A)	139 (94)	181 (135)	132 (126)	219 (144)	182 (66)	180 (134)	174 (126)	168 (145)

Notes: Figures in parentheses represent student in attendance for at least 30 days. N/A = No data available. Spragg Elementary was removed from the 21st CCLC program in 2021-22. 1=Fall term, 2=Spring Term

4. Advisory Boards

Based on reports from the program director and staff over the years, the following information was learned about the program’s advisory boards.

2020-21

During the program year, the Program Advisory Board met twice (virtually), at which time the program director provided program updates and shared information about the program’s progress. In addition, the program director continued virtually to consult periodically with program partners and collaborators. The Student Council also met monthly via ZOOM.

2021-22

By the time of the second monitoring visit, M and E was advised that the Program Advisory Board had conducted two of its planned quarterly meetings, at which time the program director provided

updates and shared information about the program's progress. In addition, the program director met three times with program partners and collaborators to discuss program activities, and the Student Council met six times. The advisory boards and REACH Student Council were major contributors to the planning of events for the Festival of Hope held on December 9, 2021. The advisory boards also continued to serve as program partners in creating events, such as March Madness and connecting the REACH program with other community partners.

2022-23

By the time of the second site monitoring visit, M and E was advised that the program director reported that the Program Advisory Board had conducted three of its four scheduled meetings, at which time the program director again provided program updates and shared information about the program's progress. In addition, the program director met 13 times with program partners and collaborators to discuss program activities (those meetings were ongoing based on activities coming up and the collaborators involved), and the Student Council had convened 10 meetings.

During these meetings, all stakeholders, especially students, had opportunities to share what they wanted to see implemented in REACH. Through collaborations and partnerships, the program accomplished many new initiatives including a Wrestling Club (with funds provided through the EHC Coalition/Iron Mike Foundation), a staff wellness policy through AtlantiCare, multiple community events including the Festival of Hope, and the creation of a Civics Club that was invited to present its findings on anti-bias/hate at Stockton University in the Fall 2023. The March Madness, Hobby Night, and Special Needs Registry Night were also among the recommended events. Some of the ideas for REACH were made in collaboration with the school district and some emanated from the advisory groups.

2023-24

By the time of the second monitoring visit, M and E was advised that the program director reported that the Program Advisory Board had met three times, at which time updates were provided and information shared about the program's progress. In addition, the program director met (via Zoom teleconferences) and communicated (via telephone and email exchanges) twelve times with program partners and collaborators to discuss program activities, and the Student Advisory Board had convened eight of its planned ten meetings. During those meetings, advisory group members were given opportunities to express their understanding of the program, as well as share "wish lists" of items/events they would like to see come to fruition. New and continuing initiatives were accomplished through partnerships, inclusive of a Wrestling Club (once again, with funds provided through the EHC Coalition/Iron Mike Foundation), a staff wellness policy through AtlantiCare, multiple community events including the Festival of Hope, and the creation of a Civics Club that presented their findings on anti-bias/hate at Stockton University.

2024-25

By the time of the second monitoring visit, M and E was advised that the Program Advisory Board conducted three of its four planned quarterly meetings, at which time the program director provided program updates and shared information about the program's progress. In addition, the program director met (via Zoom teleconferences) and communicated (via telephone and email exchanges) 12 times with program partners and collaborators to discuss program activities, and the Student Advisory Board convened three of its planned four meetings.

During all these meetings, stakeholders were given opportunities to express their understanding of the program as well as share "wish lists" of items/events they would like to see come to fruition. Throughout the program year, students recommended a Jewelry Club and an Art Club, and both

were added to the program. In addition, several strategies were planned for increasing opportunities for parents to offer input into the program's planning and implementation.

5. Action Research Activities

Beginning in 2011-12, all 21st CCLC programs were required to organize action research teams, select an area of focus, and implement action research projects. The activities that were implemented as part of Egg Harbor City's 21st CCLC program between 2021-22 are described below.

2020-21

The program director reported that the Action Research Team (comprised of the program director, program/site coordinator, one after-school teacher, and the guidance counselor) had agreed that the area of focus for the 2020-21 action research project would be to increase participation in the virtual (online) program. In addressing this area of focus, the Team implemented the following actions:

- conducted an exploration of new classes,
- explored new incentives for registration and attendance,
- conducted surveys of parents and students,
- promoted the program at Student Council meetings,
- conducted networking meetings with other 21st CCLC programs,
- collected and analyzed participation and attendance data, and
- conducted planning, staffing, registration, and potential opening of morning program.

The Team also collected the following types of data:

- meeting notes
- surveys
- course descriptions
- attendance records

Action Research Team meetings were ongoing throughout the program year, and the following actions was taken as a result of the data analyses:

- The after-school program in the elementary site was closed for the following year, and third graders were to be bused and incorporated into the EHC Community School site, as data showed there was an insufficient student population in third grade to support a second 21st CCLC site.
- When the program resumed in-person programming, some online family programs continued to be offered, as the data clearly showed that parents liked having the option of not leaving their homes. Interactive materials also continued to be distributed for some of these activities.

2021-22

During M and E's initial monitoring visit, the program director reported the Action Research Team (comprised of the program director⁴, site coordinator, district director of special projects, and two program staff members) was organized based on members' experience working in the program and their role in district professional development. Based on the findings from the previous year's action research project, the current year's Action Research Team determined that the focus for 2021-22 would be on improving professional development opportunities for staff members in order to increase their capacity to support students' social and emotional development. To that end, during the first half of the program year, the program provided the Kid-Grit SEL workshop to the staff, which explained its importance and how it ought to be implemented. (This was a carry-over from the

⁴ By the time of the second monitoring visit, Ms. Garcia had joined with Mr. Mohr co-leading the Action Research Team.

homeroom morning meetings on SEL characteristics connecting the regular school day program to the after-school program.)

At the time of M and E's initial monitoring visit, the Action Research Team was still in the process of determining what data were needed that would help them assess the progress being made to achieve its goal of providing better processes for professional development, better ways to meet students' needs, and the means for staff to do so. Behavioral referrals were expected to be a significant part of the data.

At the time of the second monitoring visit, M and E was advised that, through collaboration between the Action Research Team and the Egg Harbor City Community School, REACH had been able to provide program staff with four additional SEL workshops that targeted supporting students, as well as helped staff understand their own social emotional health-molding interactions with students. A survey was distributed in the beginning of May to all program staff whose purpose was to gauge the extent to which their knowledge of social emotional learning had grown and how it had helped them in the after-school program. Action Research Team meetings continued throughout the program year, and an assessment of the effectiveness of its action items, including the survey, was made at the conclusion of the program year.

2022-23 through 2024-25

No action research projects were undertaken in 2022-23 and thereafter, as the requirement for action research projects was removed by NJDOE at the beginning of the 2022-23 program year.

6. Linkage Between the After-School Program and the Regular School Day Curriculum

The program directors, site coordinators, and program teachers were all generally consistent over the duration of the program in their assertions that there was a strong and effective linkage between what was happening in the REACH program and what students were experiencing in their regular classrooms. The program followed the standard curriculum that was approved by the board of education and implemented in the regular school program. Many of the program staff reported that REACH was an effective addendum to the regular school program, with perhaps a lot more individual attention. The instruction was supplemental to the regular curriculum, the rules and policies for student behavior were consistent with the regular school day, and the emphasis on homework assistance was designed to reinforce what students learned in their regular classrooms. The program, however, had perhaps a greater emphasis on recreational, physical fitness, cultural, and artistic activities (what students commonly referred to as the "fun stuff"). Generally, there was good communication between the program staff and the regular school day instructional and support staff. Since many of the program staff members were also regular classroom teachers, this communication was facilitated. Teachers were aware of students' academic needs, and they addressed those needs during homework time. Otherwise, through emails, face-to-face contact, or other means of transmission, the regular classroom teachers were able to provide the program staff with their lesson plans, projects, homework assignments, and special needs or areas of focus for specific students. Likewise, the program staff members were able to provide feedback to the regular classroom teachers about the progress their students were achieving. Some specific examples of the way the linkage described above was implemented during each of the five years of the program are the following:

2020-21

During both rounds of interviews in the Fall and Spring terms, the program director, site coordinator, and program teachers reported that all after-school staff also taught in the regular school day

program and were thoroughly familiar with the regular school day curriculum and students. All homework assigned during the regular school day program was posted and accessible to the after-school program teachers. They reported that the program director had created a form that could be used for teachers to request general or specific help for a student. There was also a language arts and math specialist on the after-school staff to assist the students and other teachers when needed. The guidance counselor who worked with the after-school program checked on students' progress and conferred with staff to make sure participants were getting the supplemental help in language arts and math they needed. Direct communication between after-school staff and the classroom teachers via phone, email, or in-person contacts, was frequent and ongoing.

2021-22

The program director, site coordinator, and program teachers all reported that the after-school staff also taught in the regular school day program in the district and were thoroughly familiar with its curriculum and students. The program director further reported working in collaboration with the regular school day curriculum, staff, and activities. Specifically, this included working among the everyday staff, participating in daily duties, attending all administrative meetings to provide updates and receive feedback for the 21st CCLC Program, and meeting with the district's director of special projects. The REACH program shared spaces, resources, and staff members with the regular school day program to meet the needs of all students. REACH also collaborated closely with the school district to organize and provide community events for their families, such as the Festival of Hope and March Dadsness. REACH was also represented at all district I&RS meetings.

The site coordinator reported that all homework assigned during the regular school day program was posted and accessible to the after-school program teachers. The guidance counselor who worked with the after-school program checked on students' progress and conferred with staff to ensure that participants were getting the supplemental help they needed in language arts and math. Direct communication between after-school staff and the classroom teachers via phone, email, or in-person contacts was frequent and ongoing.

During the initial monitoring visit, one after-school teacher reported that, because she also taught many of the same children during the regular school day, she was very familiar with the curricular materials and could work very effectively with students who needed extra help with their homework or other supports. She firmly believed there was a seamless transition between the regular day school program and REACH. The other after-school teacher noted that there was consistent communication between and among the regular school day and after-school staffs. In addition, there were reading and math specialists who worked in both programs, which was helpful in filling in any learning gaps. Both staffs used Google Classroom and Google Docs, as well as other regular school day materials in their work. The after-school staff checked on homework assigned and monitored students' learning concerns.

During the second monitoring visit, two other⁵ after-school teachers were interviewed. They corroborated that communication between the regular school day school and after-school teachers was continuous and effective. If the regular school day teachers had concerns about a student and thought the after-school teachers could help, they readily communicated that to the after-school teachers. They further reported that educational games played a big part in the regular school day curriculum, and logic games were used in the ELA classes. One teacher remarked, "I have

⁵ In this and subsequent years, the teachers who were interviewed during the second monitoring visit were different from those who were interviewed during the initial monitoring visit.

incorporated them in my [after-school] club. We use Gamekit and Blooket with the Chromebooks. We are also able to use the day-school equipment and gaming subscriptions.”

2022-23

During both rounds of interviews, the program director, site coordinators, and program teachers all reported that the after-school REACH staff also taught in the regular school day program and were thoroughly familiar with the regular school day curriculum and students. The program director reported that the after-school program staff worked in collaboration with the regular school day curriculum, staff, and activities. Specifically, the program director regularly attended weekly administrative meetings and monthly I&RS meetings and met with the district’s director of special projects and worked among the district and school staffs to provide updates and receive feedback for the 21st CCLC Program. The REACH program also shared spaces, resources, and staff members with the regular school day program to meet the needs of all students. REACH also collaborated closely with the school district to organize and provide community events for their families, such as the Festival of Hope.

During the initial round of interviews, the site coordinator further affirmed that all REACH staff worked in the district (at either the Community School or at Spragg Elementary) during the regular school day. She pointed out that the Community School was small, so everyone knew the school curriculum, as well as one another, and they used their cell phones, texting, email, and face-to-face interactions to communicate with one another and discuss program issues, as well as the needs and progress of the after-school participants. The regular school day teachers also made a concerted effort to inform the REACH teachers when a student needed help or had an assignment due. As evidence of further linkage, the REACH children also participated in school-based activities, i.e. basketball, band, etc. They were required to sign in at REACH and then go to their after school-based activity and return to REACH after practice or a game.

During the initial round of interviews, one teacher reported that most REACH teachers also taught in the Community School during the day, although a small number (5 or 6) taught at Spragg Elementary. Most of the after-school lesson content was interdisciplinary and grounded in the approved school district curriculum to which REACH staff had access via a shared hard drive on their computers. In addition, REACH staff had access to Google Drive, which contained a district database, and they were able to use an SEL program called Kid-Grit. The other teacher noted that there was a homework log-on line that enabled REACH staff to view what the students were required to complete. The regular school day teachers made an effort to communicate with and inform REACH teachers if students had extra credit to complete during homework time. She used “Let’s Go Learn” software to collect personal learning data. She further reported that REACH had both ELA and math specialists who circulated during homework time, a practice which had been expanded this year from 45 minutes to 60 minutes daily.

During the second round of interviews, two different teachers were interviewed and both reported that the school had a small cadre of teachers and small student body, The REACH staff taught in the regular school day program, and there was a lot of face-to-face communication and email to connect each other. The regular school day teachers placed all assignments and homework on their chalkboards, where the REACH teachers could then copy them for the homework helper class.

2023-24

The program director reported that the after-school REACH staff also taught in the regular school day program and were thoroughly familiar with the regular school day curriculum and students. He further reported that the homework portion of the after-school program followed the regular school

day curriculum and that regular school day work was reinforced at that time. The after-school staff were in constant communication with regular school day staff as many of them worked in the same school during the regular school day. Google Drive, e-mail, and staff surveys were among the means of communication for both staffs.

The site coordinators further affirmed that all REACH staff worked in the district (at either the Community School or at Spragg Elementary). They pointed out that the Community School was small, so everyone knew the school curriculum, as well as one another, and they used their cell phones, texting, email, and face-to-face interactions to communicate with one another and discuss program issues, as well as the needs and progress of the after-school participants. Both staffs had the same behavioral and disciplinary expectations, and they were able to quickly share information when they sensed a potential problem. Homework Help time was also a direct link to the regular school day program. Both staffs had access to an Excel spreadsheet log that was updated every Monday on which regular school day teachers listed their homework assignments for the week. Students who needed it received extra homework support.

The teachers reported that some of the after-school clubs (e.g., civic engagement, homework, Chromebooks) mirrored the regular school day school curriculum. The regular school day teachers used Google Docs to inform REACH teachers concerning homework, learning struggles and behavioral issues, and they reported seeing increased homework completion. REACH teacher “floaters” circulated during homework time to help students as needed. The teachers further noted that since many of the regular school day teachers also worked in the after-school REACH program, there was excellent communication between both groups. Student progress and needs were shared easily, and REACH staff were informed concerning homework and learning difficulties. Finally, the teachers reported that the REACH program’s Homework Help and Extra Help, Financial Literacy, and Coding instruction also provided direct curriculum connections to the regular school day. Regular school day staff used Google Sheets for homework assignments so the REACH staff could more easily be aware of any work needing to be completed. However, one teacher reported that communication could be better with the regular school day staff, and it would help if they regularly updated Google Classroom.

2024-25

During the initial monitoring visit, the program director reported that the after-school REACH staff also taught in the regular school day program and were thoroughly familiar with the regular school day curriculum and students. The program director also reported that the Homework Help and tutoring sessions as well as SEL instruction all followed the regular school day curriculum. The regular school day staff were in constant communication with after-school staff and used Google drive, e-mail, and staff surveys as means of communication. During the initial monitoring visit, the site coordinator affirmed that all REACH staff worked in the district (at either the Community School or at Spragg Elementary) during the regular school day. She pointed out that the Community School was small, so everyone knew the curriculum as well as one another, and they used their cell phones, texting, email, and face-to-face interactions to communicate with one another and discuss program issues, as well as the needs and progress of the after-school participants. She further noted that the Homework Help was a direct link to the regular school day curriculum, and the program’s clubs were also aligned naturally with the regular school day curriculum. In the follow-up interview during the Spring monitoring visit, she added that both the MLK collaborative poster activity and the Earth Day cleanup event linked directly to the regular school day curriculum. In addition, one of the teachers reported that the program’s Homework Help and tutoring sessions were direct curriculum connections to the regular school day as students worked on and/or got help with regular school day

curriculum skills and assignments. The Research and Debate Club also used skills found in the regular school day curriculum. Students working with one another was another skill activity that aligned with the regular school day curriculum. REACH program staff communicated daily with regular school day teachers about students' needs, through texting or email. The other teacher reported that, in addition to the Homework Help sessions, SEL, STEM, coding, art, and writing instruction all connected directly to the regular school day curriculum. Regular school day staff used Google Sheets for homework assignments so the REACH staff could easily be aware of any work needing to be completed. In the interviews during the follow-up Spring monitoring visit, the teachers reported that the Homework Help, STEM, the Science and Gardening clubs, comic book, and coding were all directly linked to the regular school day curriculum. In addition, the regular school day staff communicated easily about student needs with the program director who was on-site daily. The regular school day staff and program staff communicated also often among themselves through emails and texts about student needs.

7. Parent and Family Participation

Over the 5-year term of the grant, parents were consistently described as active and engaged. Teachers reported that parents generally did not participate in classroom activities, but they did participate in evening activities, such as parents' dinners, training sessions, and family nights. According to some of the staff, many parents played active roles on the Advisory Board, attended family-oriented activities and volunteered in various ways. Specific events and activities are described below.

2020-21

At the time of the initial virtual monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that virtual parent nights were scheduled at least once a month. There was also a REACH parent overview, a Family Recipe Night, and a Make-Your-Own-Gingerbread-House event (take home kits were provided for such activities). Family Fitness Night has also been a favorite event.

One of the teachers reported that the program director did a great job trying to get parents involved in interesting, interactive remote family events. She conducted personal outreach to parents to discuss children's needs and progress and encouraged participation, and she recommended students and their families for the Strengthening Families program. Another teacher reported that the Family Fitness Night at 5:30 p.m. involved both parents and siblings.

During the second virtual monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that staff always encouraged parents to attend online monthly parenting activities. She also reported that participants' siblings would sometimes pop up online during ZOOM activities, and the staff tried to involve them when they could. She noted that interactive family fitness activities were very well attended. The Spring Refresh Community Resource Fair also got many families out to access resources (including some free giveaways and produce) from different businesses and agencies, and that helped them get to know their neighbors and fellow parents, as well as helped them build trust with police.

During the second virtual monitoring visit, the teachers reported that the after-school staff wanted to get parents involved in interesting, interactive family remote events by sending them supplies and that most parents were on board with the program because it provided activities to keep their kids busy during the after-school hours. In fact, once the program started having outdoor activities, more parents became involved. Many families eagerly participated in the Spring Refresh Community Resource Fair.

2021-22

At the time of the initial monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported the program held an evening event for families called Festival of Hope that was well attended. The parents went to the cafeteria where 35 community groups were available to provide valuable information, including such things as paying bills, receiving the COVID vaccine, counseling, food banks, filing taxes, banking, etc. Desserts, snacks and gift baskets were also offered. Interestingly, she noted that on-line events had a significantly lower participation level compared to in-person events.

One of the teachers reported that the program director was doing a great job trying to get parents involved by communicating with them often through various means (e.g., robo-calling to inform them of upcoming events, days off). She reported that the most successful event had been the Festival of Hope for families. There were crafts for the kids, and many parent supports were available. The attendance was very good, and the parents enjoyed the gift baskets for door prizes. The other teacher reported that parent involvement had previously been very difficult to provide for because of Covid-19 restrictions. The program conducted Trivia Night via Zoom with moderate success. Virtual field trips, e.g., National Parks, were also held. Students and their families were invited to attend the Festival of Hope, which was a big hit. There was Santa, food, and crafts for the kids. The parents had many community support groups who attended to provide needed services and answer questions and concerns that they had about running their households.

At the time of the second monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported the program had held an internet safety program, as well as March Madness with dinner and a speaker; both events provided by the local Prosecutor's Office. More than 130 parents attended March Madness, which was very successful. She further reported that, compared to the first half of the program year, more parents had become involved in program activities. They had been very receptive to building relationships. As both she and the present program director were new to the district in September, it took a while to have their presence felt. She reported that, "Now we know the students and their parents better, which has opened up lines of communication."

Teachers' comments mirrored those of the site coordinator. They reported that one of the most successful events was the drama club performance, which was sold out (150+ in the audience) with standing room only. Parents offered donations for the cast party, which was also supported by other members of the local community. The attendance at the March Madness event was also amazing. The kids got very excited about their parents attending and meeting their friends' parents.

2022-23

During the first round of interviews, the site coordinator reported that, during the program year, the program offered the Festival of Hope event and a Family Art Night (where they made scarecrows and which was well attended). Later, during the second round of interviews, the site coordinator reported that the program conducted a Student Talent Show and a Community Clean-up Day. The program also organized a kickball game that included students, parents, and local police. She mentioned that the same parents usually attended those events, and he'd like to see more parents involved. He also reported that some local community agencies (e.g., AtlanticCare, South Jersey Gas, and the Atlantic County Utilities Authority) also sponsored or conducted events for parents.

The REACH teachers reported that the following activities and events were conducted during the first half of the program year in which parents participated:

- Christmas caroling around the school neighborhood,
- Family kickball, which was conducted during REACH hours,

- Festival of Hope, held in conjunction with local community agencies and well attended,
- REACH Talent Show, which was also well attended,
- Class DOJO - an on-line app for parents, which the program director used to communicate with parents, announcing events and posting the REACH Newsletter, and
- Various virtual sessions, e.g., Strengthening Families.

During the second round of interviews, one teacher reported that Family First Nights were held, during which time vendors, such as the local Food Bank and a Swap Program, attended. At these events, parents engaged in cooking healthy tortillas and making trail mix. In addition to the Family First Night events, students from Stockton University demonstrated how to make maple syrup, followed by a pancake breakfast. A Festival of Hope event was also held. Parents, students, and local police played basketball. Food was also provided by the Food Bank. Another teacher reported that a Talent Show was held, and the parents loved attending and watching their children perform. Among other parent events that were held were a Drama Club performance (which is usually held annually), the Festival of Hope (which has always been well attended), and March Dadness, an event in which fathers spent the day at REACH with their children, and at which the turnout has always been good.

2023-24

The program director and site coordinators identified 30 different activities and events that were provided for parents during the program year, including the Festival of Hope event (held from 5 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.) in which parents played games and did crafts with their children. Family support resources (e.g., police, medical, healthcare professionals, food banks, family finance, counseling) also were available at some events to help as needed. Food was also offered, which helped attendance. In addition, family engagement activities were planned in such a way that parents got involved with their children’s activities (e.g., clubs, sports). They further cited the March Dadness event, which usually resulted in a major turnout of parents. Very few parents attended daytime activities.

The teachers also reported that the most significant events available for parent involvement were the Festival of Hope, where Santa attended, crafts were offered, choices were given, and local vendors offered their services to families, e.g., financial, food, healthcare, and March Dadness event. They also reported that Fun Fridays were popular among parents, which they attended with their children, sometimes playing kickball games, board games, etc. One teacher remarked that, “the same few parents come out to everything.”

2024-25

At the time of the initial monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that overall, parent participation this year had not been as good as it had been in previous years. The program offered activities once a month for parents, who generally come out primarily when free food was involved. She did note, however, that there was a Festival of Hope in December that drew a lot of families. In the follow-up interview during the Spring monitoring visit, she noted that a flower arrangement Mother’s Day event had occurred which had good family participation. The teachers also reported that parent participation had been minimal, even when Family Fridays were conducted. They did agree, however, with the site coordinator about the Festival of Hope event that attracted many parents. One teacher also offered that REACH hosted a March Dadness event that usually had good attendance. In the interviews conducted during the follow-up Spring monitoring visit, both teachers reported that the program hosted family wellness, kickball, flower arranging, and Mother’s Day

events. They added that, normally, only a handful of parents attended such events; however, the Mother's Day event brought out a lot of families.

8. Availability of Program Materials and Supplies

Throughout the 5-year term of the grant, the program staff consistently reported they did not experience any problems or obstacles in the acquisition and use of the materials necessary for effective implementation of the program. Generally, they reported they had all the supplies they needed, which were fully paid for by the program. If they needed things that were not on hand, they could order them and get reimbursed for the costs by the program. At one point, one teacher reported using his own game collection in his program activities, and another teacher reported that students were sometimes able to make new materials from those that had already been supplied. Moreover, they praised the program director, site coordinators, and even the parents who were very supportive, responsive, and accommodating to their needs.

9. Feedback from Program Participants and Stakeholders

Over the 5-year term of the grant, feedback from the staff and participants was received via interviews and surveys. Both the site coordinator and a small group of teachers were interviewed about what they were hearing about the program from the participants. In addition, the participants were interviewed about how the program affected them, as well as what they liked and didn't like about the program. A summary of some of the comments from the program/site coordinator, staff, and participants is presented in the paragraphs that follow.

2020-21

During both rounds of interviews in the Fall and Spring terms, the site coordinator reported that direct communication was as frequent and ongoing between after-school staff and classroom teachers via phone, email, or in-person contacts as was practical given the impact of the pandemic on school closings and virtual instruction.

2021-22

During both rounds of interviews, the site coordinator reported that students enjoyed getting back to the routine of school, once the pandemic had abated. One student mentioned the after-school program helped her meet many more friends more quickly. One of the teachers also reported that students really looked forward to attending the program every day and offered very positive feedback. They liked the opportunity to complete their homework and get help from the teachers when needed, and they didn't want to do anything that could jeopardize their attendance. Another teacher commented that student feedback was generally positive. The staff was also very flexible when it came to students wanting to see what another club was all about before they chose to sign up.

After "working the kinks out," the after-school teachers liked working in the program, and they felt that better connections were made with students during the after-school program than during the regular school day. Teachers also liked the flexible work schedule, where they could select two days a week to work, if they would like. The experienced teachers suggested that, after Christmas, student attendance would drop off, but the site coordinator reported she hadn't yet seen that.

During M and E's first monitoring visit, two eighth grade students were interviewed, and when asked why they attended the after-school program, both students reported they attended so they could get help with their homework if they needed it. They also liked hanging out with their friends. One student remarked he attended the after-school program because his high school sister wasn't always home, his little sister in 3rd grade also attended the after-school program, and his mom

worked late. When asked about what effect participating in the after-school program had on their grades in school, both students reported they always got their homework done in the REACH program and, because of that, their grades seem to have improved.

Students were also asked about what effect participating in the after-school program had on their self-confidence and regular school day attendance and behavior. Regarding their self-confidence, one student remarked, "I like participating in the clubs, especially the science club. They are always fun and interesting," and another remarked that he "felt comfortable around people. There are some students [he] just hasn't gotten to know yet." Regarding their behavior, both students reported their behaviors were always good, and one student remarked that he "felt more protective and aware of what others were doing, so he was able to stop them from getting into fights." He also stated that others responded positively to him because he knew most of the 6th and 7th graders. Regarding their attendance at school during the day, both students remarked they always attended every day, except when they were ill or had doctor's appointments. Finally, when asked what they liked and disliked about the after-school program, the students remarked they liked the outside time, the activities the program offered, hanging out with their friends, and the helpful teachers. One student remarked, "I really do not dislike anything about the program," while the other student indicated that he disliked the length of the after-school program, "because he played basketball at night and had to rush to get back to it." One student suggested that more teachers would help control loud and unruly kids, greater care should be taken to ensure that sports equipment was maintained, and the meals "could be better." He also suggested the program should offer robotics. Another student remarked simply, "I am happy with the way it is."

During M and E's second monitoring visit, two students (fourth and seventh graders) were asked similar questions. The fourth grader remarked that she came to the after school program for several reasons, including (1) she didn't want to do her homework at home, (2) she got to see her friends, (3) she loved the art and nature club as well as the drawing club, (4) she hoped to get into the dance club, (5) she got to read and watch movies at the program, and (6) she got food to eat. Similarly, the seventh grader also had several reasons for attending the after-school program, including (1) because she was encouraged by her parents, and she could get homework help as well as help with studying, (2) she could hang out with her friends, and (3) she liked being a part of the drama club and some of the additional activities that were offered.

When asked what effect participating in the after-school program was having on her grades in school, behavior, attendance at school, and self-confidence, the fourth grader responded that she always got good grades in school, but the REACH program helped her practice her math and reading. Regarding her behavior, she added that she was energetic and happy, in general, and the program taught her manners. Further, she always attended school and was absent only when she was ill. Finally, the fourth grader reported that her self-confidence had improved by attending the REACH program, and she was more willing to take risks. The drama program also helped her with her acting, and she was no longer nervous being on stage.

Similarly, regarding her grades, the seventh grader reported that she tended to be a straight A student, but participating in the REACH program brought her A averages up closer to 100%. Further, the program made her aware of being a role model for the younger students, so she was more conscious of her behavior, although she was usually well behaved anyway. Regarding her attendance at school, she attended every day unless she was sick and that participation in the REACH program hadn't changed that in any way. Finally, she remarked that she was able to be herself more by being in the program. She talked to more peers than she might otherwise do, as she

tended to be normally shy. The drama program improved her ability to speak in front of people and that boosted her confidence.

Among the things that both students liked about the REACH program were the following: (1) everyone was kind and welcoming, (2) they liked seeing their friends, (3) they could do their homework and get help when needed, (4) the staff wanted everyone to be successful, (5) the program helped kids get higher grades, if they wanted them, and (6) the opportunities to read and get good food. Both students reported there wasn't anything about the program they disliked, except the seventh grader mentioned that some behaviors of other students made her mad. Finally, they offered the following suggestions: the food could have better flavor, the program should have more clubs, there should be more free time to hang out with friends, and more instruction should be provided about the earth through an Earth club.

2022-23

During both rounds of interviews, the two site coordinators reported that the children enjoyed attending the program, and they showed up pretty consistently. They also enjoyed the food that was provided by the local Community Food Bank of NJ. In addition, the staff also provided positive feedback about the program, and all teaching slots were filled with many staff returning year-after-year. During the second round of interviews, the site coordinator also reported that he observed greater staff engagement during the program year.

During M and E's initial round of interviews, one of the teachers reported that she got a lot of positive feedback from the students. "They ask about the activities scheduled for that day, and if I am doing certain clubs. I use their feedback, so my clubs reflect their interests." The other teacher commented that students enjoyed the cooking club, and some have asked to switch clubs. Many students made positive comments about the activities offered, and they tended to tell the staff what activities they liked or didn't like.

During the second round of interviews, one teacher reported that most students enjoyed attending. They especially liked playing volleyball and cheerleading activities, as well as making origami. Their biggest complaint was that they couldn't use their phones during REACH. The other teacher agreed that the students really loved attending REACH. They liked socializing with their friends and with the teachers. It was a good bonding activity for the 6th graders to meet their 7th grade teachers.

During the initial interviews, two students (fifth and sixth graders) were interviewed, and when asked why they attended the after-school program, both students reported they attended because their parents worked, and they signed them up for the program. They both also reported they enjoyed the program because of the clubs and activities, because they could get their homework done early, and because they could socialize with their friends.

The students were also asked about what effect participating in the after-school program had on their grades, behaviors, regular school day attendance, and self-confidence. Regarding their grades, both students reported their participation in REACH definitely helped them improve their grades. One student commented that she had dyslexia, so participating in the program definitely helped her grades. She said the teachers were very helpful. Both students also reported that both their behaviors and their attendance at school during the day hadn't really been impacted by their participation in REACH. One student remarked, "I always behave appropriately and participating in the program hasn't changed my behavior." The other student also commented that she only missed school when she was sick. Participating in the program hadn't affected her attendance at all. Finally, regarding

their self-confidence, both students reported they had always been self-confident and attending the program had no impact on it.

When asked about what they liked and disliked about REACH, the students reported they liked the teachers who worked in the program, the fun clubs (one student commented she liked wrestling the best), and hanging out with their friends. One student didn't like going into the gym for free time ("it's too loud and chaotic in there"), and the other student disliked the food that was served in the program. They both suggested that the program could be improved by the addition of an art and sports club, and one student suggested "better food or possibly bringing in food trucks."

During the second round of interviews, two different students were interviewed, a fifth grader and an eighth grader. One student reported she attended the after-school program because her parents worked and there was no one at home, she liked hanging out with friends, she could get homework help from the math teacher, and she got to have fun and unwind from the stress of the day. The other student reported that she attended the program because she got to hang out with her friends, and the teachers helped her with her homework.

The eighth grader reported that participating in the program had a positive effect on her grades because she could ask questions of the teachers and study for tests with friends. The fifth grader reported that the help she got from her teachers and other students impacted her grades for the better. The eighth grader also reported that her behavior wasn't affected by her participation in the program because "she always does the right thing." The fifth grader, on the other hand, reported that participating in the program made her want to be a better person and that positively affected her behavior. She mentioned that she made better choices as a result of the program. Both students reported that they always attended school during the day and missed only when they were sick. Finally, both students also reported that participating in the program helped their self-confidence. The eighth grader reported the program helped her realize how she wanted to present herself, and it taught her how to be more patient and how to teach others the steps needed to do a new task. The fifth grader also reported that "her self-confidence was better, especially in the area of trying new things." The students were also asked what they liked and disliked about the after-school program, and they reported they liked the following things: the program's environment (especially since the new director came on board), the students who attended, the different things they got to do in the clubs, and doing things on the Smart Board, like Just Dance and pulling up music on it. They didn't like the rules that had to be followed during REACH, such as not being able to have phones out. She also didn't like the food and one particular staff member who used to work in the program. The eighth grader suggested that the program could be improved if more sports were incorporated, more events were added that got everyone together, and the food was better. The fifth grader suggested that some additional field trips should be added to the program, such as an amusement park and/or the zoo.

2023-24

The site coordinators reported that without REACH, problems could occur. However, the children liked attending the program, and they showed up pretty consistently. However, if students weren't fully invested in an activity, they complained. In addition, parents' feedback generally had to do with calendar errors or issues that arose; however, parents liked the idea that their children were not out on the streets after school, and their children sometimes talked about an activity in which they were involved that was fun.

The teachers reported some children really wanted to attend, while others attended primarily because their parents insisted they attend. The younger the students, the more they liked to attend, while

some of the older students would have preferred to be home with their friends. Many liked the volleyball club, but since there was a waitlist for the activity, they had to first earn the privilege to play. The teachers further agreed that the children really liked attending REACH, even those who may have resisted at first. They got to hang out with their friends whom they otherwise wouldn't see if they went home immediately after school. They also liked making connections with their REACH teachers, and some reported they attended because they liked the teachers, and those who needed additional math support were grateful that it was available.

Five students were interviewed during the two rounds of interviews, and when asked why they attended the after-school program, they reported they attended because they could get their homework done early and because they could socialize with their friends. Some students added that they attended because their parents worked and the program offered things they couldn't do at home.

The students were also asked about what effect participating in the after-school program had on their grades, behaviors, regular school day attendance, and self-confidence. Regarding their grades, four of the five students reported their participation in REACH definitely helped them improve their grades because they could get help if they needed it. One student commented that the program really didn't have a significant impact on improving her grades, because she always got good grades.

Four students also reported that their behaviors hadn't really been impacted by their participation in REACH, but one student confessed she could control her behavior better, but she didn't always do so. All five students agreed that the program didn't really impact their attendance at school during the day because they attended every day except when they were ill or had other obligations.

Finally, all five students reported that participating in REACH has helped their self-confidence. Some remarks that were offered by the students are as follows:

- "the program helped my self-confidence because I made new friends and the help I got when I asked for it helped me to overcome my shyness,"
- "some clubs, like civics, helped my confidence even though I believe I already had confidence in myself"
- "REACH teachers helped me to have more self-confidence,"
- "attending REACH made me more confident. I now will answer and/or ask questions during the regular school day, and I didn't do that prior to attending," and
- "getting to know program teachers I didn't already know gave me more confidence."

When asked about what they liked and disliked about REACH, the students reported they liked:

- the teachers,
- that the program was well organized but not too structured or strict,
- that students had choices in the games they got to play,
- talking to and hanging out with their friends,
- getting homework help,
- Fun Fridays,
- being in a safe place,
- being able to talk with teachers about anything,
- the ability to provide student input, and
- the clubs, especially drama.

The students reported they didn't like:

- the food,

- the program was too short and ended too soon,
- some of the boring clubs,
- students with attitudes, and
- that some teachers get overwhelmed by certain students and then they took it out on the rest of the students.

Among the suggestions that were offered by the students were as follows:

- provide more field trips,
- extend the program so it could go on longer,
- homework should not be required as part of the after-school program,
- improve the food,
- teachers need to be firm, but not mean,
- students ought to be able to get second chances,
- the program needed to be more structured as there are times when students are all over the place and it appears teachers don't know where they belong,
- provide more sports clubs and possibly a puzzle club and a drawing club, and
- provide more hand-on activities.

2024-25

During M and E's initial monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that most of the feedback from students had to do with the different clubs. Those in the lower grades especially liked the program. However, there hadn't been much feedback from parents. Both teachers reported that the students liked the program and the different clubs, and they liked socializing with their friends. They further reported that parents also seemed to like the program, insofar as students got dinner, social opportunities, and help with their homework.

Two students were interviewed, and when asked why they attended the after-school program, one student reported he attended because it was a safe place to be after school. The other student attended to get help with her homework, to learn new things, and to hang out with her friends.

The students were also asked what effect participating in the after-school program had on their grades, behaviors, regular school day attendance, and self-confidence. Regarding their grades, both students reported their participation in REACH definitely helped them improve their grades, because they could get help with their homework when they needed it.

One student reported that he believed his behavior had improved because of his participation in REACH, while the other student didn't think her behavior had been affected, since it was always good. Both students reported their attendance during the day in school also wasn't affected because they attended every day and were only absent when they were ill.

Both students also reported that participating in REACH helped their self-confidence. One student commented that the program helped him feel more confident being around other people, and he made new friends, while the other student commented she generally had self-confidence in things, but participation in the program helped her with learning how to build Legos and looking at colleges during the summer program.

When asked about what they liked and disliked about REACH, the students reported they liked the Lego Club, watching movies, the food, helping others with their homework during the Homework

Help part of the program, and the clubs. Neither student could identify anything about the REACH Program that they didn't like.

One student suggested that he would like to have more time for the different activities (e.g., homework, clubs, recess), while the other student suggested more field trips, more daily clubs (two instead of one), and going to the Waterpark in the summer.

In the interviews during M and E's follow-up Spring monitoring visit, the program director reported that students didn't always want to leave when their parents came to pick them up. In addition, he noted that parents liked when they got to do activities with their children. The teachers reported that the students loved the program, especially spending time with other students in different grade levels. They also loved the free time even if they didn't want to participate in some of the clubs.

When asked why they attended the program, the three students who were interviewed offered similar reasons. One student attended to hang out with friends, get help with her homework, and for the food. Another student attended for the extra homework help, to be with some of the teachers, and to be with friends. The third student attended because her mom couldn't pick her up right after school, and she got to do her homework as well as hang out with her friends.

All three students agreed that their participation in the after-school program helped them improve their grades in the regular school day program. One student commented that her grades improved because the program helped her with learning different ways to understand what was taught during the day. Another student commented that she had been failing math at one point and being in the program helped her bring her grade up to a B. Finally, the third student commented that the program helped her grades a lot because she got to go over her regular school day work during the after-school program.

All three students also agreed that their participation in the after-school program had little effect on their attendance at school each day, as they always attended every day unless they were ill. In addition, they agreed that their behaviors hadn't changed due to their participation in the after-school program (they were always well-behaved), although one student commented that being in the program helped her to be a good person. Finally, they all agreed that being in the program helped them improve their self-confidence. One student commented that her self-confidence was better because being around friends made her happy and feel better about herself. Another student commented that her self-confidence in math increased because of what she learned in the program, and the third student commented that her self-confidence was better because the program helped to make her happier.

When asked what they liked and disliked about the after-school program, the student reported they liked the clubs that were offered, recess time, the teachers, hanging out with their friends, and getting her homework done so her evenings could be free. They all agreed they didn't like the food the program provided. They offered several suggestions as follows: offer recess with the older students, offer a singing club, provide better food choices, allow students to use their phones at recess, offer tap dancing, and spend time teaching students how to be better human beings and getting students to be nicer to one another.

PROGRAM MEASURES AND OUTCOMES

Program Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To provide high-quality educational and enrichment programs that will enable students to improve academic achievement and promote positive behavior and appropriate social interaction with peers and adults.

Objective 1.1: The grantee will establish and maintain partnerships and collaborative relationships with schools, families, youth, and the community to enhance students' access to a variety of learning opportunities.

Findings

Throughout the five program years, the program maintained partnerships with all of the following organizations and agencies:

Table 2 – Partnerships, Collaborations, and Coordination with External Agencies/Programs (2021-25)

Partner/Collaborating Agency	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Stockton University – Criminal justice students mentoring program participants	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EHC Community School provides building resources, teachers, and professional development	✓	✓	✓	✓	
EHC School District – space, custodians, printing/ mailing, collaborations	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Egg Harbor Police Department and township employees provided workshops, e.g. winter safety, Spring Community Resources Fair, Read Across America; interactions with students	✓	✓	✓	✓	
EHC Coalition – community events			✓	✓	✓
Coalition for a safe community - civic engagement activities, e.g., downtown beautification project; donations for event prizes	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Noise Garage – Atlantic City agency displaying art exhibits of origami made by students	✓				
The Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA) provided the Adopt-a-Road program. The ACUA provided the equipment/supplies, and students cleaned a specific stretch of road. \$400 was supplied for four road clean-ups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AtlantiCare – civic engagement, seminars on health, community functions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cedar Creek H.S. students mentoring program students for mock trial and debate activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Atlantic Prevention Resources – provides the Strengthening Families program for 8 weeks for 10 families	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Egg Harbor City Education Association - provides family night activity	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cedar Creek HS– helped set up the track team training and meets and encouraging participation as feeder for their high school program.	✓				
Atlantic County Prosecutor’s Office		✓	✓	✓	✓
The Office of the Egg Harbor City Mayor		✓	✓	✓	✓
The Community Foodbank of New Jersey		✓	✓	✓	✓

South Jersey Gas Company		✓			
Celeste Fernandez		✓			
Atlantic County Quit Center - Community Initiatives		✓			
Southern NJ Perinatal Cooperative - Intake Service		✓			
Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City – Communications		✓			
Beautiful Minds - Manager of Clinical Service		✓			
CCGNJ - Gambling Prevention Specialist		✓			
Gateway H.S.		✓			
Atlantic City School District Pre-school Teacher Program		✓			
Atlantic Cape Community College		✓			
Ideal Institute of Technology		✓			
Mental Health Association in Atlantic County		✓			
Southern Jersey Family Medical Center		✓			
Atlantic Community Charter School		✓			
Jewish Federation/Community Foundation of Atlantic & Cape May Counties		✓			
Perinatal Cooperative		✓			
Atlantic Cape FSO		✓			
California Apartments		✓			
Cape May Prosecutor’s Office – Hope One, clubs, workshops		✓			
Beautiful Minds		✓			
JFS Atlantic		✓	✓		
Jondhi Harrell		✓			
New Jersey State Library		✓			
AtlantiCare - Hope One AC		✓			
Atlantic City RX5 Cyber EnVision Center		✓			
Atlantic County Quit Center - Community Initiatives		✓	✓		
Fade Barber Shop		✓	✓		
Egg Harbor City Library		✓	✓		
Gennaro’s Italian Grill		✓			
Egg Harbor City McDonald’s		✓	✓		
Atlantic County Division of Civil Rights		✓	✓		
Mobile Ed – virtual field trips		✓	✓		
EHC Municipal Alliance collaborations, connections to local agencies		✓	✓		
Kid-Grit – SEL training		✓	✓		✓
The Arc			✓		
Information Hearts TRC			✓		
Autism NJ			✓		
Atlantic County Aces Sports Program			✓		
Generation Citizen – provides lesson plans and professional development for staff and					✓
NJSACC – Lights On!	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Analysis and Conclusion

There is clear evidence of the attainment of this objective. During the current 5-year program cycle, REACH established partnerships and collaboration agreements and coordinated its programming

with 56 different community organizations and agencies. The result was a more effective program that earned significant satisfaction from students and parents. In addition, the program established and met frequently with its Program Advisory Board, its partners and collaborators, and the Student Advisory Board to solicit input and feedback about program activities for purposes of planning and program improvement. Whenever possible and practical, the recommendations that emanated from the advisory groups were incorporated into the program design

Objective 1.2: The grantee will adopt intentional strategies and research-based practices designed to support student skill building and mastery, both academically and from a youth development perspective.

Findings

As the data in table 3 clearly show, over the 5-year term of the grant (2020-21 through 2024-25), the program provided a broad array of academic remediation, enrichment, recreational, youth development, health and nutrition, physical, cultural, and character education programs, services, and activities, many of which were research-based. The program also provided services and activities for parents as well.

Table 3: - Program Services and Activities (2021-2025)

Program/Service/Activity	2020 -21	2021 -22	2022 -23	2023- 24	2024- 25
<i>Academic Remediation and Enrichment:</i> Students in grades 4-8 received academic remediation from certified teachers during the morning and afternoon homework help periods. Students who could not complete their homework within the allotted time were given the benefit of the extended homework room. They also received academic enrichment through a variety of afternoon club activities, including:					
Math and language arts remediation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Math and language arts enrichments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Homework help	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Let's Go Learn	✓				
Cross-curricular book read aloud	✓				
STEAM activities	✓				
Debate	✓				
Student Council	✓				
Lights, Camera, Drama!		✓			
REACH NEWS		✓			
School and Virtual Road Trip Across USA		✓			
Read Across America -Student Council Readers		✓			
Read Alouds		✓			
AM and PM Knights in Training (ELA/ Math Skills)		✓	✓		
Book Club		✓	✓		
Library Club			✓		
Science Fair & Discovery		✓			
Math Club		✓			
Orton Gillingham Tutoring		✓			
Homework Club		✓			
Coding Club		✓		✓	✓
Educational Games		✓			

LEGO/STEAM Engineers		✓			
Ms. Farnan's Logic Games		✓			
Superheroes (Marvel Club)*		✓			
Virtual Field Trip Around the National Parks		✓			
Cinderella Around the World			✓		
Space Invaders			✓		
Creative Writing			✓	✓	✓
World of Math & Art				✓	✓
Financial Literature				✓	
Math Hour				✓	✓
Literary Magazine				✓	
Mind Masters				✓	✓
<i>Cultural, Recreational, and Youth Development Activities:</i> The afternoon REACH clubs that were offered to students included mural painting, drama club, knitting club, digital media, and crafts club. Students also received positive youth development from direct services, community volunteerism, character education programs, and social skills building activities. Students also participated in the following clubs:					
Career exploration	✓				
Mentoring by Stockton University Criminal Justice students	✓				
Art activities: shoebox float creations, design-you-own cereal box, painting nights, remaking art, my famous artists	✓				
Monthly contests, e.g., REACH Logo creating, redesigning Phillies jerseys, Leprechaun trap making	✓				
Civic engagement activities, e.g., can tab collection for Ronald McDonald House, city clean-ups, winter safety video, packed food for senior center, cards donated for veterans	✓				
Outdoor games (weather permitting)	✓				
Competitive track team	✓				
Soccer team	✓				
Art Club		✓			
Board Games & Problem Solving Skills		✓			
Directed Drawing		✓			
Recess		✓			
Fun Friday! - Team Building (Escape Rooms / Kickball)		✓			
Fun Friday - Crafts, Academic Escape Rooms, & Basketball		✓			
Community Service Club with EHC Coalition		✓			
ACUA Community Clean Up		✓			
ACUA- School Yard Clean Up		✓			
Community Tree Decorating with Coalition		✓			
Kindness Card for Senior Center		✓			
Chinese New Year Virtual Field Trip - Great Wall of China Tour		✓			
Cedar Creek Drama Field Trip		✓			
Superheroes (Marvel Club)		✓			
Nature & Walking		✓			

Farm to Table		✓			
Read Across America Field Trips		✓			
Prosecutor/Dept. of Civil Rights Visit		✓			
Prosecutor's Chat with Debate Club/Chess Club		✓			
Prosecutor Visit/Fun Friday		✓			
Great Kindness Challenge		✓			
Law and Order: Fairy Tale Unit Cast		✓			
Pi Day SEL/Contest		✓			
Lego Club			✓		
Comic Club			✓		
Mural Painting			✓		
Random Facts Trivia Club			✓		
Wrestling Club			✓		
Chess and Basketball Club			✓		
Tech Club			✓		
Coding Club			✓	✓	✓
Directed Drawing			✓		
Paint Club			✓		
Film Club			✓		
Knitting/Crocheting Club			✓		
Puzzle Club			✓	✓	✓
Cinco de Mayo/Virtual Field Trip to Mexico			✓		
Rainbow Loom Club			✓		
Origami Club			✓		
Crafts Club			✓		
Trip to see "The Big Fish" play			✓		
Movie Masters Club			✓		
Maniac Missions				✓	✓
Trivia Club				✓	✓
Shark Tank				✓	✓
REACH Olympics				✓	✓
Music Club				✓	✓
Brain Teasers and Building				✓	✓
World of Math & Art				✓	✓
Dance Club				✓	✓
Forensic Club				✓	
Mentor Club				✓	✓
Volleyball				✓	✓
Career Readiness				✓	✓
Media Club				✓	
Journalism Club				✓	
Ceramics Club				✓	
Design of Art Club				✓	
Escape Room				✓	
Research and Debate Club					✓
Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activities:					

Mindfulness	✓				
Yoga	✓			✓	✓
Cooking Club	✓				✓
Month-long family fitness nights	✓				
Cardio-drumming nights	✓				
Basketball Skill Development		✓			
Fitness, Recreation, and Mindfulness		✓			
Walking and Meditation		✓			
Floor Hockey		✓			
REACH Dance Club		✓			
Daily Dinner Service		✓	✓		
SNAP ED (AtlantiCare)			✓	✓	✓
Gym Class Heroes			✓		
Wrestling Club			✓	✓	✓
Stockton Maple Project			✓		
Kitchen Masters			✓		
Chess and Basketball			✓	✓	✓
Volleyball Club			✓	✓	✓
Dance Club			✓	✓	
Cheer Club			✓		
Health & Beauty Club			✓		
Olympics Club				✓	✓
Nature Club				✓	
Gardening Club				✓	
<i>Infusion of Character Education:</i> A number of character education programs and activities were conducted, including the following:					
Kid Grit – social emotional learning activities	✓	✓	✓		
Kindness Club	✓		✓		
Chess Club		✓			
Debate Club		✓	✓		
Disney Club		✓			
REACH Spring Fling (Keeping The Lights on After-school Poster Contest)		✓			
The Great Kindness Challenge		✓			
Book Club			✓		
Civics Club			✓	✓	✓
Drama Club			✓		
Mentor Club			✓	✓	✓
Trip To Stockton University			✓		
Christmas Parade			✓		
Trip to Mike’s Wrestling Clinic			✓		
Student Council			✓	✓	✓
Brain Teasers and Building				✓	✓
Teambuilding				✓	
<i>Parent Involvement Activities:</i> The program offered monthly interactive family activities, quarterly parent meetings with the					

Program Advisory Board, a semi-annual pasta dinner, field trip chaperoning, and adult education workshops. The programs and activities that were offered included the following:					
Monthly family nights, e.g., parent orientation Family Fitness, Recipe Night, Math Bingo Night, making gingerbread houses, cooking classes, dance parties	✓				
Coordinated programs with other 21 st CCLC programs, e.g., drumming, yoga, posture workshop, pizza making, winter drive-thru	✓				
Strengthening Families	✓				
Spring Refresh Community Resource Fair	✓				
Field trips	✓				
Family Night Spring Fling Car Parade	✓				
Family Night Earth Day-themed Clue Game	✓				
Family Night Jiu Jitsu	✓				
Live Family Night games, e.g., kickball, outdoor yoga, bootcamp exercises, volleyball	✓				
REACH Overview		✓			
Family Trivia Night! Are You Smarter Than A 3rd-8th Grader!		✓			
AtlantiCare Health Family Recipe Contest		✓			
Festival of Hope		✓	✓	✓	✓
REACH Overview with Mr. Hood		✓			
Great Kindness Challenge Home Edition		✓			
March Dadness		✓	✓	✓	✓
Internet Safety Workshop		✓			
Literacy Workshop		✓			
Scarecrow Building with the Mayor			✓		
REACH Talent Show			✓		
Community events (e.g., Back-to-School Nights, Caroling, Special Needs Registry)			✓		
Parent Overview Night			✓		
Stockton University Trip			✓		
Family Kickball				✓	✓
Are You Smarter than a Knight?				✓	✓
Family Bingo				✓	✓
Family Paint Starry Pumpkin				✓	✓
EHC Halloween Parade				✓	✓
Family Game Night				✓	✓
SNAP-Ed Hydration Presentation				✓	✓
REACH Fitness/Wrestling				✓	✓
ACUA Family Clean-Up				✓	✓
Iron Mike Wrestling Clinic				✓	✓
Festival of Hope				✓	✓
EHC Christmas Parade				✓	✓
Community Pantry Food Box Giveback				✓	
Financial Literacy Night				✓	
Family Yoga				✓	
Family Pantry Food Box Giveback				✓	

Financial Literacy Game Night				✓	
Reading with Arthur Brandin Bryant				✓	
March Dadness				✓	
SNAP-Ed. Cooking Presentation				✓	
REACH Drama Play				✓	
REACH Olympics				✓	
Family REACH Math Night				✓	
Autism awareness Bubbles				✓	
Parenting Planting				✓	
Strengthening Families				✓	

Analysis and Conclusion

There is clear evidence the attainment of this objective. During the current 5-year program cycle, REACH provided 34 academic, remediation, and enrichment programs; 68 cultural, recreation, and youth development activities; 24 health, nutritional, and physical activities; 17 character education programs, and 49 parent involvement activities. The diversity of the programs and activities across the 5-year span was also helpful in avoiding unnecessary duplication and boredom among the students. There is also clear evidence from stakeholder interviews and surveys that those activities were generally well-attended and well-received, well-organized and led, well-staffed and supplied, and well-coordinated and linked with the regular school day program and had a positive impact on students' educations and well-being, especially their grades in school, their attendance during the regular school day program, their social skills and disciplinary behaviors, and their self-confidence.

Objective 1.3: The grantee will adopt practices to support the orientation, training, and development of after-school staff in the adoption and use of intentional strategies and research-based practices to ensure program quality.

Findings

Over the 5-year term of the grant, there were no problems with retaining staff. All teachers were highly qualified in their subject areas, and all staff were adequately trained and had completed their required criminal background checks, and their credentials were listed in PARS and were on file in the 21st CCLC Office. The program administrators and staff participated in many different types of professional development. In each of the five years, the program director and site coordinators attended national and/or regional conferences and annual meetings. These included, but were not limited to, required state and regional professional development technical assistance and training sessions, workshops, and/or other meetings. Staff also generally attended beginning-of-the-year orientations and periodic in-house in-services and training sessions. Specific professional development events or activities that occurred each year are summarized below.

2020-21

At the time of M and E's initial virtual monitoring visit, the program director reported that staffing was complete. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher and staff hours had to be reduced in order to adjust for the lower virtual student enrollment. All staff continued to work in the program but for fewer hours. In this way, they were prepared to increase staffing as needed. All staff members, including paraprofessionals, were appropriately credentialed for their positions, and their degrees and certifications were listed in PARS and were on file in the 21st CCLC Office.

Throughout program year, the following professional development activities occurred:

- NJDOE provided local evaluation training

- The program director attended all NJDOE director training sessions via ZOOM.
- The program director and program/site coordinator attended NJSACC webinars
- Staff orientation meetings (Fall and Summer), KidGrit curriculum training, social-emotional training, and AtlantiCare's Healthy Staff program were conducted for staff. Two teachers also reported they received training in the KidGrit social-emotional learning program and cited the REACH resource folder that was available if extra help in teaching online, enrichment, or supplemental materials were needed.
- Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State

2021-22

At the time of M and E's initial monitoring visit, the program director reported that staffing (including two program administrators, 14 teachers, and two nurses) was complete. During the second half of the program year, the staffing pattern changed somewhat to include three administrators and 12 teachers, all of whom worked in the district during the regular school day.

During the first half of the program year, the program director attended the new director PLC training, monthly program director meetings, Beyond The Bell Day 1 & 2, and the socially distancing OST: *Recreating Programming . . . Post Pandemically!* event. Professional development activities were also provided by the NJDOE and/or NJSACC. In addition, CPR, CPI, and resiliency training were provided by the school district, and training in Kid-Grit social emotional learning curriculum was provided by REACH.

During the second half of the program year, in addition to regularly scheduled state-required program director meetings, the program co-directors also participated in the NJ 21st CCLC Webinar *Building Data Quality and Continuous Improvement Focus into Local Evaluations* session. The district also provided additional CPR, CPI, and resiliency training sessions, as well as two *Let's Go Learn* trainings and a session in *Dyslexia Training* provided by Public School Works for district staff, which included REACH staff. In addition, for its program staff, REACH provided four SEL professional development sessions, and the program directors attended the 2022 National Service-Learning Conference and the Symposium on Evidence-Based Practices in Afterschool and Summer presented by After School Alliance.

2022-23

At the time of M and E's initial monitoring visit, the program director reported that staffing (including one full-time program director, two part-time site coordinators, 15 part-time teachers, one part-time nurse, one part-time social worker, and one part-time receptionist) was complete. All (100%) program staff members worked within the school district during the regular school day. During the second site monitoring visit, the program director reported that, except for his position, staffing had not changed and remained in place.

During the program year, the program director attended NJDOE's new program director orientation and training, all NJDOE quarterly program director meetings, the NJSACC program director PLC meetings, AIR evaluation meetings, and other sessions, including the PLC Creating Brave and Safe Spaces for LGBTQIA & Students, Y4Y-Positive Learning Environments, Organization Culture/Climate, Program Director PLC Esports as a Career Pathway, and NJSACC – Soaring Beyond Conference.

In addition, the EHC district provided the following professional development sessions for REACH staff: CPR training, CPI trainings (2), *Let's Go Learn* trainings (2), playground supervision training, resiliency training dyslexia training, special education classification training, and McKinney-Vento

Law. Finally, REACH provided an initial staff orientation in September 2022, monthly staff meetings, a Kid-Grit SEL session, and sessions were offered by external agencies including the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, which offered a session on healthy eating, and a session on youth mental health provided by the Virtual NJ Healthcare Quality Institute was also provided.

2023-24

Throughout the program year, the program director attended NJDOE's new program director orientations and training sessions, all NJDOE program director meetings, NJSACC program director PLC meetings and the NJSACC After-school Conversations, NJSACC Youth Mental Health and First Aid Training, and the NJSACC Soaring Conference. In addition, the school district included the program director in its regular administrative meetings, some REACH staff attended the district's monthly district staff meetings, and the REACH program provided an initial staff orientation in September 2023, as well as monthly staff meetings. Finally, the program director also attended Zoom sessions on sustainability and NJ Climate Challenge offered by the state of New Jersey organizations that focused on issues of sustainability and climate change and the Foundations Beyond School Hours Conference.

2024-25

At the time of M and E's initial monitoring visit, the program director reported that staffing (including one full-time program director, two part-time site coordinators, 18 part-time teachers, one part-time nurse, and one part-time guidance counselor) was complete. All (100%) program staff members also worked within the school district during the regular school day.

During the program year, the program director attended all NJDOE quarterly program director meetings, training offered by the NJ Food Bank for food bank and food handler certification, the *Foundations Beyond School Hours* Conference, the NJSACC Annual Conference on Afterschool and Out-of-School Time, and the NJSACC Soaring Conference. In addition, the school district included the program director in its regular administrative meetings, and some REACH staff attended the district's monthly district staff meetings. The district also provided professional development sessions for the staff on several topics including Safe Schools, Creating Resilience - Trauma Responsive Schools by Michael McKnight, The Science of Reading by Kim Tucker, Best Practices in Math with Innovamat, CPR training, Aces Trauma Review, Differentiation and De-escalation, Sheltered English Instruction, Behavior Basics with Interactive Kids, and Nearpod Training. The REACH program provided an initial staff orientation in September 2024, monthly staff meetings, and Generation Citizen training for staff.

Analysis and Conclusion

There is clear evidence of the attainment of this objective. During the current 5-year program cycle, the REACH staff was provided an abundance of substantial opportunities for their continuing professional development from several different sources, including the NJDOE, NJSACC, the school district, the 21st CCLC Program, the national Boys and Girls Clubs of America organization, and scores of other external agencies and programs. There is also positive interview and survey feedback from the program staff attesting to the relevance and usefulness of the professional development sessions.

Objective 1.4: Students regularly participating in the program will be positively impacted in terms of performance on state assessments in language arts and mathematics.

The data in Tables 4 and 5 show that program participants continued to struggle academically in the five years of this program cycle.

Table 4 - NJSLA Scores in Language Arts and Math with Percentages of Students at *Below Expectations* and *Met or Exceeded Expectations* Levels of Achievement

Program Year	Mean Score		% Below Expectations (Scores <750)		% Met or Exceeded Expectations (Scores ≥750)	
	Language	Math	Language	Math	Language	Math
2020-21						
2021-22	711.6	714.3	90.2%	92.3%	9.8%	7.7%
2022-23	705.7	705.9	92.9%	94.3%	7.1%	5.7%
2023-24	708.3	707.1	94.7%	96.1%	5.3%	3.9%
2024-25	720.2	718.9	80.9%	85.5%	19.1%	14.5%

Note: NJSLA mean scores based on a range of 650-850. No data available for 2020-21 as the NJSLA was canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Table 5 - Students' Standardized Test (NJSLA) Results by Grade – Percent *Meeting Expectations* and *Exceeding Expectations* (≥750) (Spring Term - 2021-25)

Grade	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
3	N/A	N/A	15.4%	25.0%	0%	11.8%	6.7%	26.7%	12.5%	12.5%
4	N/A	N/A	9.1%	0.0%	7.1%	0%	8.3%	0.0%	27.2%	9.1%
5	N/A	N/A	6.7%	0.0%	6.1%	0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	6.3%
6	N/A	N/A	0.0%	4.8%	11.1%	0%	6.7%	3.3%	0.0%	7.1%
7	N/A	N/A	19.0%	14.3%	13.6%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	23.8%	19.0%
8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.3%	21.7%	8.7%	0.0%	38.5%	38.5%
Total	N/A	N/A	9.8%	7.7%	7.1%	5.7%	5.3%	3.9%	19.1%	14.5%

N/A – NJSLA Not administered in 2020-21

Findings, Analysis, and Conclusion

The data in Tables 4 and 5 clearly show that this objective met with only limited success. Specifically, large percentages of participating students did not meet expectations for English language arts and mathematics as measured by the NJSLA. Specifically, while the test was not administered in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during the three succeeding years for which data were available, only small percentage of participating students (9.8% in 2021-22, 7.1% in 2022-23, 5.3% in 2023-24) met or exceeded expectations in English language arts; however, in 2024-25, the percentage meeting or exceeding expectations increased significantly to 19.1%. Similarly small percentages (7.7% in 2021-22, 5.7% in 2022-23, 3.9% in 2023-24), met or exceeded expectations in mathematics. However, that percentage increased significantly in 2024-25 to 14.5%. Correspondingly, large percentages (90.2% in 2021-22, 92.9% in 2022-23, and 94.7% in 2023-24) did not meet expectations in English language arts, and 92.3% in 2021-22, 94.3% in 2022-23, and 96.1% in 2023-24 did not meet expectations in mathematics. However, in 2024-25, the percentage of students not meeting expectations in English language arts and mathematics decreased significantly to 80.9% and 85.5% respectively. Moreover, during the four years between 2021-22 and 2024-25, large percentages (49% in 2021-22, 43.3% in 2022-23, 57.6% in 2023-24, and 53.7% in 2024-25) were found to be making progress (Levels 2-3) in achieving proficiency in English language arts.

Similarly, in mathematics, during the same 4-year period, large percentages (68.2% in 2021-22, 56% in 2022-23, 58.3% in 2023-24, and 64.6% in 2024-25) were found to be making progress in achieving proficiency (Levels 2-3). While these data clearly attest to the fact that participating students were struggling in these core areas, the data also demonstrate that students were positively affected by their participation in the REACH program; so much so, in fact, that significant increases in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations in both core areas were observed in 2024-25.

Objective 1.5: Students regularly participating in the program will demonstrate improved school-day attendance, decreased disciplinary actions or other adverse behaviors, improved social-emotional functioning, and the development of 21st century skills.

Findings

Student Attendance and Disciplinary Infractions

The data in Table 6 show rates of regular school day attendance and reportable disciplinary infractions among participating students during the 5-year program cycle. Tables 7 and 8 elaborate more fully on the data in Table 6.

Table 6 - Average Daily Attendance and Disciplinary Infractions (2021-25)

	Average Daily Attendance		Number of Disciplinary Infractions		
	N	Percent	N	Number	Rate
2020-21	108	92.83%	5	6	1.2
2021-22	135	94.22%	39	96	2.5
2022-23	237	94.32%	44	132	4.0
2023-24	138	93.64%	46	102	2.2
2024-25	110	95.00%	36	81	2.2

Table 7 - Student Average Daily Attendance (2021-25)

Grade	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
3	97.18%	92.99%	94.97%	94.72%	94.04%
4	93.20%	95.03%	94.06%	94.04%	95.18%
5	87.69%	92.75%	94.13%	92.99%	94.41%
6	92.97%	93.54%	94.14%	94.28%	94.72%
7	93.59%	95.05%	94.90%	92.05%	95.05%
8	95.58%	95.87%	94.01%	93.45%	97.39%
Total	92.83%	94.22%	94.32%	93.64%	95.00%

Table 8 - Student Disciplinary Infractions (2021-25)

Grade	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	No. Stud.	No. Inf.	No. Stud.	No. Inf.	No. Stud.	No. Inf.	No. Stud.	No. Inf.	No. Stud.	No. Inf.
3	0	0	2	2	1	1	3	7	8	21
4	1	1	7	11	9	24	6	19	8	16
5	0	0	9	24	11	24	8	21	5	11
6	4	5	8	17	9	40	13	21	4	6
7	0	0	9	29	6	18	7	21	5	13
8	0	0	4	13	8	25	9	13	6	14
Total	5	6	39	96	44	132	46	102	36	81

The data in tables 6-8 clearly demonstrate that nearly all participating students (>92%) attended consistently during the regular school day. The data further demonstrates that the number of disciplinary infractions was generally low.

Immediately following, by year, is a summary of the extent to which participants demonstrated positive youth development (social) and behavioral characteristics as measured by student, staff, and parent surveys. Table 9 clearly shows the extent to which the various program stakeholders reported *excellent* and *good* ratings for participants’ social and disciplinary behaviors.

Table 9- Percent of Program Stakeholders Reporting *Excellent* and *Good* Ratings for Program Participants’ Social & Disciplinary Behaviors (Spring 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

Source	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	Social	Discipline	Social	Discipline	Social	Discipline	Social	Discipline	Social	Discipline
Staff	93%	93%	71%	71%	57%	43%	81%	76%	58%	50%
Students	82%	82%	80%	80%	64%	77%	77%	85%	85%	85%
Parents	N/A	N/A	87%	87%	89%	100%	84%	100%	100%	100%

Note: N/A means that no data were available

The data in table 9 clearly demonstrate that large percentages (in nearly all cases >76%) of stakeholders reported that students’ social and disciplinary behaviors were either excellent or good.

Finally, a brief narrative describing stakeholders’ assessments of students’ attendance and social and disciplinary behaviors follow immediately for each of the five years in the program cycle.

2020-21

During M and E’s initial virtual monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that because not all students had their own electronic devices (some families had multiple students at home with only one device available), conducting virtual instruction was sometimes a challenge. Furthermore, while attendance in the after-school program had been consistent, it had also been lower than desired. Nevertheless, students seemed to be well-adjusted socially to the online format, and the KidGrit program provided social and emotional support. No significant disciplinary issues were documented.

One program teacher reported that attendance had been consistent with 10 third graders logging on almost daily, but another teacher noted that that, from approximately 20 registered students, only eight attended consistently; the remainder were sporadic. The students enjoyed being able to interact socially while online, and they were also provided with mindfulness and yoga activities for their well-being.

During M and E’s second virtual monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that after-school online attendance was never as high as it was before COVID-19. Those students who did attend the program did so fairly consistently. She also found that those were the students who thrived academically, working online from home because of a lack of school anxiety when in-person. However, she noted that attendance seemed to drop off when the weather outside was nice. The teachers also noted a drop in attendance between the fall and spring semesters. They reported that the kids “who come are incredibly consistent. The challenge is getting other kids to log on.” In order to address their need for social interaction, one teacher “always gives the kids time to talk to each other online because they don’t even have that during their in-person school day, when they are socially distanced 6 feet apart and have no free common time.” Another teacher remarked that the kids “in grades 4 and 5 really liked the adult interaction. As time went on, their conversation online became more comfortable for all.” Once again, no significant disciplinary issues were documented.

2021-22

During M and E's initial monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that students attended consistently, with 100 – 115 attending daily. Ordinarily, students who were absent from the regular school day program were the only ones absent in the after-school program. The program maintained a robust waiting list for students wishing to enroll. At the time of the second monitoring visit, the site coordinator again reported that students attended consistently every day, with an average daily attendance of 90-100 students.

During the initial monitoring visit, the site coordinator also reported there were some behavioral problems throughout the program, but most concerned age level-related issues, e.g., name calling, teasing, speaking disrespectfully to staff, etc. Some students still hadn't adjusted returning to the regular school day program and the after-school program. Some negative day-school behaviors carried over to the after-school program, and the free time the students had often provided more opportunities to engage in such negative behaviors. Ordinarily, behavioral issues were immediately handled by program staff or the site coordinator; however, if the coordinator needed to call a child's parents, they were usually very supportive. Very few students needed to be suspended from the program for a day or two depending on the incident. She further noted that the staff ensured there were extra activities in which students who finished their homework early could engage during the Homework Help hour. At the time of the second monitoring visit, she reported that she witnessed tight groups of friends joining activities. She had also seen much improvement in positive student interactions since the beginning of the program. Behaviors were relatively normal for this age group.

During the initial monitoring visit, one after-school teacher reported that attendance was very good. Not only did the students enjoy attending their classes (for which their input was both solicited and accommodated), they also enjoyed the opportunity to complete their homework and have a nutritious snack. The other teacher, who also rated student attendance as very good, noted how excited students were to attend ("They're always here!") and be with their friends, whom many would not see after school unless they attended the program. Even students who participated in school-sponsored sports came to the program after practice. Similar comments were offered by teachers who were interviewed during the second monitoring visit. One teacher remarked, "We get almost the same kids every day. Some may not attend for a day or two, but they always return," and another teacher commented, "Attendance is pretty good. If a student is absent from school, they don't attend the after-school program. When parents need to pick them up early, the students are not happy to leave."

The after-school teachers also commented on students' social and disciplinary behaviors. One teacher reported that, even though some misbehaviors had occurred, most were age-related and not of a serious nature. Students' social behaviors were generally good, in that the program provided opportunities for students to interact with the staff and their peers in a more informal manner than in the regular school day environment. The other teacher noted that the general lack of socialization and social adjustment was a behavioral issue since the school was closed because of the pandemic. Currently, however, students thrived on the individualized attention they received in REACH. She also noted that disrespecting the adults in the program seemed to be another behavioral issue, although it appeared that such misbehavior was slowly improving as the year progressed. Since all the students wanted to be in the program, they tended to respond quickly to redirection.

During M and E's second monitoring visit, one teacher commented that students' social interactions and behaviors had "evened out" and were much better. "As a staff, we have worked through the issues. There are now mostly positive experiences for staff and students, who have grown a lot in

social/emotional learning.” She also commented that discipline was not an issue, as students’ behaviors were normal for their age group and often carried over from the regular school day. Another teacher remarked that she couldn’t remember the last time she had to discipline a student.

2022-23

During M and E’s initial round of interviews, the site coordinator reported that student attendance had been very good, with most of the children attending consistently. With a LOS of 126 and a waiting list, program administrators and staff would love to increase the REACH enrollment, but limited space and staff has prevented that from happening. Regarding students’ social and disciplinary behaviors, the site coordinator reported that both had improved over the previous year, although a few children were still learning how to get along with each other. She did mention, however, that earlier in the year, the program director was forced to expel a few children for fighting or being disrespectful to the teachers. She noted that many issues that originated in the regular school day program were not resolved there, and they tended to carry over to REACH. Unfortunately, the regular school day staff did not consistently inform the after-school staff regarding such issues. During the second round of interviews, the site coordinator (who was filling in for the former site coordinator who had left the program) reported that attendance during the second half of the program year had been outstanding, with 90-100 children participating on a daily basis. He added that students were getting to know each other better, and no significant disciplinary measures were needed.

The teachers who were interviewed during the first round also reported that attendance had been good and consistent. One teacher commented that she had the same children every day, while the other teacher commented that attendance in her classes was about 95%. They also reported that children seemed to get along really well, and the staff and the kids worked hard on being kind to one another. The older children were good role models, and they tended to look after the younger ones. Although one teacher mentioned that some children had some difficulty adjusting to the program, they had hardly any significant issues with discipline. Both teachers also reported they usually could de-escalate and re-direct students who engaged in misbehaviors. One teacher commented that she may have had to give one or two warnings, but then the children tended to respond well. They knew the procedures and rules, and they didn’t want to be excluded from the program. Issues that could not easily or quickly be resolved were referred to the program administrators, who kept a written log of issues and their resolutions. During the second round of interviews, the teachers again agreed that student attendance had been good and consistent, although the Spring brought warmer weather and outside sports, which caused a decrease among some students’ attendance in the after-school program. The teachers also reported that students’ social and disciplinary behaviors were improving. The younger students were struggling the most, because they were the ones who missed formal instruction during COVID. Nevertheless, REACH helped in getting the students to work together, share, and socialize with other students from their grade level. One teacher did note, however, that there had been some fighting during the regular school day that, unfortunately, carried over to the after-school REACH Program. When misbehaviors occurred, the teachers were the first responders. Each one had a walkie talkie, so their response was quick. The teacher would separate the students and mediate the situation. Sometimes, time-outs were used for the students, and depending on the severity of the issue, they may be sent home for a day or two. Some were expelled if the situation didn’t improve.

2023-24

During two rounds of interviews in the Fall and Spring terms, the site coordinators reported that student attendance during the year was good, with most of the children attending consistently. They

reported that there was a core group of students who attended every day; even students who complained the most attended regularly. They also noted, however, that some students on the roster attended inconsistently. Students liked to be with their friends, were fed, and had a pleasant after-school environment. They also pointed out that after-school activities could alter student attendance, depending on the season, sport, or club.

Regarding students' social and disciplinary behaviors, the site coordinators reported that students had gotten used to the school structure since COVID restrictions were lifted, and they got along well. However, at times, some students knew what buttons to push to get under others' (i.e., staff and students) skins, but there hadn't been any real discipline problems during the year. Students wanted to be in the program, so they were careful not to get suspended. They further noted that students tended to be sillier in REACH than they were during the regular school day, and students in different grade levels interacted differently with one another. The age of students also made a difference. At times, the older students were good guides and role models for the younger students, who sometimes let their emotions take over with sports, which resulted in their pushing one another. Bad language and not following directions was also a social/disciplinary issue at times, although there was policy in place for both.

The teachers also reported that attendance had been good and consistent, with a core group attending pretty regularly. The teachers also reported that the children got along well with each other. One teacher remarked that children's social interactions seemed to be "better than last year and was getting back to normal (i.e., before COVID). There were more structured activities this year, and the children expected the program to be well organized." Another teacher agreed with her colleague and commented that students got along well. During the regular school day, they only saw their homeroom classmates but, at REACH, they saw and interacted with other students beyond their grade level. Both teachers also agreed that there were rarely any significant disciplinary issues. A third teacher remarked that the program was "more structured [than previously], so there were fewer disciplinary issues. She remarked, "Eighth graders were much more disciplined than last year's group, although a few had been suspended from the regular school day program, so they couldn't attend REACH." Finally, the fourth teacher agreed with her colleagues and reported that discipline was not a problem. For some students, however, REACH wasn't perceived as "being in school," and sometimes they failed to see REACH teachers as regular school day teachers, so there was a disconnect at times with their behaviors and interactions.

2024-25

During M and E's initial monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that student attendance had been consistent overall, but it varied as the year progressed, with more students attending when the weather turned cold. Regarding students' social and disciplinary behaviors, she reported that students got along well, but some students were goofy and silly, and the younger students tried to mimic behaviors of their older counterparts, who tried to take charge of them. She also noted that the after-school program experienced more behavioral issues than during the regular school day, and there was a lot of friend drama and violations of the no cell phone policy.

The teachers who were interviewed also reported that attendance had been good and consistent, especially among the younger students. Regarding their social interactions and disciplinary behaviors, they noted that, for the most part, students were socially appropriate, kind to their peers, and respectful of teachers. They chose who they wanted to associate with in the program. However, the attitudes of some students had been a bit rough this year, and those students tended to hang out with the same friends every day. The teacher further noted that there hadn't been many disciplinary

behavior issues so far this year, but when they did arise, they were handled promptly and correctly. Some of the disciplinary issues that arose included pushing/shoving at recess, cursing, bad attitudes and disrespect, and phone incidents since phones were to be kept out of sight.

In the interviews during the follow-up Spring monitoring visit, the teachers reported that attendance had been good with the same core group of students attending every day. She further added that the children’s social interactions were also good, and most students generally got along pretty well. With the older students helping with the younger ones. One teacher reported, however, that some of the girls at times acted in socially inappropriate ways. Finally, the teachers noted that inappropriate cell phone usage and disrespectful behaviors continued to be issues that often resulted in corrective disciplinary action.

Analysis and Conclusion

There is clear evidence of the attainment of this objective. During the current 5-year program cycle, program administrators and teachers reported that attendance was consistently good (an assertion that is corroborated by the high student enrollment figures and attendance rates). Moreover, there is clear evidence from interviews and surveys that students’ social and disciplinary behaviors were also generally good (most of the disciplinary infractions were age-appropriate and largely insignificant). Finally, based on interview and survey data, students’ participation and engagement in the REACH Program had a positive impact on their self-confidence and self-esteem; their social and disciplinary behaviors; their critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills, as well as on their social-emotional learning.

Goal 2: To implement activities that promote parental involvement and provide opportunities for literacy and related educational development to the families of participating students.

Objective 2.1: The agency will establish collaborative relationships that offer opportunities for literacy and related educational activities to the families of participating students.

Findings

The data in Table 2 (see above on pp. 27-28) clearly show that the program maintained consistent collaborative relationships with a number of different agencies and organizations over the 5-year term of the grant, many of which offered a variety of services and activities aimed specifically at parents and families.

The data in Table 10 clearly demonstrate that parents perceive themselves as familiar with the program’s goals and objectives and heavily involved in literacy-based programs and activities, not only with their children, but also for themselves.

Table 10 - Parents’ Self-Assessment of their Own Literacy Skills and Participation in Literacy-based Activities with their Children (Spring 2021-22: Winter 2023-25)

Program Year	Parents Familiarity with Program Goals and Objectives (% Excellent and Good)	Parent Self-Assessment of Literacy Skills (% Excellent and Good)	Parent Self-Assessment of Participation in Literacy-based Activities with Children (% Excellent and Good)
2020-21	100%	100%	100%
2021-22	93%	100%	93%
2022-23	83%	94%	89%
2023-24	100%	100%	95%
2024-25	83%	100%	100%

Analysis and Conclusion

There is evidence of the attainment of this objective. During the current 5-year program cycle, the program coordinated its services and activities with several different partners and other external agencies and programs, many of which provided opportunities for parents and families to become more involved in their children’s education. In addition, survey and interview data attest to the fact that while parent participation and engagement could benefit from improvement, parent interest, participation in, and support for the REACH program was good and beneficial.

Objective 2.2: Parents participating in grant-funded activities will increase their involvement in the education of children under their care, and

Objective 2.3: Grantees will adopt intentional strategies to communicate to parents and adult family members about program goals and objectives, activities, and their child’s experience in the program.

Findings

Regarding Objective 2.2, the data in table 11 demonstrate that a substantial percentage of parents (>93% in every year) generally view themselves as involved in their children’s education. These data corroborate the testimony of the program director and site coordinator and instructional staff who described (see *Parental Involvement* above) parents as active participants in the program.

Table 11 - Parents’ Self-Assessment of Involvement in their Children’s Education (Spring 2021-22: Winter 2023-25)

Program Year	Parent Self-Assessment of Involvement in Children’s Education (% <i>Excellent and Good</i>)
2020-21	100%
2021-22	93%
2022-23	94%
2023-24	95%
2024-25	100%

Regarding Objective 2, readers are referred to Table 11 above and Table 17 below, both of which provide data regarding the extent to which parents have been given the opportunity to understand the goals and objectives of the program and to learn about the services and activities provided to their children. Moreover, additional information regarding this objective has been threaded throughout the discussion of the section on Parent Involvement (see paragraph 7, *Parent and Family Participation*, pp.17-19).

Analysis and Conclusion

There is evidence of the attainment of the two objectives immediately above. During the current 5-year program cycle, findings from stakeholder interviews and surveys show that, despite the lingering effects of the pandemic, parent and family-oriented services and activities at the program site were well-attended and were well-received and had a positive impact on parents’ knowledge, skills, and participation in program activities. Finally, the program continued to use multiple strategies to ensure that parents became and remained informed about program activities.

Goal 3: To measure participants’ progress and program effectiveness through monitoring and evaluating.

Objective 3.1: Throughout the grant period, the grantee will continually assess program quality and effectiveness and use this information to support quality improvement,

Findings

Throughout the current 5-year program cycle, REACH employed an external evaluator who collected and analyzed data on academic remediation, different types of enrichment, and students’ social and disciplinary behavior data each year and provided annual reports of progress.

Table 12 - Areas and Variables Included in Annual Program Assessments (Spring 2021-22: Winter 2023-25)

Program Year	Areas and Variables Included in the Annual Assessments of the 21 st century Community Learning Center Projects		
	Academic Remediation	Enrichment	Social and Behavioral Development
2020-21	✓	✓	✓
2021-22	✓	✓	✓
2022-23	✓	✓	✓
2023-24	✓	✓	✓
2024-25	✓	✓	✓

Analysis and Conclusion

Based on the findings illustrated above in Table 12 above, as well as the compelling narrative that constitutes this report, it is clear that this objective was achieved. Working with the program director, site coordinators, and staff over the five years of the current cycle, M and E implemented an elaborate and research-based evaluation design and methodology that provided timely and useful information for program improvement.

Objective 3.2: The grantee will work to obtain data on students’ in-school progress in the areas of academic achievement, behavior, and social development and use this information to inform the design and delivery of programming,

Findings

As the data in table 13 clearly demonstrate, a substantial majority of participants were reported to have earned passing grades (A, B, or C) in language arts and math during the fourth marking periods of the years for which data were available. Table 14 elaborates on the data in table 13. It is noteworthy, however, that the collection of report card data was temporarily discontinued during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 program years due to (1) difficulties in obtaining such data from the school district in a timely manner in a format that was compatible with the needs of the evaluation, and (2) it was determined that in some schools, student performance data were recorded in a variety of formats, which made it difficult to aggregate such data and report it in a consistent format. Nevertheless, the collection of report card data resumed in 2024-25, and all the available data show that significant majorities (>75%) earned grades of A, B, or C in both English language arts and math. In fact, during the 2024-25 program year, the percentage of students earning these grades exceeded 93%.

In addition to quantitative report card data, subjective narrative data also exists that addresses this objective. In each of the five years of the current program cycle, students were interviewed twice. In

each interview, they were asked about the extent to which their participation in the 21st CCLC Program helped them academically. While some students reported they didn't think the program directly impacted on their academic progress (because they were already performing well in school), the majority of students commented that the extra help they got from the after-school teachers both with their homework and with subjects with which they were struggling had a significant impact on helping them to get better grades in school.

Table 13 - Percentage of Participants Who Earned Grades of A, B, and C in Regular Classroom Work in Language Arts and Math (2021-25)

Program Year	Percent Achieving Grades of A, B, or C	
	English Language Arts	Mathematics
2020-21	81.48%	75.93%
2021-22	91.85%	89.63%
2022-23	N/A	N/A
2023-24	N/A	N/A
2024-25	93.64%	95.45%

N/A – Data Not Available

Table 14 - 4th Qtr. Report Card Grades – Percent Achieving Grades of A, B, or C (2021-25)

Grade	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
3	N/A	N/A	50.00%	81.25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	70.83%	87.50%
4	100.00%	94.12%	100%	87.50%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100.00%	100.00%
5	88.46%	92.31%	95.83%	91.67%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100.00%	100.00%
6	90.00%	85.00%	100%	95.83%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100.00%	92.86%
7	90.91%	72.73%	95.65%	95.65%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100.00%	100.00%
8	100.00%	85.00%	93.75%	81.25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100.00%	92.31%
Total	81.48%	75.93%	91.85%	89.63%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	93.64%	95.45%

N/A – Data Not Available

Analysis and Conclusion

Based on the report card data regarding student achievement that were available, as well as the abundance of interview and survey data attesting to student achievement, the conclusion has been reached that this objective was achieved. Moreover, the survey data in Tables 15-22 also provide evidence of students' behaviors and social development.

Objective 3.3: Throughout the grant period, the grantee will adopt measures as needed within the program when data is not available from other sources to assess (a) youth engagement in program activities; (b) the academic and/or social-emotional needs of participating youth; and (c) program impact, and

Objective 3.4: The grantee will measure the impact of the program on family members of participating students.

Findings

In addition to the data reported immediately above in Tables 13-14, the data below in table 15 clearly demonstrate that a substantial majority of program stakeholders (i.e., staff, students, parents) reported that the overall impact of the REACH program over the 5-year term of the grant was positive, as evidenced by high percentages of responses of either *excellent* or *good* or *strongly agree* or *agree*. Tables 16-22 provide an elaboration of these impact assessments. Throughout this report, data have been presented that clearly demonstrate that the program has provided remedial and

enrichment academic instruction, as well as various other services and activities that have been designed to improve students' knowledge and skills, their attitudes and behaviors, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the knowledge and skills of their parents. These data appear in the tables presented in this report represent clear testimony to the assertion that the program has had a demonstrable impact on family members of participating youth.

Table 15 - Assessment of Students' Academic Achievements and Overall Program Impact (Spring 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

Program Year	Assessment of Students' Academic Achievements and Overall Program Impact (2021-25)					
	Staff		Students		Parents	
	Academic Achieve.	Impact	Academic Achieve.	Impact	Academic Achieve.	Impact
2020-21	93%	100%	100%	100%	92%	100%
2021-22	71%	86%	87%	77%	93%	93%
2022-23	64%	93%	82%	84%	83%	83%
2023-24	94%	100%	81%	93%	95%	95%
2024-25	83%	92%	95%	95%	100%	100%

Note: Percentages represent combined data for respondents offering *Excellent* and *Good* ratings.

Stakeholder Assessments of Program Effectiveness and Impact: During the course of the 5-year program, surveys were administered to staff, students, and parents about their perceptions of program effectiveness and impact. The results of these surveys are presented in tables immediately following.

Table 16: - Student Assessment of Program Impact (Spring, 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

Area	2020-21 (n=11)	2021-22 (n=58)	2022-23 (n=39)	2023-24 (n=76)	2024-25 (n=20)
Understanding of reason for enrollment in after-school program/familiarity with program's goals and objectives	91%	79%	82%	81%	65%
Self-perception of attitudes toward school	91%	70%	72%	89%	95%
Self-perception of feelings about self/self-esteem	90%	61%	74%	87%	85%
Self-perception of ability to get along with others/social behaviors	82%	80%	64%	77%	85%
Self-perception of personal disciplinary behaviors	82%	80%	77%	85%	85%
Self-perception of classroom (academic) achievement/grades	100%	87%	82%	81%	95%
Self-perception of critical thinking skills	N/A	81%	85%	84%	95%
Self-perception of problem solving skills	N/A	70%	74%	84%	100%
Self-perception of decision making skills	N/A	72%	71%	83%	90%
Overall impact of the program	100%	77%	84%	93%	95%

Note: Percentages represent combined data for respondents offering *Excellent* and *Good* ratings.

Table 17: Students' Agreement/Disagreement with Selected Statements about 21st CCLC Program (Spring, 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	2021-22 (n=58)	2022-23 (n=39)	2023-24 (n=76)	2024-25 (n=20)
I have fun participating in the 21 st CCLC after-school program	82%	87%	92%	95%
In the 21 st CCLC after-school program, I learn things that will	57%	73%	87%	90%

help me in school				
I have met new friends in the 21 st CCLC after-school program	71%	82%	92%	95%
The starting and ending times of the 21 st CCLC after-school program are just right (not too early, not too late)	68%	97%	77%	85%
The amount of time the 21 st CCLC program operates each day is just right (not too long, not too short)	80%	91%	87%	75%
The food/snacks that are provided in the 21 st CCLC after-school program are enjoyable.	28%	56%	87%	95%

Note: Percentages represent combined data for respondents offering *Strongly Agree and Agree* ratings.
These questions were initially introduced in 2021-22

Table 18 - Staff Assessment of Program Impact (Spring, 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

Area	2020-21 (n=14)	2021-22 (n=14)	2022-23 (n=14)	2023-24 (n=15)	2024-25 (n=12)
Familiarity with program goals and objectives	100%	93%	93%	82%	100%
Knowledge of program responsibilities	100%	93%	93%	88%	100%
Lines of communication within program	100%	93%	93%	82%	100%
Linkage between 21 st CCLC and regular school curriculum and activities	NA	86%	93%	76%	100%
Students' attitudes toward school	100%	71%	57%	76%	58%
Students' self-confidence	86%	71%	71%	88%	83%
Students' self-esteem	86%	79%	79%	82%	75%
Students' social behaviors	93%	71%	57%	81%	58%
Students' disciplinary behaviors	93%	71%	43%	76%	50%
Students' critical thinking skills	N/A	71%	64%	82%	58%
Students' problem solving skills	N/A	71%	64%	82%	67%
Students' decision making skills	N/A	71%	64%	94%	67%
Students' homework completion	93%	71%	71%	82%	92%
Students' academic achievement	93%	71%	64%	94%	83%
Students' classroom engagement/participation	93%	79%	93%	82%	83%
Overall impact of the program on students' learning and well being	100%	86%	93%	100%	92%

Note: Percentages represent combined data for respondents offering *Excellent and Good* ratings.

Table 19 - Staff Assessment of Program Variables and Outcomes (Spring, 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

To what extent to agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	2021-22 (n=14)	2022-23 (n=14)	2023-24 (n=15)	2024-25 (n=12)
The 21 st CCLC after-school program is adequately focused on inquiry-based and social-emotional learning	100%	93%	94%	100%
The 21 st CCLC after-school facilities and organizational structure are conducive to student learning	100%	100%	100%	100%
The linkage between the regular school day and the 21 st CCLC after-school program curriculum and activities is satisfactory	100%	93%	76%	100%
Parent/family engagement in 21 st CCLC after-school program activities is satisfactory	100%	86%	81%	100%
Starting/ending times and hours of operation are just right	100%	93%	100%	92%
Student attendance and engagement, in the 21 st CCLC	100%	93%	82%	92%

after-school program is satisfactory				
Students seem to have fun in the 21 st CCLC after-school program	100%	93%	88%	100%
21 st CCLC program field trips are interesting and informative	57%	71%	82%	92%
The professional development/training I receive as part of the 21 st CCLC after-school program has been relevant and useful	86%	93%	88%	100%

Note: Percentages represent combined data for respondents offering *Strongly Agree and Agree* ratings. These questions were initially introduced in 2021-22

Table 20 - Parent Assessment of Program Impact (Spring, 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

Area	2020-21 (n=11)	2021-22 (n=15)	2022-23 (n=18)	2023-24 (n=19)	2024-25 (n=6)
Children's attendance and engagement in program	N/A	87%	94%	100%	100%
Children's attitudes toward school	100%	93%	89%	100%	100%
Children's self-confidence	N/A	80%	89%	95%	100%
Children's self-esteem	92%	80%	89%	84%	100%
Children's academic achievement	92%	93%	83%	95%	100%
Children's social behaviors	92%	87%	89%	84%	100%
Children's disciplinary behaviors	92%	87%	100%	100%	100%
Children's critical thinking skills	N/A	100%	82%	95%	100%
Children's problem solving skills	N/A	93%	83%	100%	67%
Children's decision making skills	N/A	93%	78%	94%	83%
Self-assessment of familiarity with program goals/objectives	100%	93%	83%	100%	83%
Self-assessment of personal literacy skills	100%	100%	94%	100%	100%
Self-assessment of involvement with children's education	100%	93%	94%	95%	100%
Self-assessment of participation in literacy-related activities with children	100%	93%	89%	95%	100%
Overall impact of the program on children's learning and well-being	100%	93%	83%	95%	100%

Note: Percentages represent combined data for respondents offering *Excellent and Good* ratings. These questions were initially introduced in 2021-22

Table 21 - Parent Assessment of Program Impact (Spring, 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	2021-22 (n=15)	2022-23 (n=18)	2023-24 (n=19)	2024-25 (n=6)
Children have fun in the 21 st CCLC after-school program	100%	100%	100%	100%
Children are learning things in the 21 st CCLC after-school program they need to know	87%	94%	100%	83%
21 st CCLC program field trips are interesting and informative	60%	72%	89%	50%
The level and frequency of communication with the home is satisfactory	N/A	94%	100%	83%
Parents have had opportunities to provide input and offer suggestions for 21 st CCLC after-school program activities	80%	78%	95%	83%
The physical facilities of the 21 st CCLC after-school program are satisfactory	100%	94%	100%	67%
The atmosphere and environment of the 21 st CCLC after-school program is comfortable and conducive to learning	93%	94%	100%	100%
The hours of operation of the 21 st CCLC after-school program are satisfactory	100%	100%	100%	83%

Children enjoy the food/snacks that are provided in the 21 st CCLC after-school program	80%	76%	95%	67%
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Note: Percentages represent combined data for respondents offering *Strongly Agree and Agree* ratings.

Table 22 - Parent Assessment of Increases in Children’s Achievement (Spring, 2021-22; Winter 2023-25)

	2021-22 (n=15)	2022-23 (n=18)	2023-24 (n=19)	2024-25 (n=6)
Language arts skills (i.e., reading, writing)	73%	61%	84%	50%
Math skills	87%	61%	89%	50%
Science/technology skills	73%	61%	84%	17%
Interest in reading	80%	50%	79%	17%
Interest in writing	67%	45%	84%	33%
interest in math	80%	56%	84%	33%
Interest in science/technology	87%	56%	84%	33%

Note: Percentages represent combined data for respondents offering *Increased a Lot and Increased a Little* ratings. These questions were initially introduced in 2021-22

Findings, Analysis, and Conclusion

The data in Tables 16-22 provide compelling evidence that the REACH program has successfully achieved the goal of contributing to youth engagement in program activities, positively affecting the academic and social-emotional needs of participating youth and likely to have a lasting positive impact not only on students who participated in the program, but also on family members of participating students.

There is clear evidence of the attainment of all four of the objectives associated with Goal 3. Throughout the current 5-year program cycle, the REACH leadership has worked in collaboration with M and E Associates, Inc. in planning and implementing evaluation strategies for the program. In the Fall of each program year, M and E met with the program director to establish a plan for the evaluation, and during each program year, M and E conducted two site visits in which interviews were conducted with the program director, site coordinators, teachers, and students. In addition, data collection protocols (i.e., surveys) were also administered to students, staff, and parents during each program year. Finally, in the Spring term of each year, M and E collected available student performance data, including NJSLA test scores, report card grades (when available), and attendance and disciplinary infraction data. The evaluation effort was designed to provide relevant and useful feedback to the program administrators and other stakeholders (e.g., advisory boards) regarding the extent to which program goals and objectives were achieved, the impact the program had on students’ academic, youth development, and social-emotional learning and well-being, the impact of the program’s services and activities on parents of participating students, and to provide other relevant and useful information that supports program quality and effectiveness and informs the design and delivery of the 21st CCLC Program. Data resulting from these evaluative activities are noted throughout this report, and the compilation of significant program strengths and accomplishments achieved over the past five years has also been presented.

OTHER INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Significant Program Accomplishments

Based on interview reports from the program director and staff over the years, the following significant program accomplishments have been noted.

2020-21

During interviews in both the Fall and Spring terms, the program director cited the following accomplishments:

- The program was not notified until early September (2020) of the new grant award, but still got a program staffed and offered by October 5th.
- Operating two sites, one for third grade students at the Spragg Elementary School and one for grades 4-8 at the Community School.
- Partnered with Egg Harbor Twp.'s, Newton's, and Mullica Twp.'s 21st CCLC programs to coordinate ideas and resources for virtual parenting activities.
- The district was recognized as "Kindness Certified" by the Great Kindness Challenge through Kids for Peace as a result of the 21st CCLC students conducting kindness activities for the school. This accomplishment was noted in the local newspaper and at a Board of Education meeting.
- Conducted the Spring Community Refresh Resource Fair
- Community service projects – collected 73 pounds of can tabs to benefit Ronald MacDonald House, community cleanup, collection of 63 boxes of cereal for donation.
- Students had origami artwork on display in Stockton Noise Garage, part of Stockton campus in Atlantic City.

The program/site coordinator also reported the following program accomplishments:

- The program operates with a large number of activities, changes classes every quarter, and provides varied opportunities for learning, enrichment, and fun. Because of this, students enjoy the program and attend regularly.
- The program provides students with stability, structure, and outlets for social-emotional learning opportunities both online and in person
- Th program's ZOOM classes provide a vehicle that allows kids to be more relaxed to talk and interact with the staff.
- The outdoor activities allowed students who had remained virtual during the day to transition back into in-person activities. School attendance was approximately 50/50 virtual and in-person from April to June.

2021-22

During the initial monitoring visit, the program director reported that one of REACH's major accomplishments was planning and implementing the Festival of Hope event in December 2021. Thirty-five community vendors attended the event to provide families with resources, such as rent assistance and access to COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, 100 students attended the event in which they participated in craft activities, enjoyed holiday treats, and had pictures taken with Santa. Despite the fact that parental involvement was severely limited and challenged due to COVID-19, this event drew many parents and family members. Another accomplishment was the enrollment for the in-person program despite various strains of the COVID-19 virus. During M and E's second monitoring visit, the program director reported that REACH had secured two new collaborators, established the Farm-to-Fork program, and was in the process of establishing a relationship with Cedar Creek H.S.'s track team to encourage students in REACH's running club to join the team

when they transitioned to high school. REACH also worked with the ACCEA to bring in Chef Andre's Food Truck, which provided dinner to all program students. There was also an Equity vs. Equality workshop for students, a March Madness Family event, and an internet safety event for parents that, through program partnerships, helped provide a student version for use during the regular school day.

The site coordinator also reported that, after a challenging start in September, the program, in which both the program director and the site coordinator were new, seemed to be running smoothly. However, there was a change in program leadership when the former director resigned, and the position transitioned to a co-directorship. The site coordinator reported that, "after a rocky start, things were finally 'getting in the groove.'" She reported that she was responsible for the discipline and daily paperwork, and she enjoyed seeing students adjusting to school and the after-school program, getting excited about participating in the clubs, and seeing students helping students. Fun Fridays, during which time an abbreviated academic schedule was observed with only the clubs being held, have been a real hit with the students.

2022-23

During the two rounds of interviews, the program director reported that the REACH staff seemed happier than they have ever been. There was a restructuring of the day-to-day programming, making it more consistent and manageable. Other accomplishments that were cited were the new collaborations, parent events, and great feedback from the required NJDOE on-site compliance visit, the program's donation of over 52 pounds of can tabs to the Ronald McDonald House of Southern New Jersey aligning with their civic engagement focus, and that the program met its LOS by December.

During the initial round of interviews, the site coordinator reported that the most significant accomplishment during the program year was that the students were finally getting acclimated to the program procedures and the REACH routine. During the second round of interviews, the site coordinator commented that there had been an increase in civic and community engagement among students. The Prosecutor's Office had been a strong partner, and they helped with Civil Rights activity, the Debate Team, and Student Rights.

2023-24

The program director identified the following as significant program accomplishments during the program year: (a) staffing was complete, (b) staff and parents were happy, (c) programming was consistent and manageable, (d) the program gave back to the community, and (e) providing food boxes from NJ Food Bank for student and their families.

The site coordinator reported that the most significant accomplishment had been the teamwork and enthusiasm that staff exhibited. They successfully waded through all the program director changes over the last few years, and they liked working together in the program. They offered their individual interests and skills to design fun clubs and activities, like coding, which wasn't offered during the regular school day program. Getting students to socialize across grade levels and in larger settings was also cited as a major accomplishment for the program year.

2024-25

During both M and E monitoring visits, the program director and site coordinator identified the following as significant program accomplishments during the program year:

- The staff and parents are happy.

- Programming is more consistent and manageable than it had been previously.
- Bringing in high school students as mentors on Fun Fridays.
- Families get food from the Food Bank.
- Parent involvement increased.
- Program achieved the enrollment targets set earlier in the program year.
- The mentoring students got from teachers in an environment different from the regular school day.

Program Strengths

Over the 5-year course of the grant cycle, program stakeholders (administrators, staff, parents, students) were asked to comment on what they perceived to be programmatic strengths. Their responses are presented below by year.

2020-21

During the initial M and E monitoring visit, the site coordinator reported that, among the program's significant strengths, students had established very positive connections with the after-school teachers and participated in a safe, trusting environment. In addition, the program provided much needed assistance in language arts and math, as well as enrichment topics in many other areas.

The program teachers reported that an important program strength was the caring, creative leadership and staff administering a program that concentrated on students' social-emotional learning, which is so crucial during these times. The program was more relaxed and allowed connections to be made. It was refreshing and beneficial whether students were learning remotely or in school (on a hybrid platform). The staff connections with the students were even closer than if students attended in-person because the teachers were present in their homes (if only virtually), meeting family members online. The program provided the opportunity to add additional technology that was beyond the daily curriculum, which provided a foundation for future learning.

During the second round of interviews, the site coordinator reported that the program provided the staff with opportunities to create courses and clubs according to their interests and allowed them to share those courses and clubs with students in ways they were not able to provide during the regular school day. The provision of supplies for hands-on activities to be done online at home for students and families was also very beneficial. Finally, the program provided opportunities for better communication between staff and students.

During the second round of interviews, the program teachers reported that:

- The program provided an opportunity for them to get to know students more personally, by "Zooming" right into their homes, which made it easier to build relationships,
- the program director distributed interest and opinion surveys and built the program partially on suggestions which created more of a buy-in from everyone,
- the program provided a rich variety of classes that were different from school day,
- teachers received feedback from students, which was sometimes easier in the after-school and online environments,
- teachers liked offering opportunities for the kids that they don't have time to do during the day, such as architecture building and design challenges, rocketry, archeology, ocean studies, and water filter engineering,
- incorporating track into the program attracted kids who never participated in sports activities,
- incorporating coding gave kids a whole new interest in computers, and
- it was really good to have director who encouraged originality and new ideas.

2021-22

The program directors reported that some major strengths of the program included their planning, clubs/activities, and flexibility in meeting students' needs. The staff worked to identify clubs that matched students' interests as well as provide academic or social and emotional enrichment. The majority of the students seemed to greatly enjoy participating in the club activities and continued to attend the program regularly throughout the week. Staff were flexible to meet the needs of the students by adjusting support for homework, recruiting new staff members, and working closely with the classroom teachers to identify students who struggled and needed extra support. Community collaboration was also cited as a significant program strength.

In addition, the site coordinator reported that, among the program's strengths, students established very positive connections with the after-school teachers and could participate in a safe, trusting environment. In addition, the program provided much needed assistance in English language arts and math, as well as enrichment topics in many other areas. She reported that the program recently added a drama program, which the students loved. The first drama production had a standing room only crowd.

The program teachers reported the biggest strength of the program was the dedicated and stellar staff, who were always looking to add a variety of clubs. All the teachers wanted to be in the program and enjoyed working, sharing, and communicating with each other. They looked forward to helping their after-school students, which also saved them time during their regular school day classes. They also liked the flexibility of the teacher work-week schedule. Homework Helper was also identified as an awesome component of the program, and one teacher in an early interview also noted that the program director was a significant asset to the program.

2022-23

During both rounds of interviews, the program director reported that a significant program strength was the motivation and capacity of the REACH program staff to work well together and be flexible. In addition, the support that students received for their academics and the wide variety of enrichment options for students from which to choose, the ways for student voices to be heard, the Student Council, the open and continuous communication among the program staff, students, and school day staff were also identified as significant strengths of the program.

During both rounds of interviews, the site coordinator reported that the REACH staff, all of whom were heavily invested in the students and in the program, was the greatest strength of the program. During the second round of interviews, the site coordinator noted that programming, which was not strictly academic in nature, was very strong. The students had a lot of diverse choices, and the clubs were focused on movie themes, such as Cinderella. Math facts and puzzles were also designed as fun activities.

During both rounds of interviews, the teachers identified the following as significant program strengths:

- The Homework Club (students got it completed with help if needed) was a huge help. Students asked for help, and there was a math teacher circulating to provide assistance,
- the variety of clubs and activities,
- opportunities for children to socialize and interact with friends from other grade levels,
- dinner was provided,
- strong community support (outside vendors were always available to participate in activities, having Stockton University support was a special significant strength),

- a program director who has a wealth of experience in running after-school programs, and who introduced 20-30 new curriculum options which she shared with those who needed them, and
- communication between the staff and the program director.

2023-24

The program director reported that significant program strengths included the fact that the staff worked well together and were flexible, the partners and collaborators supported the program, and the relationship the program director built with the community coalition was a success.

In addition, the site coordinators reported that the staff, all of whom were heavily invested in the students and in the program, was the greatest strength of the program. Staff morale was very high, and they all wanted to help. The program's philosophy was "an adult for every child," and students were able to make new connections with different adults, as a result. The site coordinator further reported that REACH was an opportunity for students to socialize more than they could during the regular school day or outside of school, which was a significant strength. It was also a place where students could be safe and away from the allure of indulging in problematic behaviors.

2024-25

During M and E's initial monitoring visit, the program director reported that significant program strengths included the fact that the staff worked well together and were flexible, and the partners and collaborators supported the program. In addition, the site coordinator reported that third graders getting to experience middle school, other participating students socializing with students whom they don't see during the regular school day, and providing a place for older students to be that was not out on the street were all significant program strengths. In the follow-up interview during M and E's Spring monitoring visit, she added that the program provided a safe place for students to be after school when parents weren't yet home, as a significant strength. And she added that the gifts and talents staff brought to the program and the opportunity to provide students with extra homework time, if needed, were also significant strengths.

The teachers who were interviewed during M and E's initial monitoring visit identified the following as significant program strengths:

- A safe place to be after school,
- Homework Help,
- tutoring,
- staff stepping up to the plate when necessary,
- students getting to know different teachers, and
- social opportunities offered to students and the relationships that develop with students among grade levels.

In the interviews during M and E's follow-up monitoring visit in the Spring, the teachers identified the following as significant program strengths:

- The dedicated staff who always go above and beyond for students,
- a present and involved program director,
- the relationships made between and among the students and staff, and
- a safe after-school place for children to play and learn.

CHANGES IN THE PROGRAM DESIGN AND SIGNIFICANT TRENDS FROM 2020-21 THROUGH 2024-25

The most obvious change in program design occurred when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020. As described in earlier paragraphs, all of the schools in the district were closed in March 2020, children and adults were quarantined, businesses were shut down, the delivery mechanisms and strategies for recruiting students, introducing and providing educational and recreational events, and monitoring student performance were transitioned from an in-person platform to a virtual (online) platform. However, by 2021, some in-person activities were able to successfully move to a hybrid instructional model and eventually resume full in-person attendance in school. Once the transition back to in-person learning was completed, the after-school program resumed its curriculum/recreation design. The only changes that were introduced subsequently were minor tweaks in the design to improve the quality of the program.

SUMMARY PROGRAM CONCLUSION

Over the 5-year term of the 21st CCLC grant, the Egg Harbor City 21st CCLC Program (REACH) has clearly demonstrated adherences to the characteristics and attributes of an effective after-school program (Grossman et al., 2009). The data that have been collected corroborates that the environment of the program was conducive to good learning. It is clear that the program was characterized by supportive adult relationships, good peer interactions and group management, and participant voice and choice in selecting the activities in which they participated. Further, the data show that the program curriculum was consistent with that of the regular day school program, was delivered effectively and efficiently, and had sufficient support services. The program also actively engaged students cognitively, behaviorally, and socially and emotionally as evidenced by data that demonstrated the intensity of such engagement in terms of its consistency in attendance, duration, and scope of activities.

The data further clearly show that, in terms of the anticipated youth outcomes, the program demonstrated at least some success in helping to advance students' learning; improve their social skills, attitudes, and behaviors; and, to a limited degree, extend and enhance parent involvement and participation. However, it is clear from the student performance data that, in most grades, improvement is still required in both language arts and mathematics, a challenging task that cannot be accomplished solely by after-school programs, like the 21st CCLC program.

The data also show that the program was successful in engaging external agencies and organizations, partners, and collaborators for the purpose of providing academic remediation in core subjects (e.g., language arts and math) and enrichment; cultural, recreational, and youth development; character education; health, nutritional, and physical fitness; and parent and family involvement activities.

The data also show that the program's services and activities positively addressed issues regarding students' daily attendance at both regular school day sessions and after-school program, as well as students' social-emotional health, interpersonal relationships with their peers and adults, and their personal disciplinary behaviors.

Finally, the data clearly demonstrate that the program was effective in fostering an inclusive environment, which encouraged and facilitated parent and family involvement in their children's lives and educational endeavors.

Taken in the aggregate, the data clearly demonstrate that the program has been successful in achieving the program goals and objectives set forth at the beginning of this report.

PLAN FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAM

It is clear from the data presented above that the program has considerable value and should not be allowed to cease its operations should potential adverse conditions or situations arise that might jeopardize future funding. Therefore, the funding for a new 5-year program cycle notwithstanding, district and program administrators as well as program partners and advisory boards continue to ponder a plan and strategies for the sustainability of REACH's after-school program to benefit students, parents, and community.

During interviews in 2024-25, the reality of the situation became clear, and the program director noted that the REACH program, as it is currently designed, would be difficult to sustain without the support of external funding. Absent such funding, the number of students accepted into the program would have to be decreased considerably and a minimal fee would have to be charged. Title I funds may help to sustain the first academic hour, and the district and program administrators could also reach out to its collaborators to find out in what ways they can help sustain other parts of the program. The program director further commented that the REACH program would continue to partner and collaborate with local organizations and apply for grants in order to sustain the program. The program could also look into collaborating with the school district to use state and local grants to assist in funding the program.

Management and Evaluation Associates, Inc. is a management consulting company specializing in data analysis, professional development and program evaluation services. Formed in 1977, M and E is staffed with full and part-time staff as well as associates and affiliate organizations. M and E has served clients across the U. S. Clients have included school districts, charter schools, universities, state and regional education agencies, private sector and foundation organizations, health care agencies and community organizations.

The following staff formed the primary team assigned to this project: Mary Beth Slivka, President; Margaret Goodher, 21st CCLC Program Specialist and Lead Evaluator; Tom Monahan, Ed.D. Evaluation Design and Instrument Development Specialist; John M. Quinn, Ed.D. Vice President of Services; and Kathy Twardy, Data Analyst.

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