Washington Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Statewide Evaluation

2019–21 Program Year Report

Samantha Sniegowski, Allison Belmont, and Lauren Stargel

June 2022

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AIR® Headquarters
1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202-3289
+1.202.403.5000 | **AIR.ORG**

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Executive Summary

The Washington Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) contracted with the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) to conduct an evaluation of the statewide 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program in Washington state. For almost 2 decades, 21st CCLC programs in Washington have provided afterschool and expanded learning programming to enhance the academic well-being of students living in high-poverty communities.

Specifically, we conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the 21st CCLC program, which included data collection and support for the existing continuous quality improvement process. AIR built and monitored online data collection modules that not only supported program improvement efforts but also facilitated the ability to report required federal data, monitor programs at the state level, and collect data necessary for evaluation activities that culminated in this annual report.

In March 2020, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic interrupted traditional 21st CCLC program operations. State and federal guidance instructed local education agencies and their associated afterschool and expanded learning programs to close all in-person activities and transition to remote instruction. Government-mandated school closures in Washington began on March 17, 2020. On April 6, 2020, schools closed for the remainder of the 2019–20 academic year, affecting 1,101,711 students in 2,436 public schools in the state.

In the summer of 2020, OSPI issued guidance for all school districts to develop reopening plans for the 2020–21 school year. Plans not only took into consideration offering in-person instruction, distance education, or a combination of these learning modes, but also addressed multiple reopening scenarios as the circumstances surrounding the pandemic continued to evolve. Data presented in this report are reflective of 21st CCLC programming as programs adapted to and worked through these challenges.

It is critically important that all readers consider the contextual implications of the pandemic when reviewing the data, key findings, and recommendations in this report. Differences in the results for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 program years likely were influenced by interruptions in data collection or transitions in normal program operations. Key findings and recommendations for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 program years are as follows.

Findings on Program Characteristics

One hallmark of the 21st CCLC program is the wide diversity (a) of organizations involved in the provision of 21st CCLC programming, (b) of approaches to the way programs deliver services and activities, and (c) in the nature of the student population served.

During the 2019–20 program year, 45 active 21st CCLC grantees provided programming at 112 centers in Washington, serving 11,223 youth in Grades K–12. In 2020–21, 140 centers were associated with 56 21st CCLC grantees, of which 108 provided programming. These centers served 7,118 youth in Grades K–12, of whom 2,938 were regular attendees. For the most part, the domain of Washington 21st CCLC grantees and centers operating during 2019–21 was similar to prior years in terms of organizational and operational characteristics.

Program Characteristics for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 Program Years

- Most of the programs occurred in school-based locations.
- Most centers were considered midcycle (i.e., in the second to fourth year of their funding cycle); a smaller proportion of the centers were new (i.e., in their first year of funding).
- A large portion of partnerships (41%) were with community-based organizations or other not-for-profit organizations in 2020–21.
- All Washington centers offered academic enrichment activities to students as well as some sort of programming to adult family members.
- Centers in Washington continued to serve mainly students in elementary school (64%) and middle school grade levels (31%) in 2020–21.
- A majority of youth served by 21st CCLC programming qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.
- About one third of student attendees were chronically absent during the regular school day, while more than half had an absence rate of at least 5% in 2020–21.

Program Operations Amid the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Many coordinators (81%) indicated their centers continued to provide services and supports with the onset of the pandemic during the 2019–20 school year.
  - A higher proportion of school-based grant centers (about 90%) indicated they continued to provide services than did non-school-based grant centers (72%).
  - Fewer centers located in towns indicated they continued to provide services (48%), as compared to rural (74%), city (94%), and suburban centers (100%).

- During the onset of the pandemic, programs helped students and families by providing supports and resources (85%), online learning opportunities (79%), and other nonfood resources (77%).
  - Rural and town-based centers were less likely to offer online programming than were city or suburban centers.
  - More than half of programs indicated that, despite not currently offering online activities, they planned to begin offering online activities during the summer of 2020.
  - One quarter of respondents (25%) noted they were unsure how to plan programming for the 2020–21 program year.
- To prepare for interactions with students during the 2020–21 program year, some respondents (19%) noted they will implement proper health protocols, such as social distancing, enhanced cleaning, and teaching proper safety practices.
- More than half of respondents (62%) hoped to better meet the needs of students and their families by providing tangible supplies.
- One third of respondents (33%) reported the intention of their remote interactions with students and families was, in general, to provide support and resources and to let them know the program is "there for them."
- Two thirds of coordinators (64%) indicated they offered online learning in the spring of 2020.
  - Of those programs offering online activities, most of the programs began providing online content in March (39%), April (29%), or May (29%).
  - Activities were offered typically four or five times a week (about 75% of responses).
  - When offered, activities lasted about an hour (51%).
  - Many respondents (43%) reported providing academic online learning opportunities, such as homework help, STEM, and literacy.
  - Nearly two thirds of coordinators (62%) indicated that 10 or fewer youth typically participate in each online activity.

Aligned Recommendations

- Consider the different training and technical assistance needs of subgrantees based on their maturity, staffing model, and location.
- Given the higher concentration of elementary school programs, consider conducting an assessment to understand the needs of 21st CCLC-eligible middle and high schools and how 21st CCLC funding could support those needs.
- Continue to monitor the extent to which students from low-income families and those who are academically at risk are served in the program.
- Given the increase in school-day absences during the COVID-19 pandemic, explore how 21st CCLC staff and programming can support student school-day attendance and academic engagement amid the possibility of continued disruptions.
- Continue communicating with programs to provide updated information about the impact of the pandemic on program operations.
- Determine if programs have resources necessary to implement proper health protocols.
- Talk with programs about what went well in supporting students and their families and what could be improved moving forward.
- Connect programs with one another to learn from each other's experiences.

Findings on Program Attendance

The findings presented here are based on descriptive analyses conducted to examine overall youth attendance in programming and the relationship between the level of youth participation in programming and certain program characteristics. These analyses are meant to provide a starting point for further exploration and analyses to inform outcome analyses carried out in future years.

Student Program Attendance

- Overall program attendance declined in both 2020 and 2021; in 2021, 7,118 students attended programming, of whom 2,938 attended regularly.
- During the 2020–21 program year, attendance was lower than in prior years across 10-day attendance bands, except for the 120 or more days attendance band, which was comparable to prepandemic years.

Student Program Attendance and Student Characteristics

- The majority of both regular (70%) and nonregular (59%) attendees identified as Hispanic in 2020–21.
- A majority of regular attendees (81%) also qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.

- A minority of regular attendees were limited English proficient (34%) or identified as having special needs (14%).

Student Program Attendance and Program Characteristics

- About half of student attendees spent the majority of their time in STEM- or arts-related activities for 3 months or more. About a quarter participated in these activities for 6 months or more.
- Students with high attendance levels, especially in elementary and middle school, tend to spend more time in specific activities, such as STEM, the arts, and youth leadership. This likely shows a strong connection between youth interest in specific content areas and attendance.
- Students earning a GPA of 2.0 or less tend to attend programming less.
- A review of participation in intensive reading and mathematics supports shows that elementary school students had higher attendance levels compared with high school students, whose attendance levels were mixed.
- A higher proportion of teachers involved in programming seems to be associated with higher attendance levels for elementary school students, but lower attendance levels for high school students.

Student Program Participation Across Multiple Years

- Between the 2014–15 and 2020–21 program years, 58,510 students participated in at least 1 year of programming. More than 38% of students participated for more than 1 year.
- A comparison of students who attend for multiple consecutive years and those who do not shows that students attending for multiple consecutive years attended approximately 14 more days on average.
- No large differences existed between centers with high cross-year retentions and low cross-year retention on many of the center characteristics such as overall demographics.
- The largest differences appear to be related to program attendance levels and number of students served, however. Students at high cross-year retention centers attend, on average, approximately 28 more days within a given year than their counterparts attend. Centers with high cross-year retention also serve, on average, approximately 32 less students than low cross-year retention centers serve.

Aligned Recommendations

- Continue to express the importance of students' consistently attending programs.
- Explore what strategies were successful in retaining students and document these best practices and successful adaptations given the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly related to virtual or hybrid programming.
- Explore ways to promote youth choice in programming that enable youth to self-direct into activities that represent their interests.
- Explore ways to recruit harder to engage youth populations, particularly those students struggling academically and high school students.
- Explore further the different staffing roles in promoting recruitment and retainment of youth, which may be helpful.

Findings on Youth Program Experiences

The evaluation team administered a brief survey to students in the spring of 2021 to gain insights into their experiences attending 21st CCLC programming during the pandemic. A summary of findings obtained from the survey are outlined below.

School and Program Attendance

- Hybrid school attendance was more common than attending school mostly in person or mostly online, with 50% of students attending school both online and in person about equally.
- About half (51%) of students attended 21st CCLC online.
- Students who attended school mostly online or mostly in person tended to participate in 21st CCLC in the same environment (78% of students who attended school online participated in 21st CCLC online; 65% of students who attended school in person participated in 21st CCLC in person).
- Hybrid school attendance corresponded more often with online 21st CCLC participation (49%) than with hybrid (27%) or in person (24%) participation.
- Many students (82%) participated in 21st CCLC at least once a week.
- Elementary school students (70%) were more likely to participate in 21st CCLC several times a week than were middle school students (59%).
- Solely online 21st CCLC participation was more common for elementary school students (45%) than for middle school students (27%).

Student Concerns and Anxiety

- The two largest concerns for students regarding current events in the world were that a family member would get COVID-19 (52%) or that they would not learn as much as normal in school because of the pandemic (45%).
- Many students (almost 70%) felt at least a little anxiety due to the pandemic, with 49% feeling a little anxious, 10% very anxious, and 9% extremely anxious.
- Students with hybrid 21st CCLC participation felt more extreme pandemic–related anxiety than students participating mostly in person or mostly online.
- Many students (75%) felt safe most days or every day, but fewer students felt hopeful (57%) or excited (52%) with the same frequency.

Positive and Negative Affect

- Some students experienced negative emotions most days or every day:
  - 50% of students felt bored;
  - 32% of students felt stressed or frustrated; and
  - 26% of students felt lonely.
- An independent sample *t*-test showed a statistically significant difference in affect for elementary and middle school students, with elementary school students experiencing both higher positive affect and lower negative affect.

Student Opinions of Staff

- Students who participated in 21st CCLC in an online or hybrid setting had slightly more positive views of staff than had those who participated in person.
- Overall, elementary school students reported more positive views of staff than did middle school students.

Online Program Experience

- On most days or every day, most students (85%) had access to a computer or device when they needed it.
- Thirty-three percent of students felt their internet connection was not fast enough to participate some days or at all.
- Slightly more than half of students (54%) would prefer not to have the option of continuing 21st CCLC programming virtually.

Aligned Recommendations

- Consider how continued disruptions in programming caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may affect student engagement in programming as well as the social and emotional well-being. Work with program staff to stay abreast of challenges they face with these disruptions.
- Consider parent insights to gain information about the emotions and experiences of students and their families in ever-evolving 21st CCLC programming amidst the ongoing pandemic.

Findings on State and Federal Targets

AIR explored aggregate statewide performance on a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) across four domains: Program Implementation, Program Quality, Student Program Attendance, and Student Outcomes for both the 2019–20 and 2020–21 school years.

- Statewide indicators point to strong performance across centers related to program implementation.

Aligned Recommendations

- KPIs should be developed to align with available data to enable the analysis of progress across all indicators.

Introduction

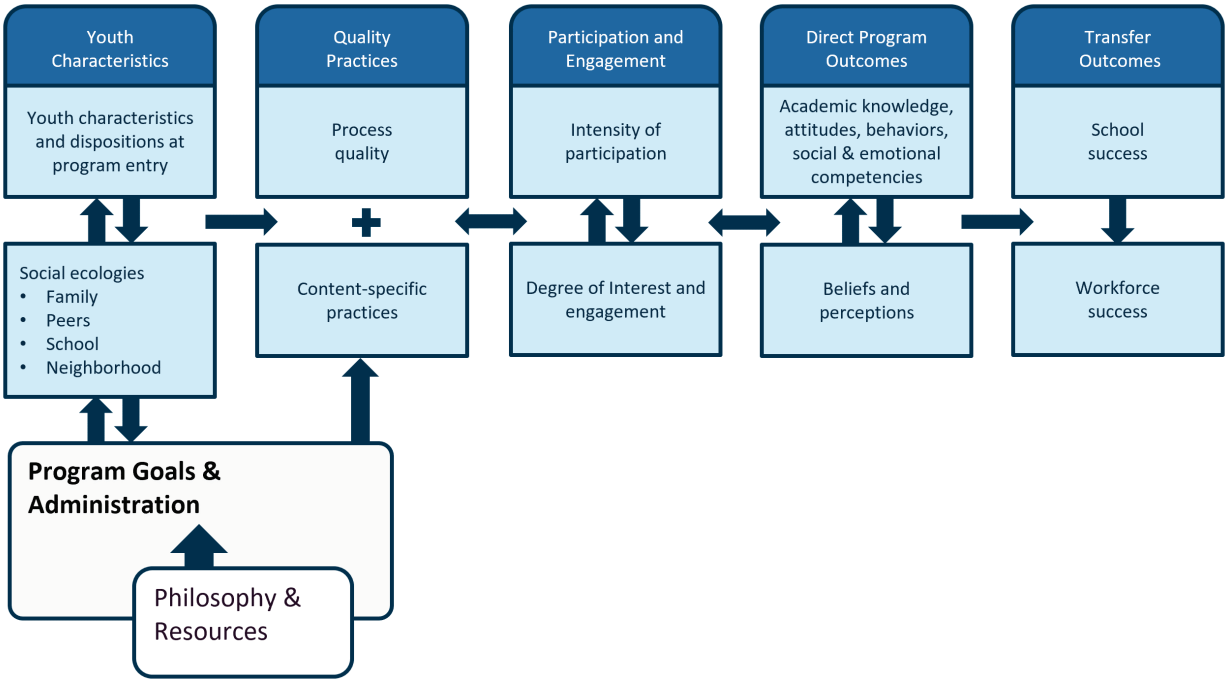
For almost 2 decades, the Washington Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program has provided afterschool programming to enhance the academic well-being of youth who attend high-poverty and lower performing schools. Since 2011, the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to support the evaluation of the statewide 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program in Washington state.

Specifically, for the current evaluation contract with OSPI, we conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the 21st CCLC program for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 programming period, which included data collection and support for the existing continuous quality improvement process (the Youth Program Quality Intervention [YPQI]). AIR built and monitored an online data collection system that not only supported program improvement efforts but also facilitated the ability to report required federal data, monitor programs at the state level, and collect data necessary for evaluation activities that culminated in an annual report. These activities align with our conceptual framework for how change happens in 21st CCLC, to which we turn next.

A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Afterschool Impact

AIR's evaluation activities were grounded in a research-based theory regarding how afterschool programs can have an impact on youth. For more than a decade, researchers have explored how youth benefit from participation in high-quality afterschool programs (Auger et al., 2013; Durlak, Weissberg, et al., 2010; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Vandell et al., 2007). Based on this work, AIR created a conceptual framework that outlines the key elements that must exist for afterschool programs to have an impact. This conceptual framework, which is outlined in Exhibit 1, guides the approach we use to conduct the statewide evaluation of the 21st CCLC program in Washington.

Exhibit 1. A Conceptual Framework for How Afterschool Programs Can Have an Impact on Youth Participants



The framework starts with the youth themselves and how they are influenced and supported by the environments in which they live and go to school. Past programming experiences, relationships with peers and teachers, the level of interest in programming topics and content, expectations regarding program experience, and the level of choice in attending all have a bearing on how youth will engage in and experience 21st CCLC programming (Durlak, Mahoney, et al., 2010). Typically, we rely on two primary sources of information to explore youth characteristics at program entry and their levels of interest and motivation to participate in 21st CCLC programming: (a) reports by school-day teachers on how youth are faring in the school-day classroom and (b) information provided by the youth themselves on youth surveys.

After considering the predispositions and contextual factors influencing youth before they even enter a program, several factors influence the experiences that youth have once they are in the program. First, programs must be of high quality to have an impact. The two broad categories of quality are process quality and content-specific practices. Process quality refers to the adoption of practices and approaches to service delivery that ultimately create a developmentally appropriate setting for youth, where participants feel safe and supported and have opportunities to form meaningful relationships, experience belonging, and be active participants

in their own learning and development. These practices are universal because they apply to any type of youth programming, regardless of content, approach, grade level, or setting.

Content-specific program practices intentionally cultivate a specific set of skills, beliefs, or knowledge. Often, such practices closely align with the direct outcomes a program is seeking to cultivate in participating youth. For example, content-specific practices include specific approaches to cultivating literacy skills, formal curricula for social and emotional learning, or methods for teaching technology skills. Content-specific practices adopted by the 21st CCLC grantees are remarkably diverse. We employ two approaches to collect information about content-specific practices: (a) reports directly by site coordinators on the types of approaches used to develop content-specific skills and (b) data on youth participation in specific types of activities with a specific content focus.

Of course, for youth to benefit from programming, they need to attend programming, ideally at high frequencies across multiple years and in a variety of distinct types of activities. Being "present" in the program is not enough, however, to ensure that youth will benefit from the activities. Youth need to experience engagement and interest during their activities to develop the beliefs, skills, and knowledge that can help them in school and beyond. In theory, the extent to which programs effectively adopt practices related to process quality and content-specific practices should heavily influence the degree of engagement and interest that youth experience while participating in 21st CCLC programming.

Once youth are engaged and participating, it is expected that they will begin to develop key skills, beliefs, and knowledge based on their participation in program activities. These features are termed *direct program outcomes* in the conceptual framework outlined in Exhibit 1. Based on AIR's research into 21st CCLC programs during the past decade, direct program outcomes fall into two categories: (a) academic knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors plus (b) social and emotional skills and competencies. These types of skills, beliefs, and knowledge are the most immediate outcomes that can emerge from participation in high-quality afterschool programs. That is, youth growth and development across these outcomes happens within the confines of the program and often can be observed directly by the staff leading afterschool activities.

Finally, the skills, beliefs, and knowledge that youth develop by participating in high-quality 21st CCLC programming may be used in other settings outside the program to drive achievement and success in the school and the workplace—a concept commonly referred to as transfer. These outcomes typically are measured by 21st CCLC programs by connecting participation data with school-related data available at the state or local level.

Evaluation Questions

Given this understanding of the conceptual framework, AIR's evaluation activities during the contract period were intended to help answer several evaluation questions outlined in the original proposal submission. In March 2020, however, the pandemic interrupted traditional 21st CCLC program operations. State and federal guidance instructed local education agencies and their associated afterschool and expanded learning programs to close all in-person activities and transition to remote instruction. Government-mandated school closures in Washington began on March 17, 2020. On April 6, 2020, schools closed for the remainder of the 2019–20 academic year, affecting 1,101,711 students in 2,436 public schools in the state.

In the summer of 2020, OSPI issued guidance for all school districts to develop reopening plans for the 2020–21 school year. Plans not only took into consideration offering in-person instruction, distance education, or a combination of these learning modes, but also addressed multiple reopening scenarios as the circumstances surrounding the pandemic continued to evolve. Data presented in this report are reflective of 21st CCLC programming as they adapt to and work through these challenges. It is critically important that all readers consider the contextual implications of the pandemic when reviewing the data, key findings, and recommendations in this report. Differences in the results for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 program years may be caused by interruptions in data collection or transitions in normal program operations.

Due to the pandemic's impact on data collection processes and available data points, the evaluation team worked with OSPI to revise the original evaluation questions (EQs) based on the data available during the 2019–20 and 2020–21 program years. These evaluation questions are organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1. Program Characteristics

1. What were the primary characteristics associated with the grants and centers funded by 21st CCLC and the student population served by the program?
2. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect program operations?
   - Which programs still operated during spring 2020 and how?
   - What were the programs' plans for summer 2020?
   - How were programs thinking about preparation for the 2020–21 school year?
   - What were the characteristics of online learning solutions implemented by programs during spring 2020?

Chapter 2. Program Attendance

1. What did program attendance look like?
2. How were student characteristics related to students' level of program attendance?
3. How was participation in different activity types related to program participation rates and student academic performance?
4. To what extent did youth remain in 21st CCLC programming across multiple years?
5. What are the characteristics of youth who stay engaged in programming? What are the differences between students who stay engaged in 21st CCLC programming across multiple years and those who do not on student characteristics?
6. What are the characteristics of programs that have high levels of cross-year retention in programming?

Chapter 3. Youth Program Experiences

1. What were the experiences of students attending 21st CCLC programming during the 2020–21 program year, during the COVID-19 global pandemic?
2. Did student experiences in programming differ for students who attended in mostly online settings, hybrid settings, and mostly in person settings?
3. Did student experiences in programming differ between students in elementary, middle, and high school settings?

Chapter 4. State and Federal Targets

1. Are 21st CCLC programs in Washington State meeting state and federal performance targets for student outcomes?
2. Are our programs meeting state and federal goals and objectives for program implementation?

The rest of this report provides our answers to each of these questions.

Chapter 1. Program Characteristics

Evaluation Question 1: What were the primary characteristics associated with the grants and centers funded by 21st CCLC and the student population served by the program?

One hallmark of the 21st CCLC program is the wide diversity of (a) organizations involved in the provision of 21st CCLC programming, (b) approaches to the way programs deliver services and activities, and (c) the nature of the student population served. This chapter outlines the primary characteristics associated with grantees and centers funded by 21st CCLC and the student population served by the program for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 program years.

Definition

Program. The actual sequence of 21st CCLC activities that take place at a given center and all associated details about those activities

Findings	Aligned recommendations
• Most 21st CCLC programming (94%) took place in school-based locations, even if the funding agency was not school based. • More than two thirds of centers offered virtual programming only during the summer and fall of 2020, while in-person (14%) and hybrid (32%) programming increased in the spring of 2021. • The majority of staff were paid during both the regular school year and the summer. • Almost all centers reported offering science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (99%) and literacy (97%) programming in the 2020–21 program year. Arts and music, physical activity, and homework help also were common in most programs. • Programs mostly served youth in Grades 1–5, with 64% of all participants in these grades. • The majority of program participants (at least 79%) were eligible for and received free or reduced-price lunch. • About one third of student attendees were chronically absent during the regular school day, while more than half had an absence rate of at least 5% in 2020–21.	• Consider the different training and technical assistance needs of subgrantees based on their maturity, staffing model, and location. • Given the higher concentration of elementary school programs, consider conducting an assessment to understand the needs of 21st CCLC–eligible middle and high schools and how 21st CCLC funding could support those needs. • Continue to monitor the extent to which students from low-income families and those who are academically at risk are served in the program. • Given the increase in school-day absences during the COVID-19 pandemic, explore how 21st CCLC staff and programming can support student school-day attendance and academic engagement amid the possibility of continued disruptions.

Findings	Aligned recommendations
	• Continue communicating with programs to provide updated information about the impact of the pandemic on program operations.

Grantee Characteristics

OSPI is responsible for distributing the 21st CCLC funds it receives from the U.S. Department of Education through a competitive bidding process that results in awarding new grants to entities that propose to operate centers in high-poverty communities and serve students attending schools in need of improvement. Grants active during the 2020–21 programming period were initially awarded in 2015 (*n* = 3), 2016 (*n* = 4), 2017 (*n* = 12), 2018 (*n* = 10), 2019 (*n* = 14), and 2020 (*n* = 13). The term *grantee* in this report refers to an entity that applied for and received a 21st CCLC grant from OSPI and serves as the fiscal agent for the grant in question. Although 13 grantees were awarded in 2020, these grantees were awarded later in the program year (January 2021) and did not offer programming during the 2020–21 school year. Instead, these grantees used the remainder of the program year as a planning period to prepare for summer 2021 programming as well as programming in the 2021–22 school year. As such, centers associated with these 13 grantees (*n* = 32) are not included in the analysis of center characteristics. The following section considers elements examined only at the grant level, notably grantee maturity and organization type.

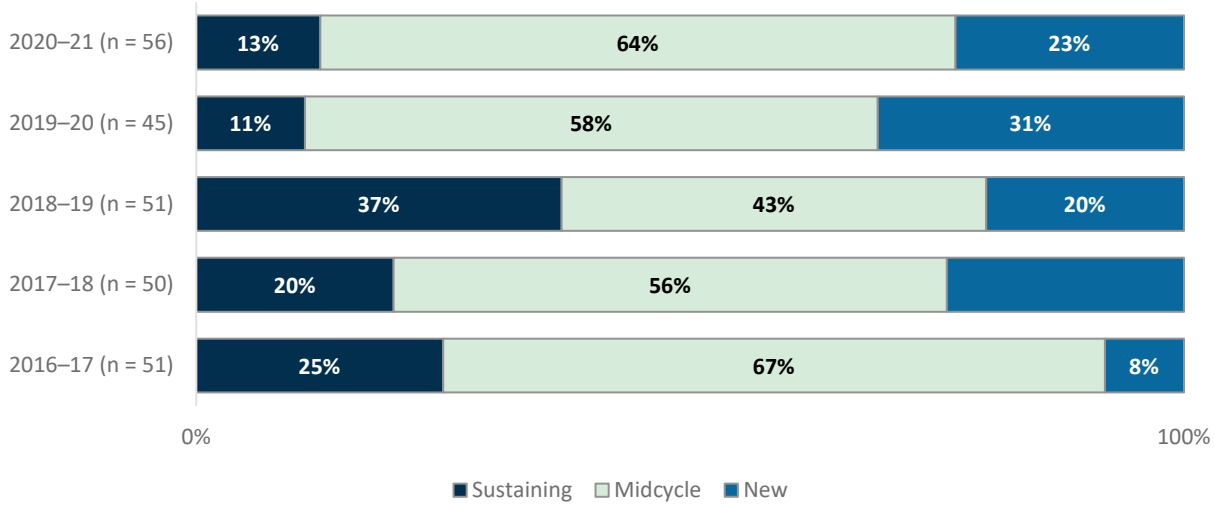
Grantee Maturity

The evaluation team examined grantee maturity from 2016–17 through 2020–21 (Exhibit 2). We classified Washington grantees into three possible maturity categories and examined the distribution across each year.

- **New**—grantees in their first year of 21st CCLC funding
- **Midcycle**—grantees not in their first year but also not in their last year of funding
- **Sustaining**—grantees in their last year of 21st CCLC funding

Understanding grantee maturity in relation to the types and level of support each group might need is important. Many grantees in their very first year of funding are likely navigating compliance activities related to grant requirements and might need different supports than those who are midcycle and focusing on things such as providing higher quality services, or those who are sustaining their program and thinking about how to continue services once the grant funding ends.

Exhibit 2. During the 2020–21 programming period, of the 56 Washington state grantees, 23% were new, 64% were midcycle, and 13% were sustaining.



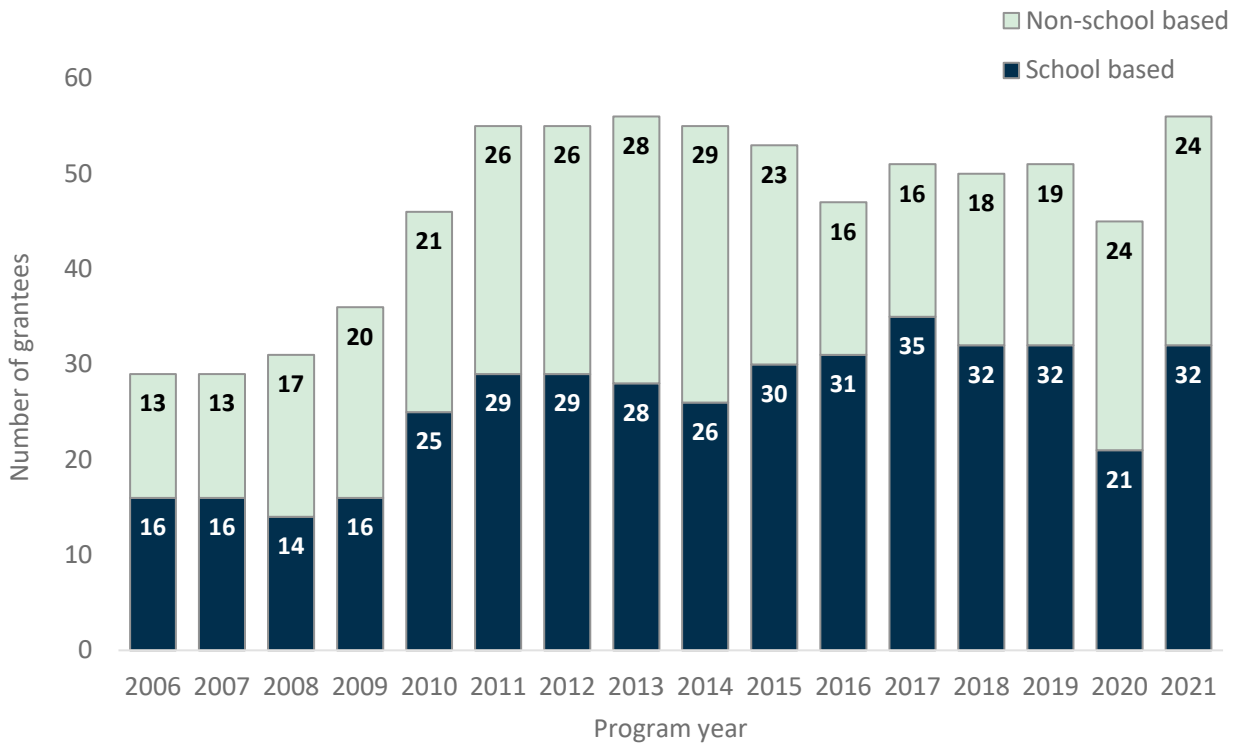
Note. OSPI awarded grants for a 5-year period; however, during the 2020–21 program year, some programs were awarded an extension.
Source. OSPI records.

Grantee Organization Type

As established in the authorizing legislation for 21st CCLC programming, several types of grantee agencies may administer programs. The most relevant distinction is whether the grantee organization is a school-based entity. School-based organizations include public districts, charter schools, and private schools. Non-school-based organizations include, among other entities, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, health-based organizations, and park districts. Both school-based and non-school-based organizations can look different in their staffing models, how they recruit and enroll youth in their program, and how they communicate with the school day.

Of the 21st CCLC grantees funded by Washington, school-based and non-school-based organizations have historically been represented roughly equally since the state-administered program began. This trend began to change in the 2014–15 program year (Exhibit 3), however, with more school-based programs represented in 5 of the 6 following years (2019–20 being the exception).

Exhibit 3. During 2020–21, most grantees were funded through school-based entities.



Source. OSPI records.

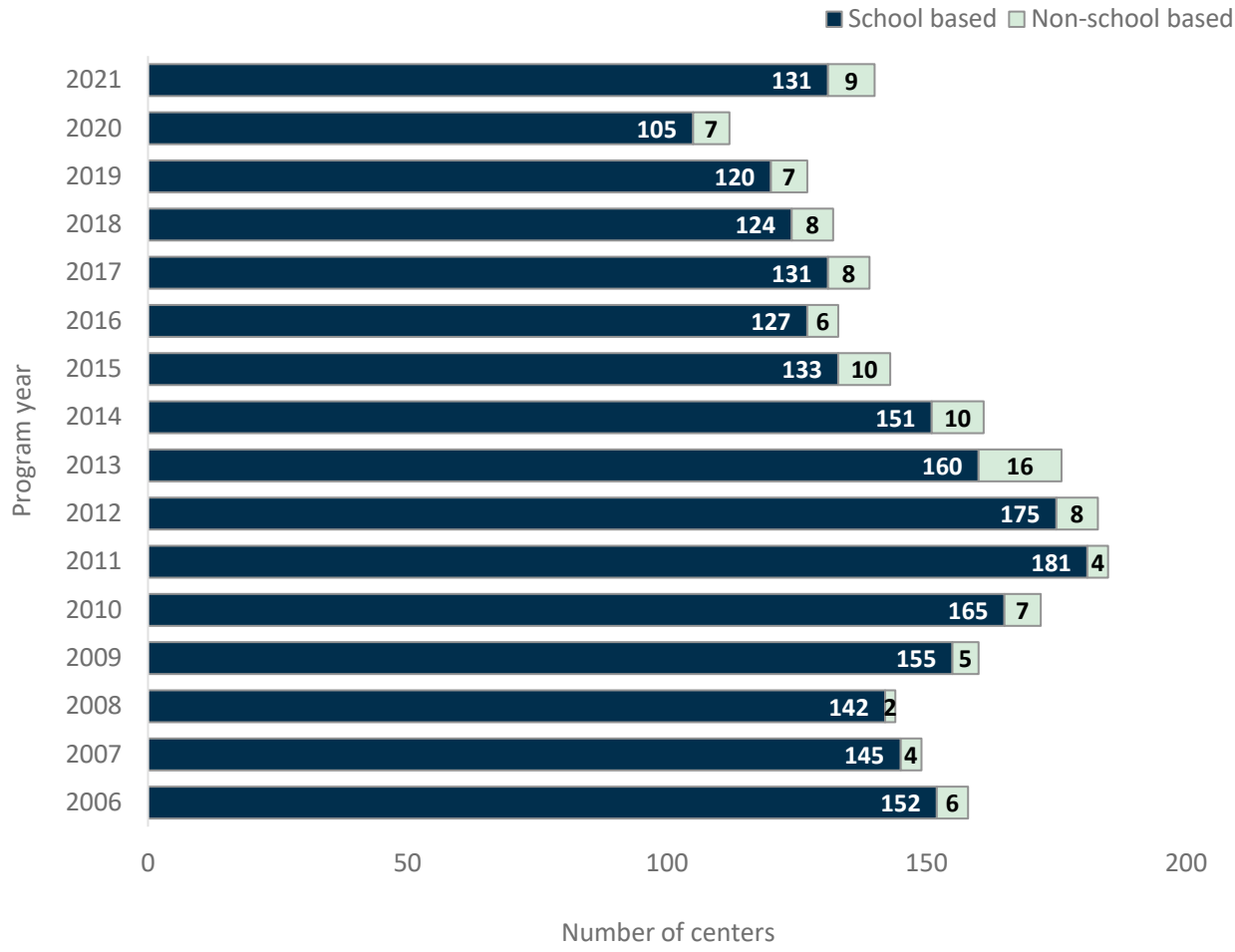
Center Characteristics

We use the term *center* in this report to refer to the physical location where 21st CCLC-funded services and activities take place. Centers are characterized by defined hours of operation, have dedicated staff members, and usually have site coordinator positions. Each 21st CCLC grantee in Washington has at least one center; many grantees have more than one center. During the 2020–21 program year, 140 centers were funded in Washington. As noted previously, 32 centers were newly funded and planning during the 2020–21 school year, while 108 centers provided 21st CCLC-funded activities and services. With the exception of Exhibit 4, the exhibits in the remainder of this report include analyses of only the 108 centers that provided programming during 2020–21 .

Center Organization Type

Similar to grantees, centers are classified as either school based or nonschool based (Exhibit 4). During the 2020–21 program year, most of Washington's 140 centers were located in schools.

Exhibit 4. During the last 16 years, the vast majority of centers have been based in schools.

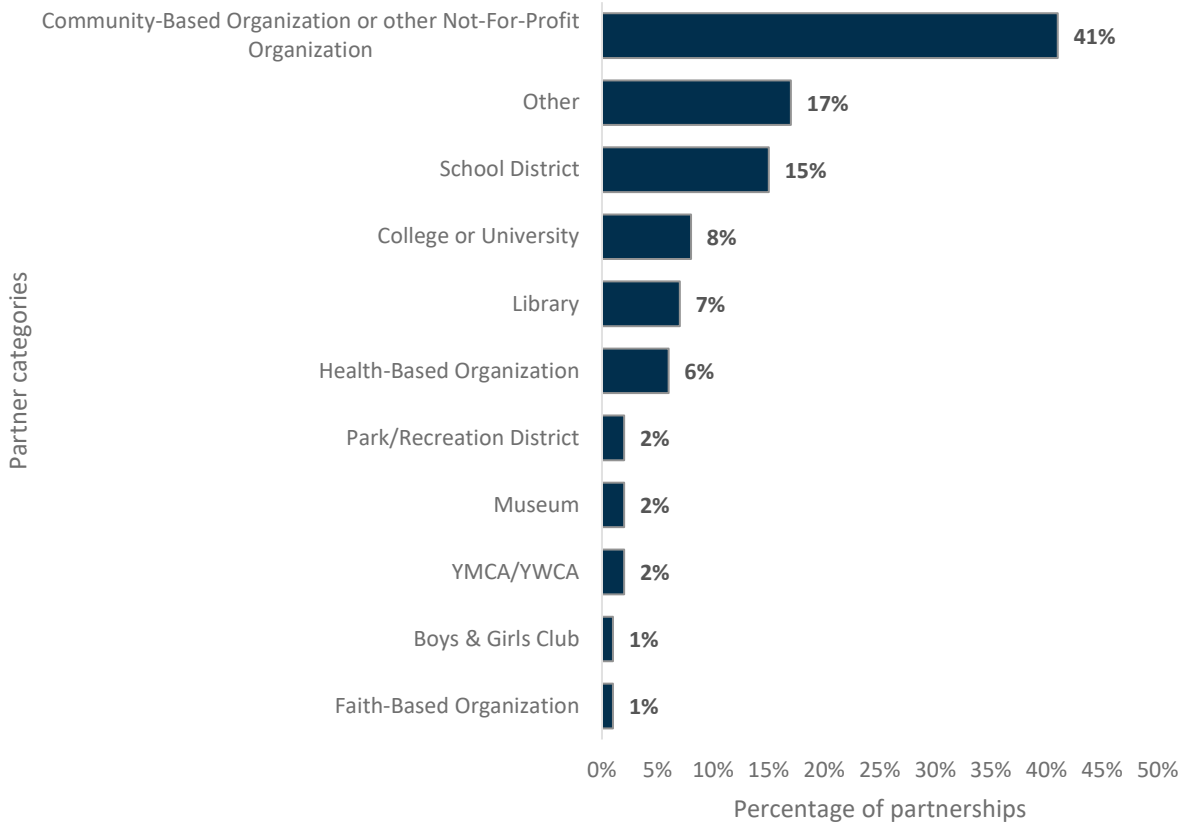


Source. OSPI records.

Center Partners

21st CCLC centers in Washington work with a variety of partner organizations. In 2019–20, centers worked with a range of 2 to 52 partners, with an average of 9 partners per center (*N*= 112 centers). In 2020–21, centers worked with a range of 1 to 11 partners per center, with an average of 4 partners per center (*N*= 108 centers). In 2020–21, 21st CCLC centers partnered with 207 different entities, including community-based organizations, school districts, colleges, and libraries. The 108 21st CCLC centers in Washington held a total of 427 partnerships with these entities, with some partners working with multiple centers in Washington. The largest percentage of partnerships was with community-based organizations or other not-for-profit organizations (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5. The largest percentage of partnerships in 2020–21 was with community-based organizations or other not-for-profit organizations.

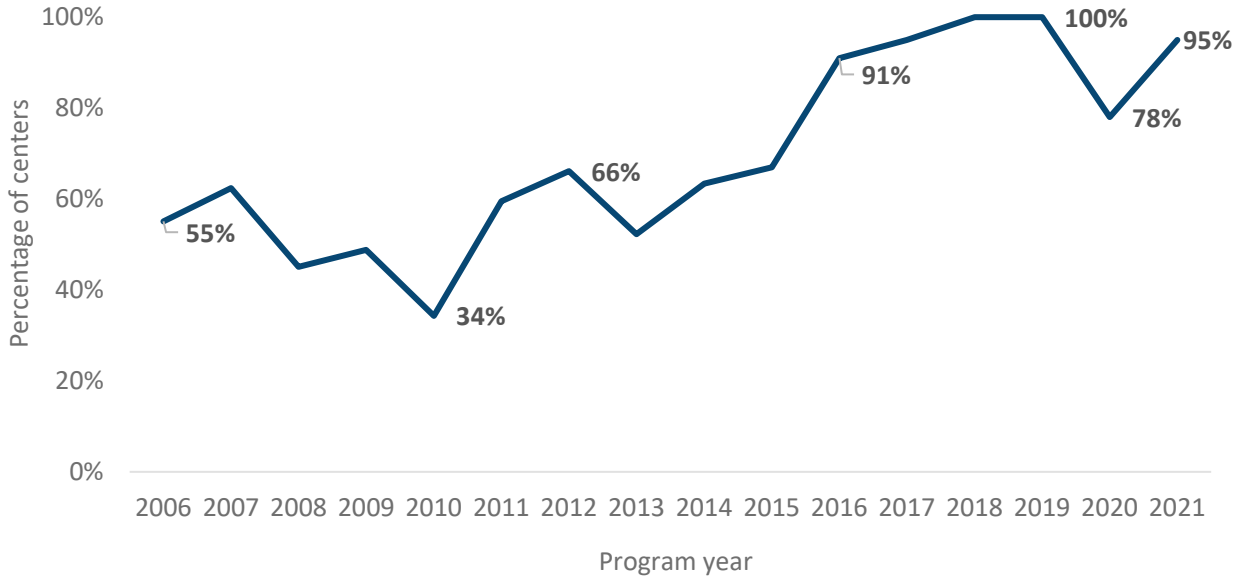


Note. 2021: *N* = 427 partnerships. Other partnerships included entities such as banks, local businesses, and individual vendors.
Source. Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Summer and School Year Operations

In 2018, the number of 21st CCLCs in Washington that offered summer programming increased from previous years, likely resulting from a policy shift that all funded projects must offer summer programming; in 2017–18 and 2018–19, 100% of Washington's centers that were required to provide summer programming were doing so (Exhibit 6). In 2019–20, the percentage of centers offering summer programming decreased to 78% (*N* = 112), but then increased in 2020–21 to 95% (*N* = 108). The pandemic likely played a role in the decreased programming during the summer of 2020. Washington centers operated on average 34 weeks during the 2019–20 school year and 36 weeks during the 2020–21 school year; if they held summer programming, another 4.9 and 5.4 weeks were added, respectively (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 6. The percentage of centers offering summer programming increased steadily from 2013 until 2020, when it decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Note. 2020: *N* = 112 centers. 2021: *N* = 108 centers.

Source. Continuation reports and Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Exhibit 7. Program Operations by Summer and School Year

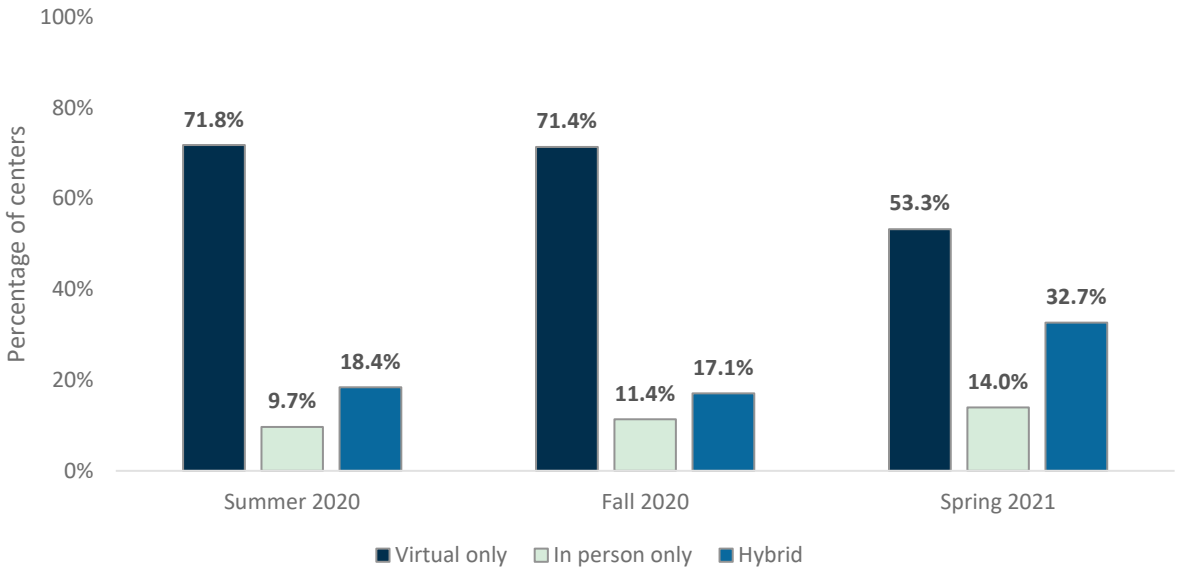
Program operations	2019–2020		2020–21	
	Summer (N = 87)	School Year (N = 112)	Summer (N = 103)	School Year (N = 108)
Programming **hours per week**	20.6	14.4	24.4	14.0
Program **days per week**	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.6
Program **weeks per school year**	4.9	33.8	5.4	36.3

Source. Continuation reports and Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Program Delivery Mode

With the conditions surrounding the pandemic ever evolving, 21st CCLC programs in Washington adapted by offering programming through three different delivery modes: in person only, virtual only, or hybrid (any combination of in-person and virtual) delivery. In 2020–21, the majority of centers offered programming virtually, with a slight increase in hybrid and in-person delivery during the spring semester of the school year compared to summer and fall programming (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Most centers offered programming virtually during the summer and fall of 2020, while in-person and hybrid programming increased in the spring of 2021.



Note. Summer 2020: *N* = 103 centers; fall 2020: *N* = 105 centers; spring 2021: *N* = 107 centers.
Source. Continuation reports and Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Center Staffing

The quality of center staffing is crucial to the success of afterschool programming (Vandell et al., 2004). Many of the program improvement approaches used in the field emphasize the importance of staff for creating positive developmental settings for youth. The success of afterschool programs is critically dependent on students forming personal connections with the staff—especially for programs serving older students, in which a much wider spectrum of activities and options is available to youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Traditionally, Washington 21st CCLC programs have employed a variety of staff, including academic teachers, nonacademic teachers, college and high school students, counselors, paraeducators from the school day, and other program staff who have a wide spectrum of backgrounds and training. In 2020–21, school-year staff were comprised of administrators (27%), other nonteaching school staff (20%), college students (15%), teachers (13%), community members (12%), subcontracted staff (7%), high school students (5%), and other staff (2%). Exhibit 9 shows the number of staff members who were paid and volunteered during the school year and the summer. Although 61% of staff working during the school year and 71% of staff working during the summer in 2019–20 were paid, the percentages of paid staff

increased in 2020–21, when a large majority of staff were paid during both the regular school year (80%) and the summer (87%).

Exhibit 9. The majority of center staff in both the 2019–20 and 2020–21 program years were paid staff.

Program staff	2019–2020		2020–21	
	Summer (*N* = 87 centers)	School Year (*N* = 112 centers)	Summer (*N* = 103 centers)	School Year (*N* = 108 centers)
Total staff	711	1,272	667	835
Paid staff	71%	61%	87%	80%
Volunteer staff	29%	39%	13%	20%

Source. Continuation reports and Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Center Activities

The staff working at a given 21st CCLC program and the activities offered to students attending it are critical elements for how youth experience and potentially benefit from their participation in 21st CCLC programs. Nationally, the goal of the 21st CCLC program is to provide academic and nonacademic enrichment programs that reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students. This overarching charge is broad and encompasses multiple types of activities. During 2019–20, almost all centers offered parent involvement activities, but were much less apt to offer career or job skills training activities to families (Exhibit 10). During this same year, most centers offered reading, math, science, and academic enrichment activities to students. During 2020–21, almost all centers offered STEM and literacy activities to students, while arts and music, physical activity, and homework help also were offered at most centers (Exhibit 11). Of the 108 centers in Washington, 56 offered adult family member activities, with activities categorized as Other and Other Support, for example resource/information sharing, produce delivery, and family engagement nights, as well as celebrations being the most commonly offered activities (Exhibit 12).

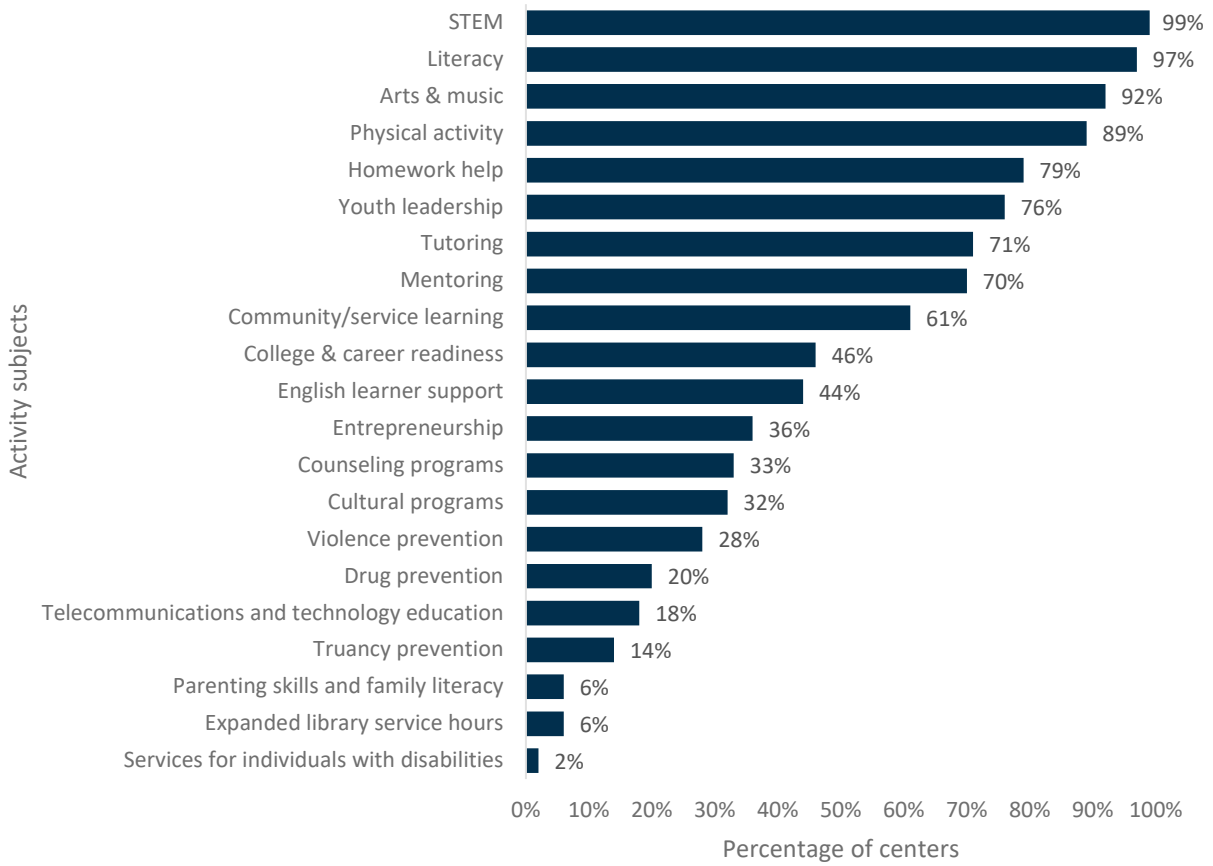
Exhibit 10. Almost all centers offered academic enrichment activities for students and parent involvement activities for families in the 2019–20 program year.

Student activities				Family activities		
Reading	Math	Science	Enrichment	Parent involvement	Family literacy	Career or job skills training
97%	96%	88%	99%	99%	80%	24%

Note. N = 112 centers.

Source. Continuation reports.

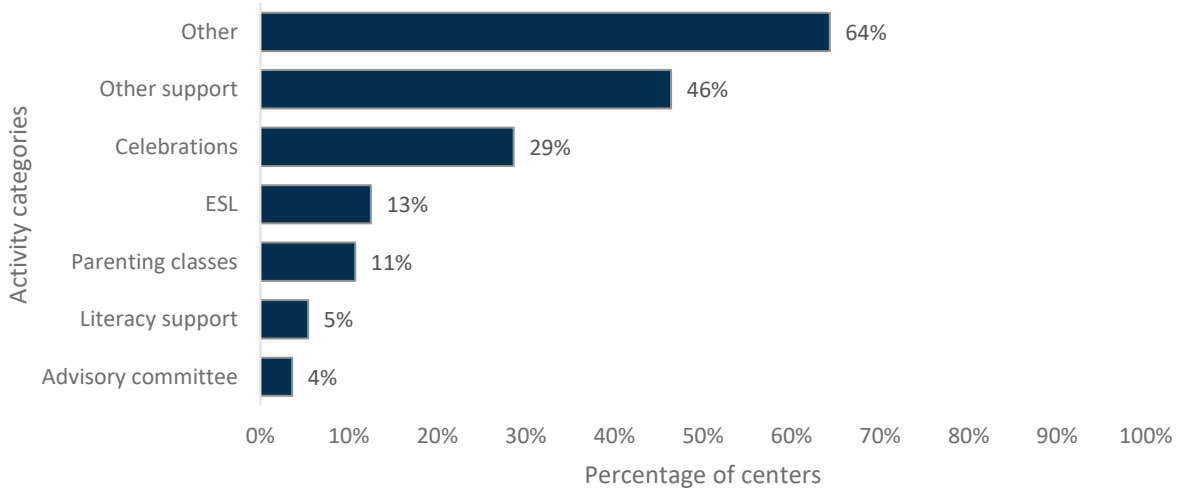
Exhibit 11. Most centers offered STEM and literacy activities to students in 2020–21.



Note. N = 108 centers.

Source. Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Exhibit 12. The most commonly offered activities for adult family members (other and other support) in 2020–21 included activities such as information or resource sharing, produce and food deliveries, and family engagement nights.



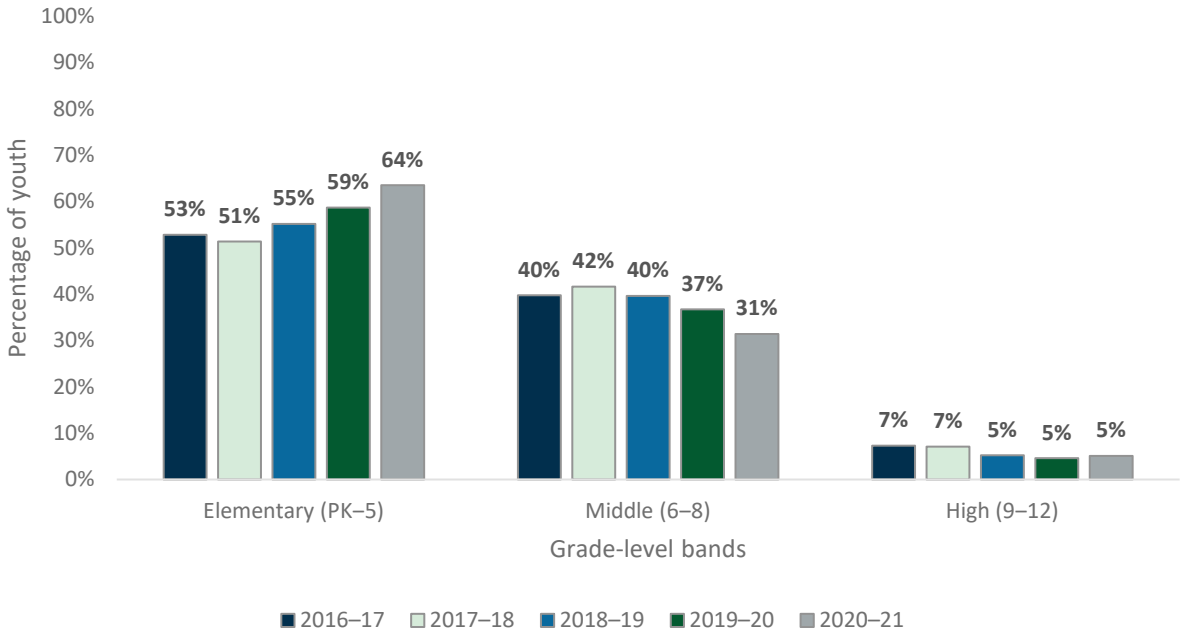
Note. *N* = 56 centers.
Source. Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Student Characteristics

Understanding the youth population served in 21st CCLC programs in Washington is an important step in determining the effectiveness of the program for youth outcomes. Youth bring their own set of unique qualities and experiences that can influence how they interact with the program. Exhibit 13 shows a consistent trend of centers serving elementary-school-age youth across the last 5 program years. During the last 4 years, the percentage of youth in elementary grades has increased slightly, while the percentage of youth in middle school has decreased slightly. Exhibit 14 shows the diverse needs of youth served by 21st CCLC programming.

It is important to note that changes in the grade levels served (as well as changes in the number of overall students served) across years could be a direct result of the funding cycles operating within Washington. As large cohorts of programs shift out of and into their 5-year grant cycles, the number of centers serving students also changes.

Exhibit 13. In the last 5 program years, most of the youth served were in elementary school.



Note. *N* = 15,997 in 2016–17; *N* = 14,910 in 2017–18; *N* = 13,848 in 2018–19; *N* = 7,118 in 2020–21.
Source. 2017–19 data: Washington Attendee Module and Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). 2021 data: Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

Exhibit 14. Across the last 4 program years, Washington 21st CCLC programs served diverse needs but overwhelmingly focused on serving youth who are eligible for and receive free or reduced-price lunch.

	% male	% female	% free or reduced-price lunch	% English learners	% special needs
2020–21	48%	52%	79%	34%	15%
2019–20	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
2018–19	50%	50%	82%	30%	16%
2017–18	50%	50%	82%	31%	15%

Note. *N* = 15,997 in 2016–17; *N* = 14,910 in 2017–18; *N* = 13,848 in 2018–19; *N* = 7,118 in 2020–21. We did not receive 2019–20 demographic data from OSPI in time for completion of this report.
Source. 2017–2019 data: Washington Attendee Module and Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). 2021 data: Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

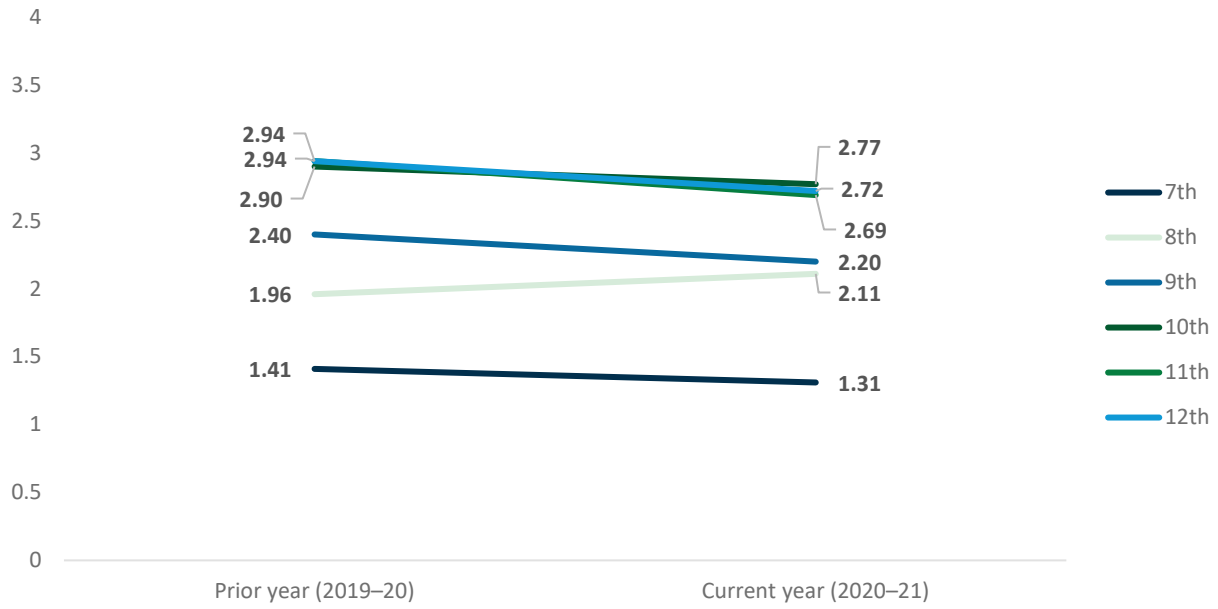
Student Baseline Descriptive Data: School Achievement and Attendance

A primary goal of the 21st CCLC program is to serve youth who are academically at risk or otherwise have struggled in school. This subsection presents school-related data for youth who attended 21st CCLC programming in 2020–21. Due to the pandemic, standardized test scores are not available for the 2019–20 or 2020–21 academic years. The academic data available for 2019–20 and 2020–21 include grade point averages (GPAs) as well as the percentage of attempted credits earned. After showing the academic data, we show data related to school-day absences for youth who participating in programming during the 2020–21 year.

None of the data in this subsection relate to program effectiveness. The data presented show only the types of youth served by 21st CCLC programming and have no bearing on program outcomes.

GPA data for the current and prior year are available for 7th through 12th graders who participated in 21st CCLC programming during the 2020–21 school year (*N* = 336). These middle and high school students averaged a GPA of 2.56 on a 4.0 scale during the 2019–20 academic year, while their average GPA during the following year was slightly lower, at 2.43 (Exhibit 15). This change in GPAs could be due in part to the impact of the pandemic. With many schools closing or shifting to virtual learning during the spring of 2020, adjustments were made by some schools to grading policies, which may have led to slight grade inflation. Additionally, the decrease in GPAs during 2020–21 could result in part from the instability students faced as they shifted from in-person learning to virtual learning as the pandemic continued to evolve.

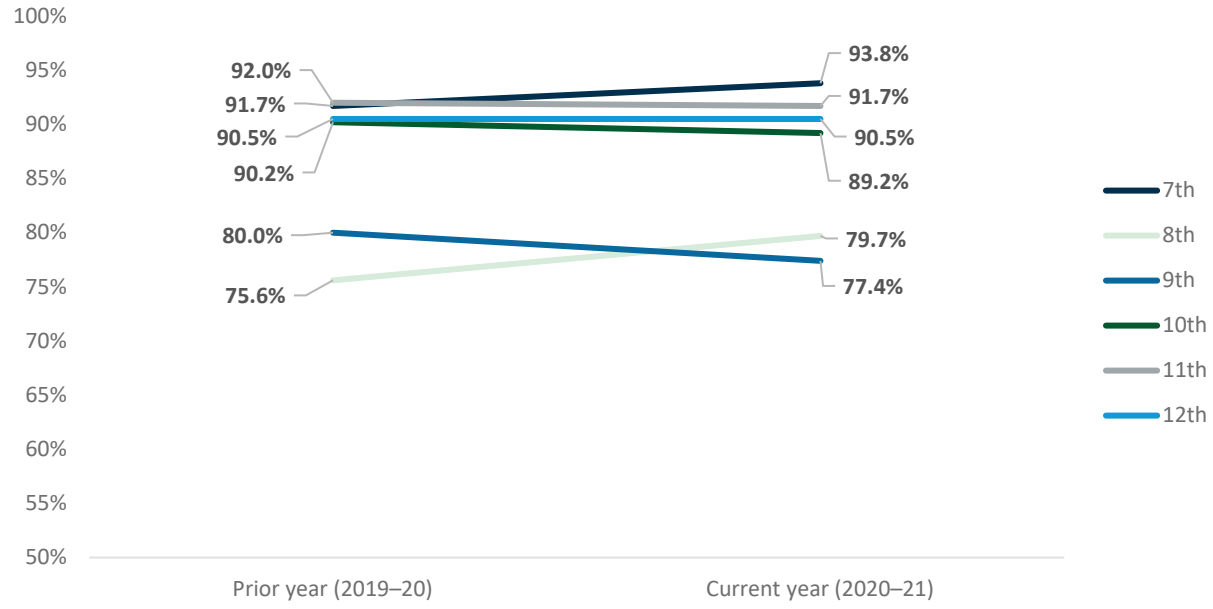
Exhibit 15. 2020–21 student attendees saw a slight decrease in their average GPAs from the previous year across all grades except 8th grade.



Note. 7th grade: *N* = 14 students; 8th grade: *N* = 54 students; 9th grade: *N* = 90 students; 10th grade: *N* = 65 students; 11th grade: *N* = 67 students; 12th grade: *N* = 46 students.
Source. Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

Data for the percentage of attempted credits earned for the current and prior year are also available for 7th through 12th grade students who participated in 21st CCLC programming during the 2020–21 school year (***N*** = 318). During the 2019–20 school year, these students earned 86.1% of the credits they attempted on average. In 2020–21, this percentage was comparable at 85.6%. See Exhibit 16 for the average percentage of attempted credits earned by grade level for 2020–21 program participants in the current and prior year. Although 7th and 8th graders saw slight increases in the percentage of credits earned from 2019–20 to 2020–21, 9th, 10th, and 11th graders saw slight decreases.

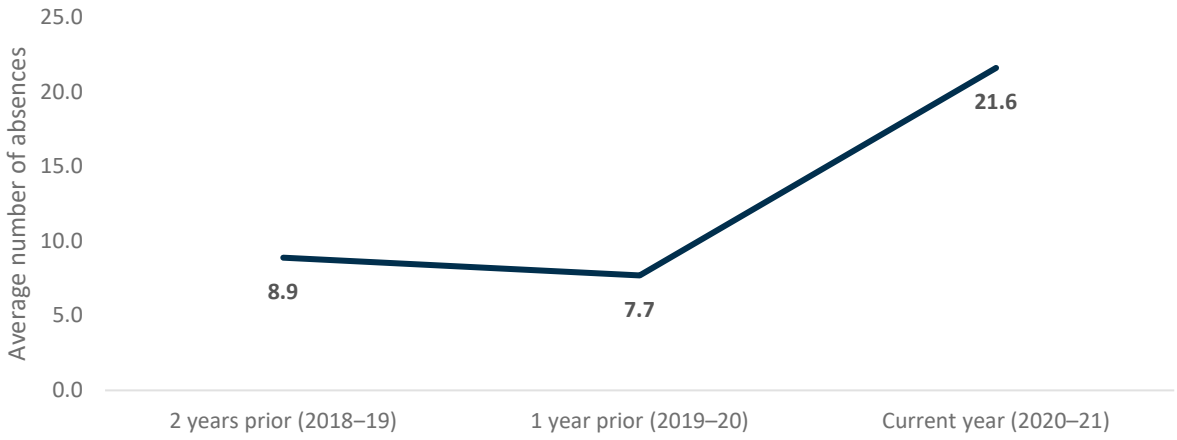
Exhibit 16. For 2020–21 student attendees, some grade levels saw a slight increase in the average percentage of attempted credits earned compared to the previous year, while other grade levels decreased.



Note. 7th grade: *N* = 12 students; 8th grade: *N* = 39 students; 9th grade: *N* = 88 students; 10th grade: *N* = 65 students; 11th grade: *N* = 67 students; 12th grade: *N* = 47 students.
Source. Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

For students who participated in 21st CCLC programming during the 2020–21 school year, data on school-day absences is available for three academic years (2018–19, 2019–20, and 2020–21). It is important to keep in mind that due to school building closures in the spring of 2020, the total length of the school year may have been reduced that year in comparison to the year prior (2018–19) or the following year (2020–21). Average school-day absences decreased slightly from 2018–19 to 2019–20, but then increased substantially in 2020–21 (Exhibit 17). Similar to what was seen with students' average GPAs, these changes in school-day absences could in part be the result of the pandemic. Slight reductions in absences during the 2019–20 school year likely are due to early school closures or changes in attendance policies while students attended school remotely. The increase in student absences during 2020–21 may be attributable in part to students' changing learning environments or difficulties with attending school remotely.

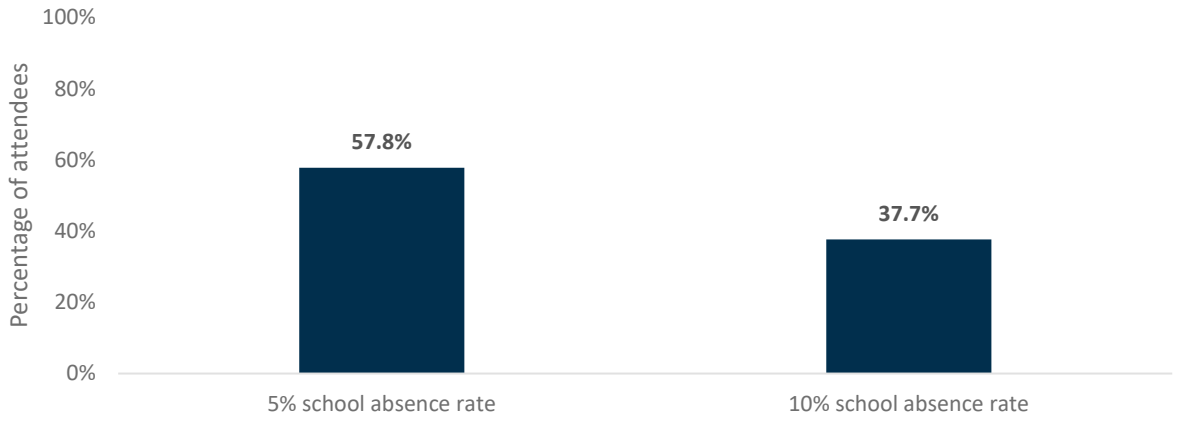
Exhibit 17. The average number of school-day absences for 2020–21 student attendees almost tripled compared to the previous 2 years.



Note. N = 6,568 students. Students were not included if they did not have absence data for all 3 years.
Source. Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

For 2020–21, data on school days attended were also available, enabling us to calculate an average school-day absence rate for students who attended programming that year. On average, students were absent for 12.6% of their total days (*N* = 6,518 students). Chronic absenteeism is defined as an absence rate of 10% or more during a given school year. We examined the percentage of youth attendees who met this definition of chronically absent, as well as the percentage of participants who had at least a 5% absence rate (Exhibit 18).

Exhibit 18. In 2020–21, more than half of youth attendees had a 5% school-day absence rate, while more than a third were chronically absent.



Note. N = 6,518 students.
Source. Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

Evaluation Question 2: How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect program operations?

On March 13, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee closed all Washington schools to limit the spread of the pandemic. Ultimately, the closure of schools extended through the remainder of the 2019–20 school year, also affecting 21st CCLC programs, many of which are based on school campuses. When the school buildings closed, the programs could not continue face-to-face operations. Many Washington 21st CCLC subgrantees continued to serve youth and families by offering virtual programming and providing resources to families, however.

Our goal was to understand more about how the pandemic affected 21st CCLC operations. The evaluation team administered a brief online survey to subgrantees to gather data that would answer the following more specific questions:

- Which programs still operated during spring 2020 and how?
- What were the programs' plans for summer 2020?
- How were programs thinking about preparation for the 2020–21 school year?
- What were the characteristics of online learning solutions implemented by programs during spring 2020?

Below, we provide a brief summary of findings and recommendations we presented in the fall of 2020, based on the data obtained from the survey. Please note that the recommendations presented at the beginning of this chapter are reflective of those that likely are still relevant moving into the next program year. For a more thorough review of the data, please see the full report located in Appendix A.

Findings	Aligned recommendations
• Many coordinators (81%) indicated their centers continued to provide services and supports during the 2019–20 school year. • A higher proportion of school-based grant centers (about 90%) indicated they continued to provide services than did non-school-based grant centers (72%). • Fewer centers located in towns indicated they continued to provide services (48%), as compared to rural (74%), city (94%), and suburban centers (100%). • Programs helped students and families by providing supports and resources (85%), online learning opportunities (79%), and other nonfood resources (77%).	• Communicate with non-school-based grant centers to determine if additional resources are required to support operations. • Determine if specific barriers existed in town-based programs that prevented their abilities to provide services. • Communicate with rural and town-based centers to determine if additional resources are required to enhance their abilities to provide online programming.

Findings	Aligned recommendations
• Rural and town-based centers were less likely to offer online programming than were city or suburban centers. • More than half of programs indicated that, despite not currently offering online activities, they planned to begin offering online activities during the summer. • One quarter of respondents (25%) noted they were unsure how to plan programming for the 2020–21 program year. • To prepare for interactions with students, some respondents (19%) noted they were going to implement proper health protocols, such as social distancing, enhanced cleaning, and teaching proper safety practices. • More than half of respondents (62%) hoped to better meet the needs of students and their families by providing tangible supplies. • One third of respondents (33%) reported the intention of their remote interactions with students and families was generally to provide support and resources and to let them know the program is "there for them." • Two thirds of coordinators (64%) indicated they offered online learning in spring 2020. • Of those programs offering online activities, most of the programs began providing online content in March (39%), April (29%), or May (29%). • Activities were typically offered four or five times a week (about 75% of responses). • When offered, activities lasted about an hour (51%). • Many respondents (43%) reported providing academic online learning opportunities, such as homework help, STEM, and literacy. • Nearly two thirds of coordinators (62%) indicated that 10 or fewer youth typically participate in each online activity.	• Continue communicating with programs to provide updated information about the impact of COVID-19 on program operations. • Determine if programs have resources necessary to implement proper health protocols. • Talk with programs about what went well in supporting students and their families and what could be improved moving forward. • Continue communicating with programs to begin to identify online learning best practices and areas for improvement. • Connect programs with one another to learn from each other's experiences.

Summary

The 21st CCLC program, according to the authorizing legislation, serves youth who attend high-poverty and lower performing schools. As shown by the data presented in this chapter, nearly all youth participants in Washington were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in each year under investigation, with a sizable minority (about one third) in each year noted as English

learners. Our analysis of baseline outcome data showed that many youth attending 21st CCLC programming in Washington saw slight decreases in their GPA in the 2020–21 school year but earned a comparable percentage of credits attempted to the prior year. School-day absences for youth increased in the 2020–21 school year, and more than half (57.8%) met the threshold for missing 5% of the school year. The main finding of this chapter is that the 21st CCLC program in Washington serves the youth that the program intends to serve. Of course, this says nothing about youth attendance levels or possible youth experiences in programming. We turn to these subjects in Chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2. Youth Program Attendance and Related Characteristics

Research has shown that increased attendance in afterschool programming for a young person may lead to improved outcomes for that person. The federal 21st CCLC program uses 30, 60, and 90 days as the attendance benchmarks on which programs must report. Research supports these figures, showing that youth can have improved outcomes after 30 days, but those youth who participate 60 days or more have even greater improved outcomes (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004; Kauh, 2011; Naftzger et al., 2013). Furthermore, from AIR's statewide evaluation work in other states across the country, evidence further corroborates that youth benefit more from 21st CCLC programming the more they participate (Naftzger et al., 2015). The 60 days (i.e., 120 hours) or more threshold is predicated on evidence accumulated by AIR that program effects associated with participation are more apt to be found at this level of annual program participation.

In this chapter, we examine overall youth attendance in programming and the relationship between the level of youth participation in programming and certain program characteristics by answering the following research questions.

- What did program attendance look like?
- How were student characteristics related to students' level of program attendance?
- How was participation in different activity types related to program participation rates and student outcomes?
- To what extent do youth remain in 21st CCLC programming across multiple years?

- What are the characteristics of youth who stay engaged in programming? What are the differences between students who stay engaged in 21st CCLC programming across multiple years and those who do not on student characteristics?
- What are the characteristics of programs that have high levels of cross-year retention in programming?

Findings	Aligned recommendations
Student Program Attendance • Overall program attendance declined in both 2020 and 2021; in 2021, 7,118 students attended programming, of whom 2,938 attended regularly. • During the 2020–21 program year, attendance was lower than in prior years across 10-day attendance bands, except for the 120 or more days attendance band, which was comparable to prepandemic years. **Student Program Attendance and Student Characteristics** • The majority of both regular (70%) and nonregular (59%) attendees identified as Hispanic in 2020–21. • A majority of regular attendees (81%) also qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. • A minority of regular attendees were limited English proficient (34%) or identified as having special needs (14%). **Student Program Attendance and Program Characteristics** • About half of student attendees spent the majority of their time in STEM- or arts-related activities for 3 months or more. About a quarter participated in these activities for 6 months or more. • Students with high attendance levels, especially in elementary and middle school, tend to spend more time in specific activities, such as STEM, the arts, and youth leadership. This likely shows a strong connection between youth interest in specific content areas and attendance. • Students earning a GPA of 2.0 or less tend to attend programming less. • A review of participation in intensive reading and mathematics supports shows that elementary school	• Continue to express the importance of students' consistently attending programs. • Explore what strategies were successful in retaining students and document these best practices and successful adaptations given the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly related to virtual or hybrid programming. This may be especially helpful for larger centers. • Explore ways to promote youth choice in programming that enable youth to self-direct into activities that represent their interests. • Explore ways to recruit harder to engage youth populations, particularly those students struggling academically and high school students. • Explore further the different staffing roles in promoting recruitment and retainment of youth, which may be helpful.

Findings	Aligned recommendations
students had higher attendance levels compared with high school students, whose attendance levels were mixed. • A higher proportion of teachers involved in programming seems to be associated with higher attendance levels for elementary school students, but lower attendance levels for high school students. **Student Program Participation Across Multiple Years** • Between the 2014–15 and 2020–21 program years, 58,510 students participated in at least 1 year of programming. More than 38% of students participated for more than 1 year. • A comparison of students who attend for multiple consecutive years and those who do not shows that students attending for multiple consecutive years attended approximately 14 more days on average. • No large differences existed between centers with high cross-year retentions and low cross-year retention on many of the center characteristics such as overall demographics. • The largest differences appear to be related to program attendance levels and number of students served, however. Students at high cross-year retention centers attend, on average, approximately 28 more days within a given year than their counterparts attend. Centers with high cross-year retention also serve, on average, approximately 32 less students than low cross-year retention centers serve.	

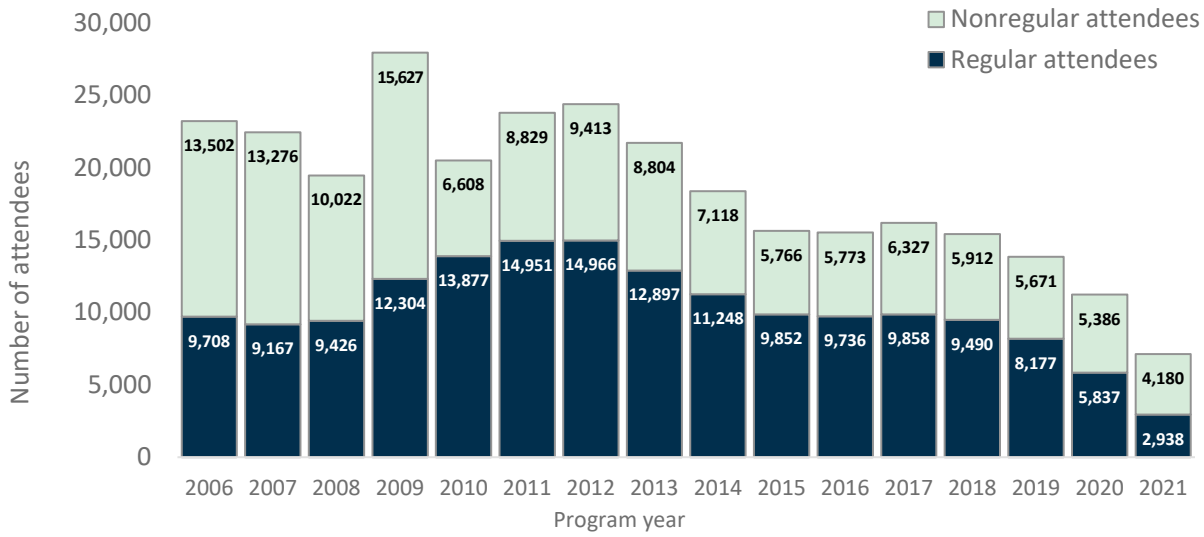
Student Program Attendance

> Evaluation Question 3: What did program attendance look like?

A common saying is that "youth vote with their feet." This adage became apparent when examining attendance levels for the Washington 21st CCLC program. Program attendance is an intermediate outcome indicator that reflects the potential breadth and depth of exposure to afterschool programming. In this regard, we consider attendance in terms of (a) the total number of students who participated in the center's programming throughout the year and

(b) the frequency and intensity with which students attended programming when it was offered. The total number of students who participated measures the breadth of a center's reach, whereas the frequency and intensity of attendance measures how successful the center was in retaining students in center-provided services and activities. Exhibit 19 shows the number of attendees across program years. The percentage of regular attendees was consistent across the 2011–2018 program periods. Overall student attendance decreased in both the 2019–20 and 2020–21 academic years. In 2019–20, 52% of the 11,223 students served were regular attendees (students who attended a total of 30 days or more during the reporting period), which was consistent with previous program years. In 2020–21, the percentage of regular attendees fell to 41%, while the total number of students attending programming fell to 7,118.

Exhibit 19. Student attendance levels decreased in both 2019–20 and 2020–21 program years with the percentage of regular attendees also decreasing in 2020–21.

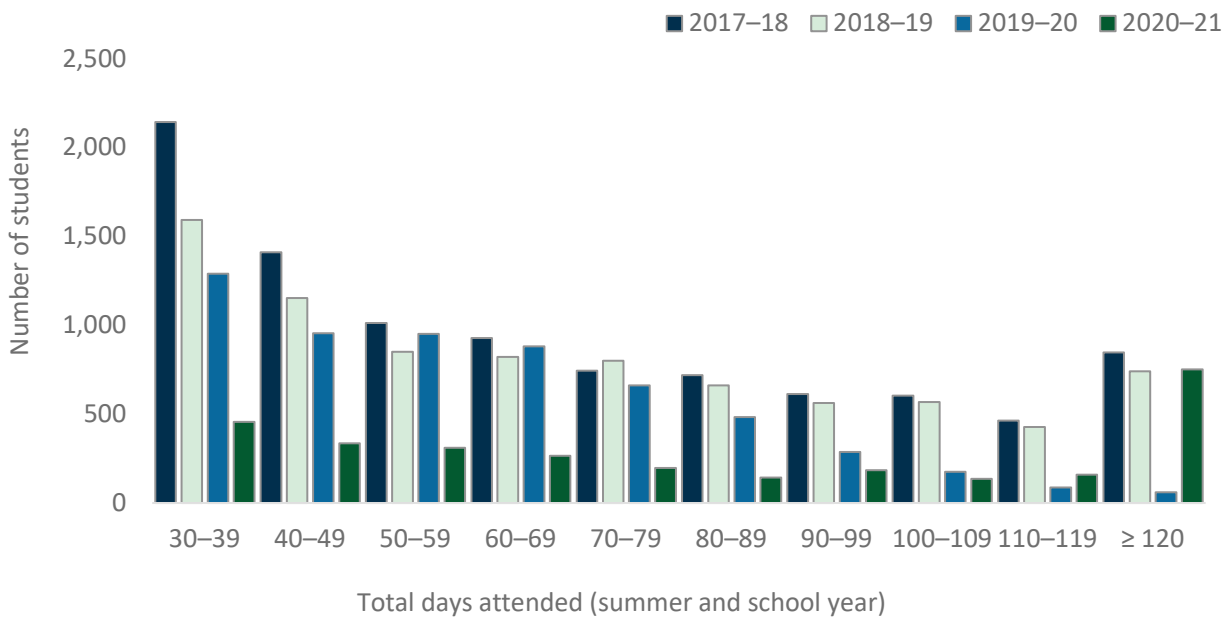


Note. The decline in attendance levels between 2009 and 2010 is representative of a policy change adopted by OSPI that increased the number of days a student would need to attend to be counted as a participant. Subsequent declines in overall attendance are related perhaps to the decline in the number of grantees and centers awarded.
Source. 2006-2020: Washington Attendee Module. 2021: Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

We also examined attendance across 10-day attendance bands (e.g., 30–39 days, 40–49 days). In previous program years before the onset of the pandemic, the number of students attending 21st CCLC programming declined steadily with each increasing 10-day attendance band, except for the more than 120 days attendance band, which increased to 848 students in 2017–18 and 741 students in 2018–19 (Exhibit 20). In 2019–20, the number of students attending more than 120 days decreased as well to just 61 students, which may be understandable given school closures during the second half of that school year. It is noteworthy that in 2020–21, although

overall student attendance was much lower, the number of students attending more than 120 days was consistent with prepandemic program years, with 752 students attending more than 120 days. Approximately 23% of regular attendees participated in 21st CCLC programming for 30 to 39 days in 2017–18, 19% in 2018–19, and 22% in 2019–20. In 2020–21, this percentage decreased slightly to roughly 16%.

Exhibit 20. During the 2020–21 program year, attendance was lower than in prior years across 10-day attendance bands, except for the 120 or more days attendance band that was comparable to prepandemic years.



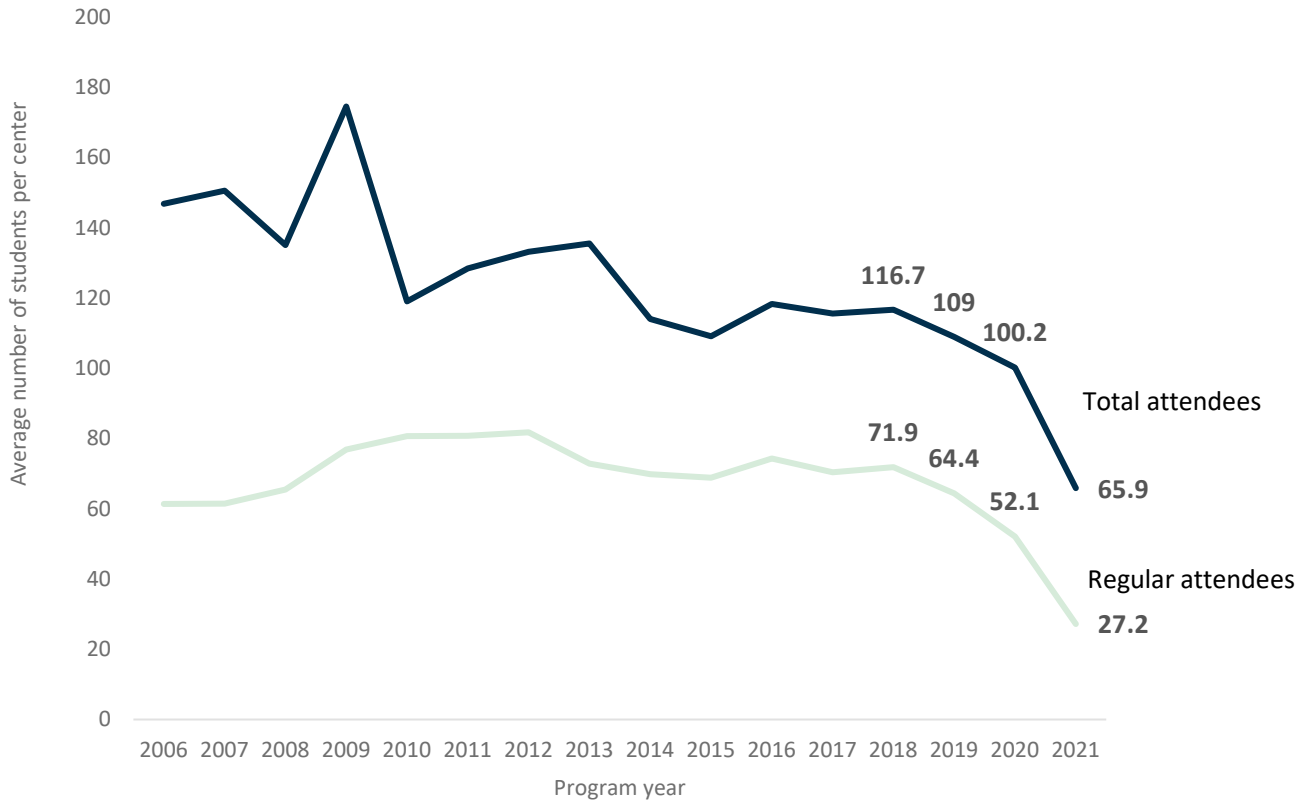
Source. Washington Attendee Module and Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Overall, the mean school year attendance for regular attendees was 81 days in 2020–21, with a median of 69 days. For the summer, the average number of days of attendance for regular attendees was 18 days, with a median of 18 days. This is an increase from the 2019–20 school year, when regular attendees attended an average of 4 days during the summer and 56 days during the school year.

Centers saw a slight increase in total attendance and regular attendance from 2015 to 2016, and then attendance leveled off in the following 2 years. In 2018–19, attendance decreased slightly, but with the disruption brought on by the pandemic, centers saw a continued decline in attendance in 2020 and 2021 (Exhibit 21). In 2019–20, each 21st CCLC center in Washington had approximately 100 total attendees and 52 regular attendees on average. In 2020–21,

centers averaged 66 total attendees and 27 regular attendees, with centers serving a range of 10 to 310 students.

Exhibit 21. Centers have seen average total attendance and regular attendance levels decline in the past several years.



Source. 2006–2020: Washington Attendee Module. 2021: Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

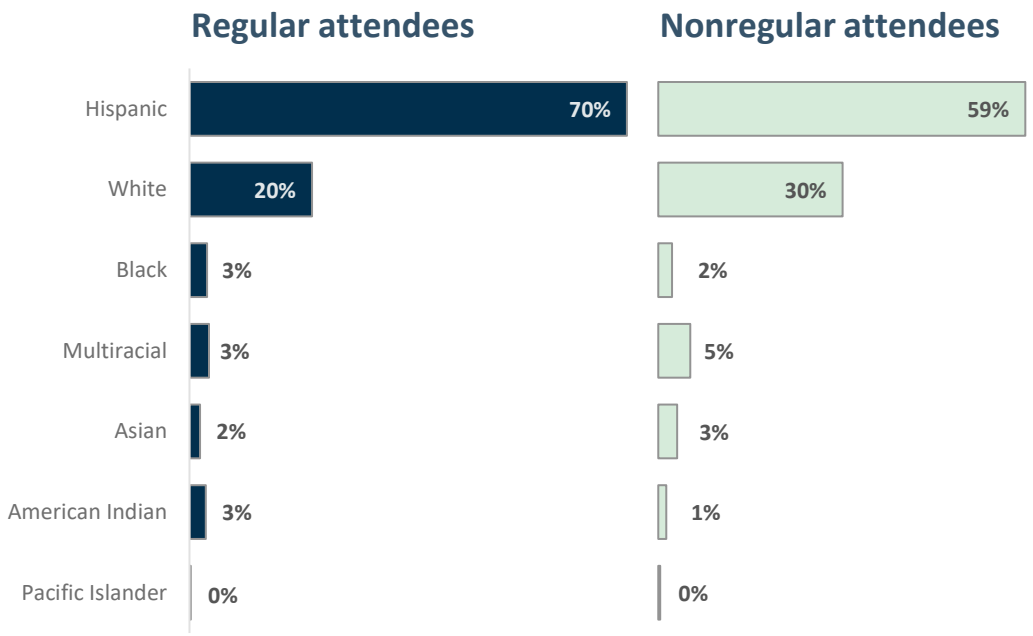
Student Program Attendance and Student Characteristics

> Evaluation Question 4: How were student characteristics related to students' level of program attendance?

During the 2020–21 school year, approximately 70% of all regular attendees were identified as Hispanic, and 20% of regular attendees were identified as White. Exhibit 22 outlines the racial/ethnic backgrounds of 21st CCLC attendees in Washington.[1]

[1] Please note that the data represented in Exhibits 12 through 15 are inclusive only of students we could match in the CEDARS data system (*n* = 6,568; 92%).

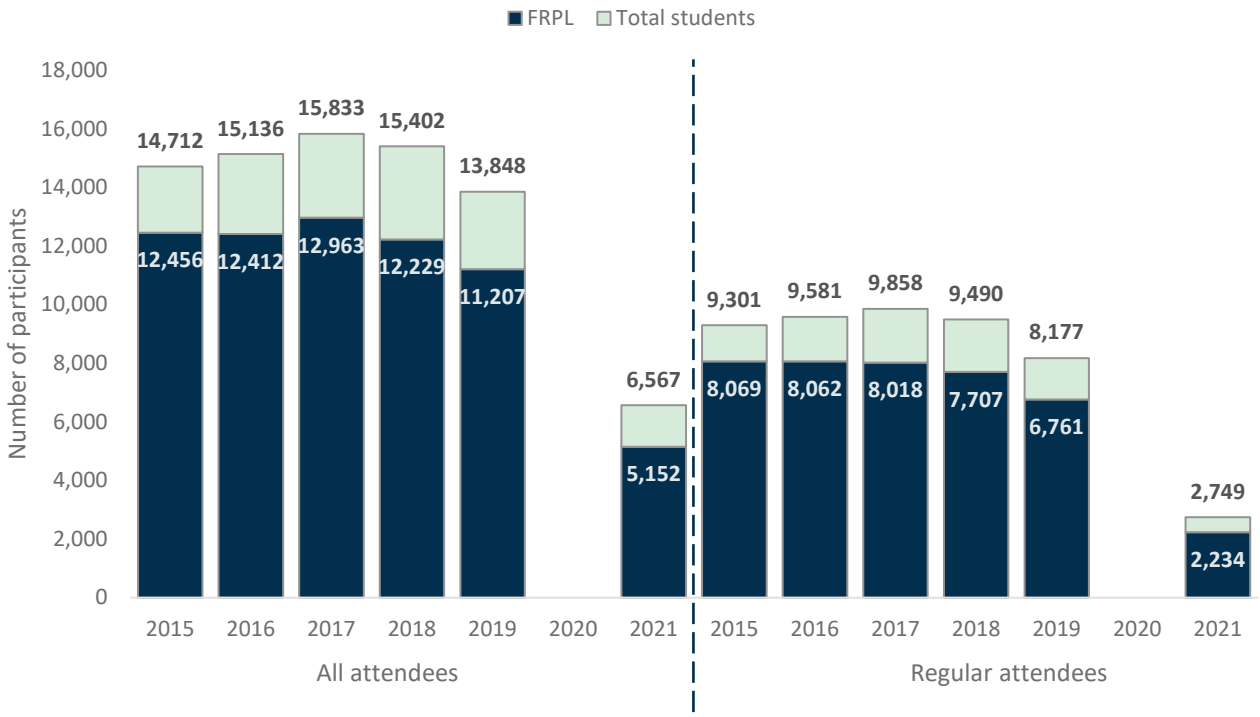
Exhibit 22. The majority of both regular and nonregular attendees identified as Hispanic.



Source. Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

The 21st CCLC program is designed specifically to provide afterschool activities and services to students living in high-poverty communities and attend schools in need of improvement. Typically, states rely on student eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch as the metric to assess how well states and grantees are reaching this target population. The number of attendees eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is shown in Exhibit 23. Roughly 79% of all attendees and 81% of regular attendees were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch during the 2020–21 programming period.

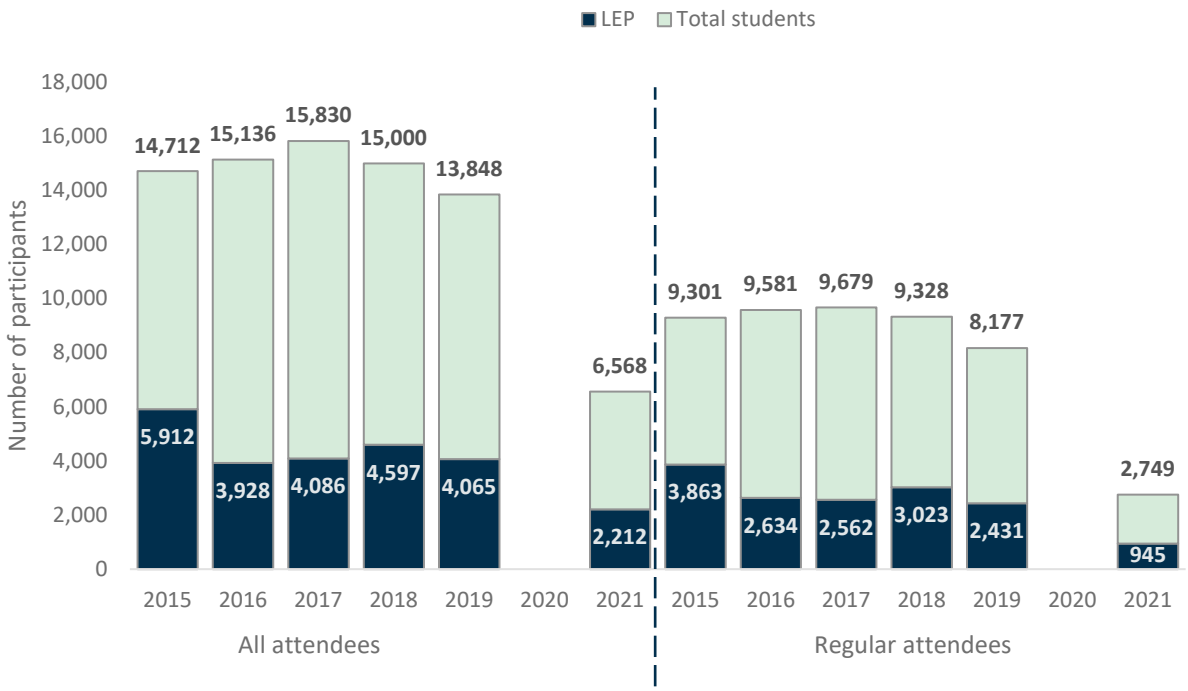
Exhibit 23. 21st CCLC programming in Washington has been serving a majority of youth who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.



Note. FRPL = free or reduced-price lunch. We do not show the number of students whose FRPL status was unknown. We removed program year data for 2006–2014 from this figure to maximize readability. We did not receive 2019–20 demographic data from OSPI in time for completion of this report.
Source. Washington Attendee Module, Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal, and CEDARS.

In addition to free or reduced-price lunch eligibility, information about the student population served by 21st CCLC programming recorded in CEDARS includes students designated as being limited English proficient (LEP) or as having special needs. As shown in Exhibit 24, during 2020–21, 34% of all participants as well as 34% of regular attendees were limited English proficient, which is slightly higher than during the 2018–19 program year.

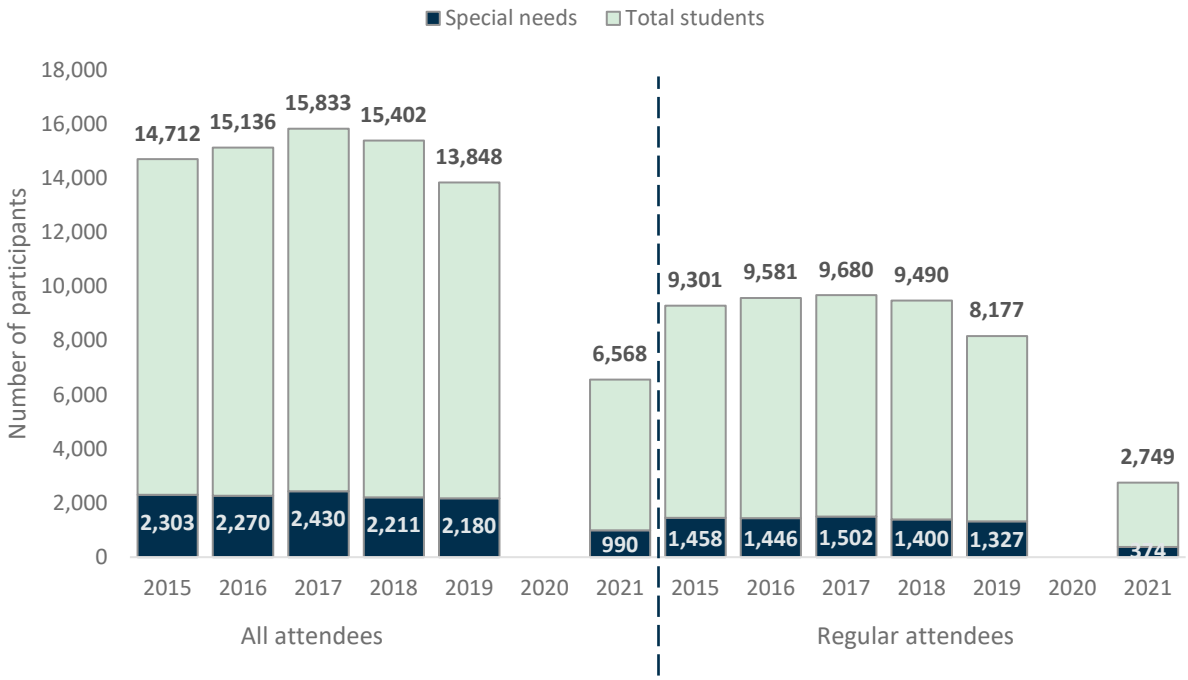
Exhibit 24. About one third of youth who participated in 21st CCLC programming in 2020–21 were limited English proficient.



Note. LEP = limited English proficient. We do not show the number of students whose LEP status was unknown. We removed program year data for 2006–2014 from this exhibit to maximize readability. We did not receive 2019–20 demographic data from OSPI in time for completion of this report.
Source. Washington Attendee Module, Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal, and CEDARS.

Exhibit 25 shows the total number of attendees, the total number of regular attendees, and the number of attendees who have special needs. During 2020–21, 15% of all attendees and 14% of regular attendees had a special need, down slightly from the 2018–19 program year.

Exhibit 25. A small minority of youth participating in 21st CCLC programming identify as having special needs.



Note. We do not show the number of students whose special needs status was unknown. We removed program year data for 2006–2013 from this exhibit to maximize readability. We did not receive 2019–20 demographic data from OSPI in time for completion of this report.
Source. Washington Attendee Module, Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal, and CEDARS.

Student Program Attendance and Program Characteristics

> Evaluation Question 5: How was participation in different activity types related to program participation rates and student outcomes?

Youth attendance data, as shown in the previous section, may indicate some measure of youth engagement in 21st CCLC programming. Attendance data alone, however, do not provide information concerning other factors that may play a role in how frequently youth attend programming. In this section, we examine key differences in center and student characteristics for groups of students who attend more frequently compared to those students who attend less frequently and any differences by school level (elementary, middle, and high school).

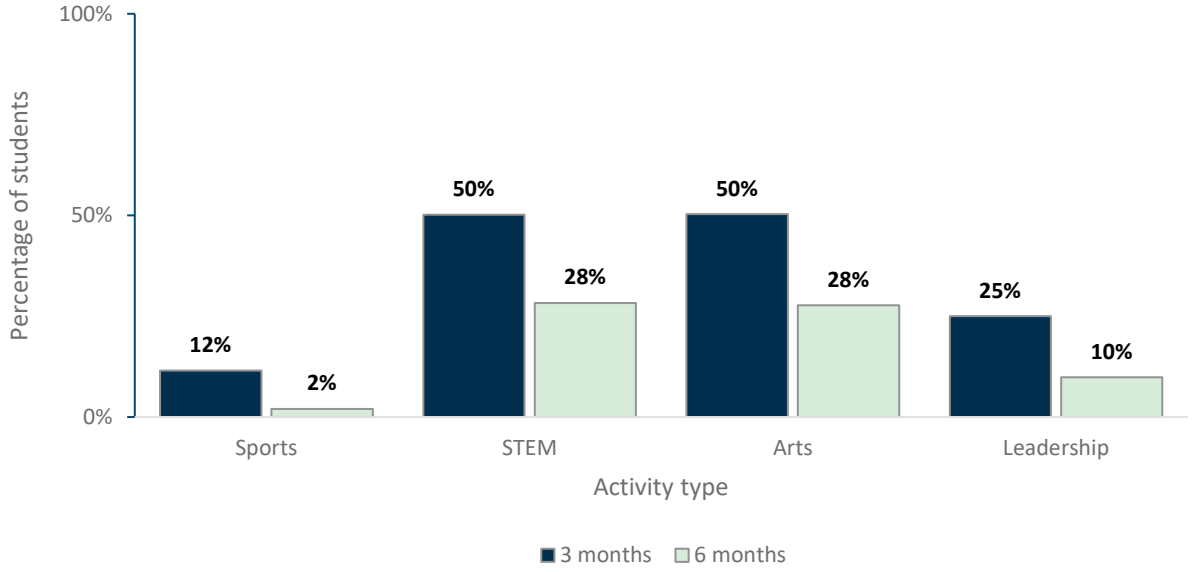
Because program characteristics likely differ depending on the grade levels served, we ran one-way analyses of variance for each grade range in elementary school, middle school, and high school on a series of program characteristics to gain a better understanding of which

characteristics might be associated more closely with higher or lower attendance levels. To do this, we first used the total number of days a student attended during the 2020–21 program year to create attendance quartiles within each grade range, with the first quartile representing students who attended least frequently and the fourth quartile representing students who attended most frequently.

Student Participation by Types of Activities Attended

As part of data collection efforts, we asked all subgrantees to report monthly on whether students spent most of their time in the following types of activities: sports, STEM, the arts, or leadership (Exhibit 26).

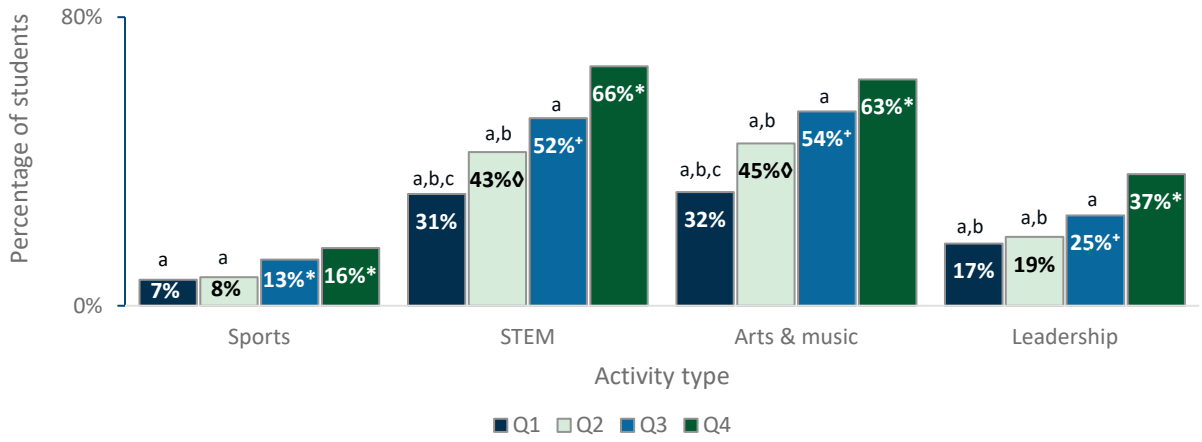
Exhibit 26. About half of the students spent the majority of their time in STEM- or arts-related activities for 3 months or more. Percentages were lower across all activity types for students who participated in them 6 months or more.



Note. N = 7,118 students in Grades PK–12. Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

We examined these activity types by looking at students who spent most of their time in them for both 3 months or more (Exhibits 27–29) and for 6 months or more (Exhibits 30–32). Our analyses showed that students with high attendance levels tend to spend more time in specific activities, such as STEM and the arts, across all school levels. For example, in Exhibit 27, two thirds of the students with the highest attendance levels spent the majority of their time in STEM-related activities.

Exhibit 27. Elementary-school-age students with the highest attendance levels across 3 months or more spent the majority of their time in STEM- or arts-and-music-related activities.



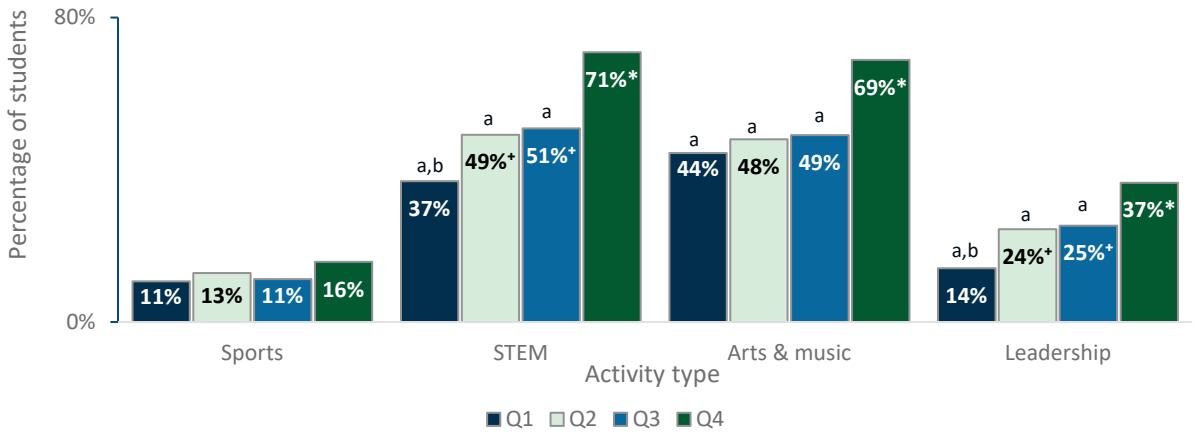
Note. N = 4,521 elementary age students (Grades PK–5). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for elementary-school-age students: 4.0 days (Q1), 13.5 days (Q2), 40.4 days (Q3), 117.4 days (Q4).

**p* < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

^{+}p < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "b" value.

◊*p* < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "c" value.

Exhibit 28. Middle-school-age students with the highest attendance levels across 3 months or more spent the majority of their time in STEM- or arts-and music-related activities.

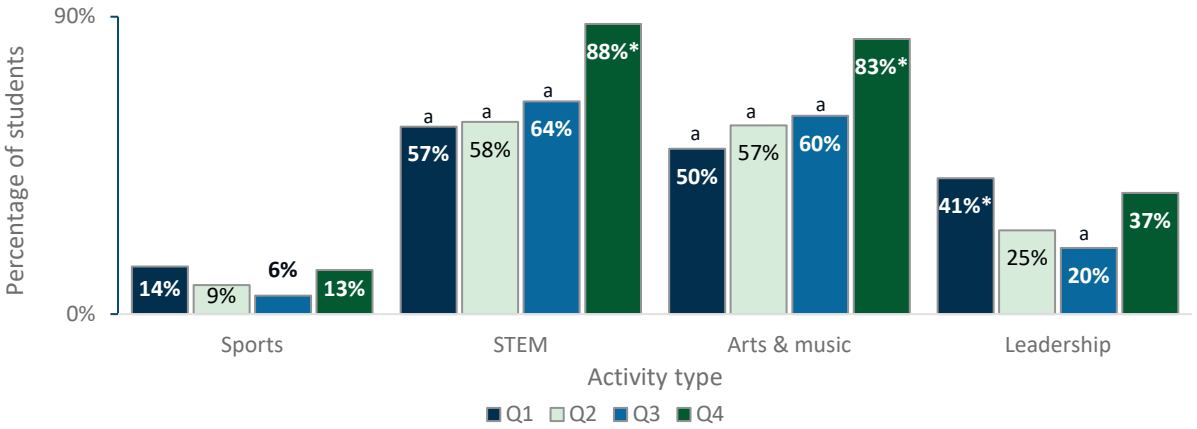


Note. *N* = 2,236 middle-school-age students (Grades 6–8). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for middle-school-age students: 2.7 days (Q1), 10.5 days (Q2), 28.5 days (Q3), 104.9 days (Q4).

*$p < .05$ and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

+$p < .05$ and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "b" value.

Exhibit 29. High-school-age students with the highest attendance levels across 3 months or more spent the majority of their time in STEM- or arts-and music-related activities.

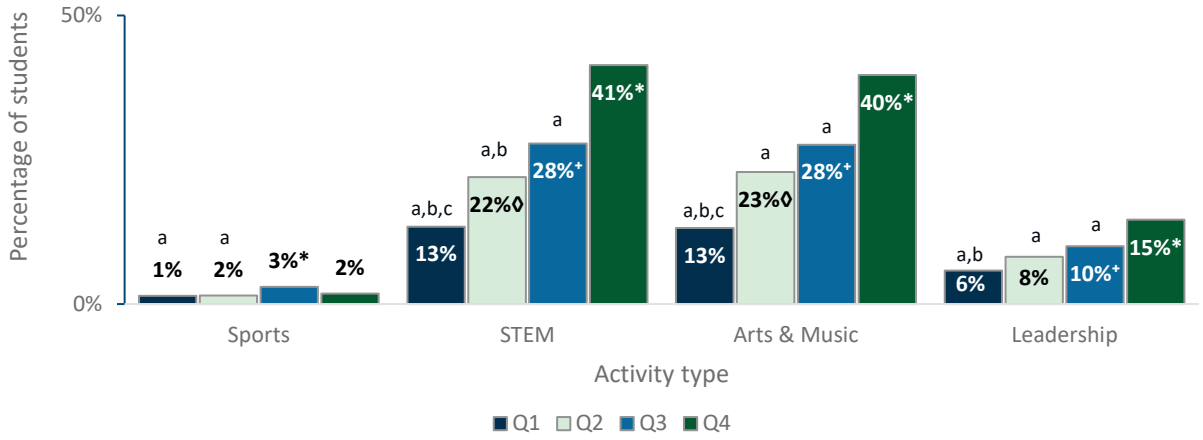


Note. *N* = 361 high-school-age students (Grades 9–12). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for high-school-age students: 6.8 days (Q1), 28.7 days (Q2), 59.4 days (Q3), 183.3 days (Q4).

*$p < .05$ and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

For students who attended 3 months or more in middle and high school, there was a statistically significant difference between attendance quartile groups for STEM, the arts, and leadership activities, while elementary school students also had a significant difference for sports. We also explored the same analyses for students who spent 6 months or more in these types of activities (Exhibits 30–32) and found fairly similar distributions for each grade range. These results also were statistically significant, with the exception of leadership activities for high school students. Overall, students with high attendance levels tend to spend more time in specific activities, such as STEM, the arts, and youth leadership. This likely shows a strong connection between youth interest in specific content areas and attendance.

Exhibit 30. Elementary-school-age students with the highest attendance levels across 6 months or more spent much of their time in STEM- or arts-and-music-related activities.



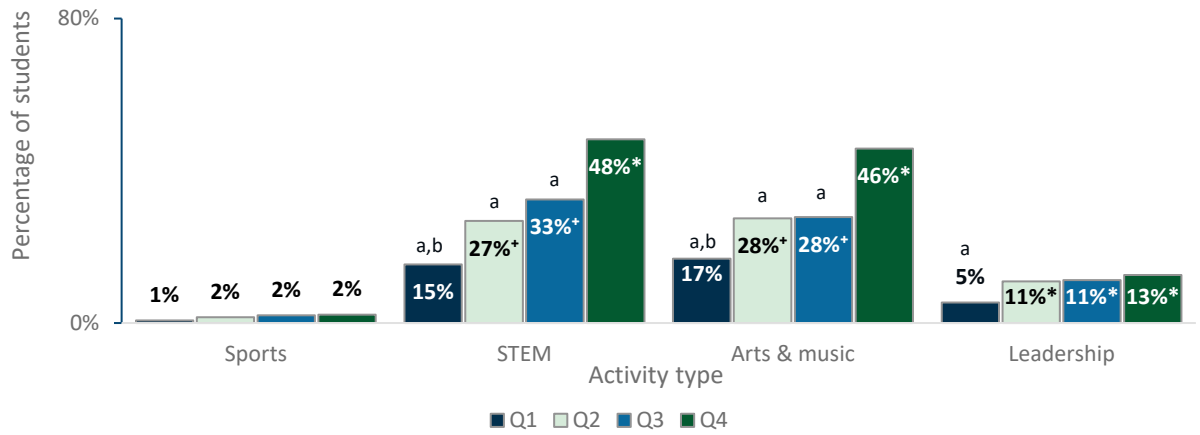
Note. N = 4,521 elementary-school-age students (Grades PK–5). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for elementary-school-age students: 4.0 days (Q1), 13.5 days (Q2), 40.4 days (Q3), 117.4 days (Q4).

*p < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

+p < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "b" value.

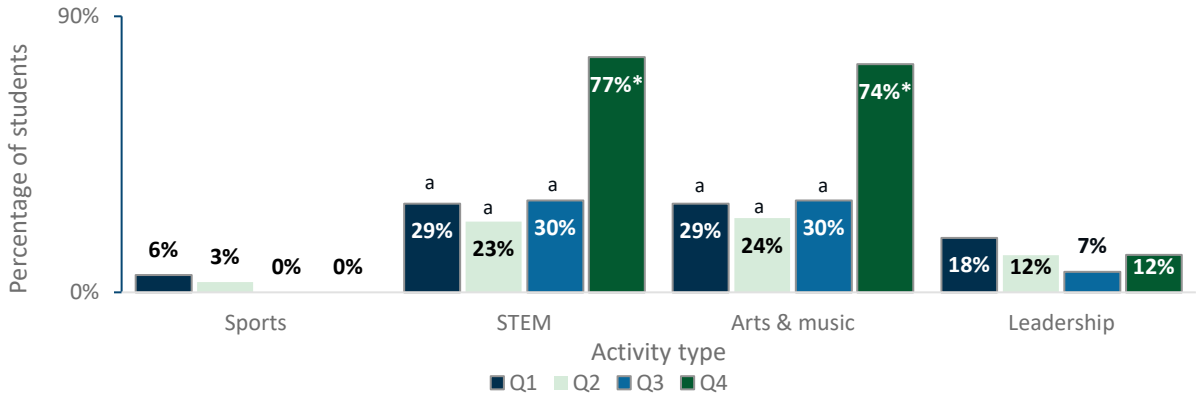
◊p < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "c" value.

Exhibit 31. Middle-school-age students with the highest attendance levels across 6 months or more spent about half of their time in STEM- or arts-and music-related activities.



Note. N = 2,236 middle-school-age students (Grades 6–8). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for middle-school-age students: 2.7 days (Q1), 10.5 days (Q2), 28.5 days (Q3), 104.9 days (Q4).
**p* < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.
+*p* < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "b" value.

Exhibit 32. High-school-age students with the highest attendance levels across 6 months or more spent the majority of their time in STEM- or arts-and music-related activities.

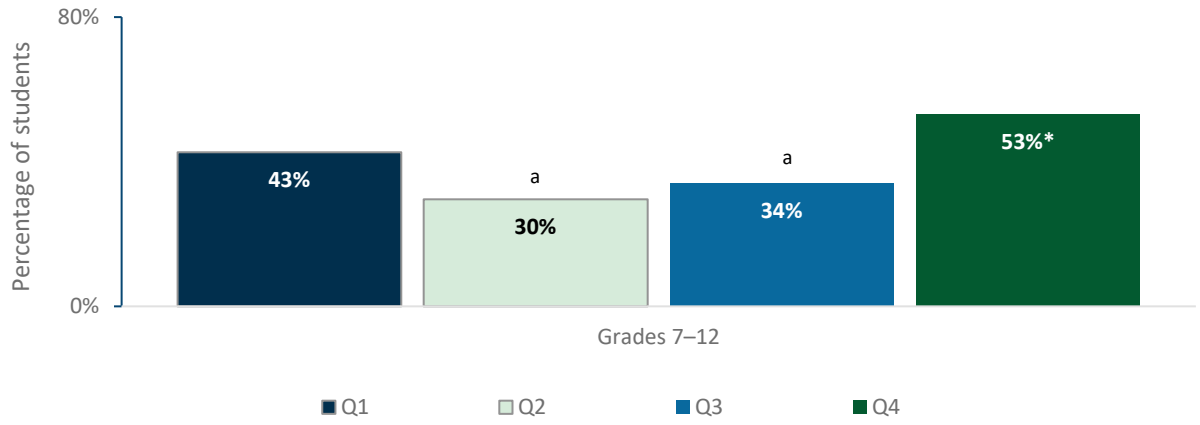


Note. N = 361 high-school-age students (Grades 9–12). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for high-school-age students: 6.8 days (Q1), 28.7 days (Q2), 59.4 days (Q3), 183.3 days (Q4).
**p* < .05 and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

Student Participation by Need for Improvement in Academics

The evaluation team also looked at the relationship between program attendance levels and students with room for academic improvement based on their 2020–21 GPA (2.0 or less) or percentage of attempted credits earned (less than 100%). We found that students with lower GPAs tended to attend programming less, while students with lower percentages of attempted credits earned attended programming more frequently (Exhibits 33 and 34).

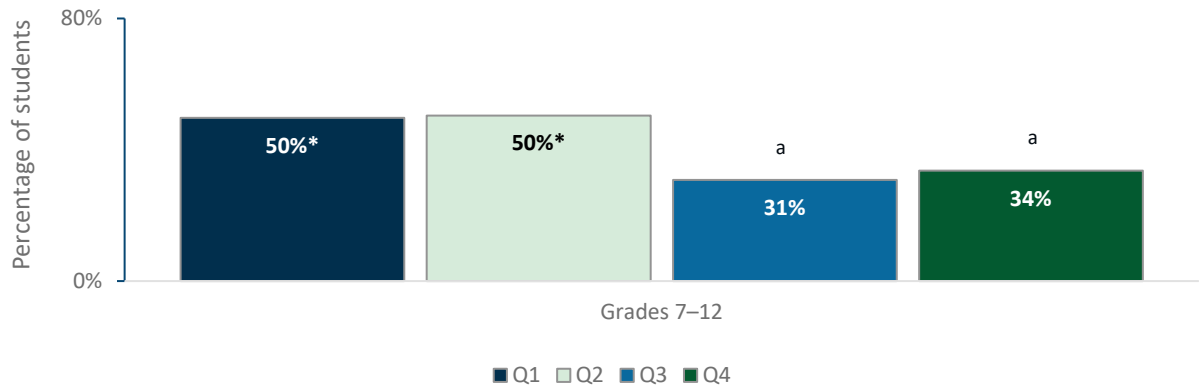
Exhibit 33. Students who earn less credits than attempted tend to have the highest program attendance levels.



Note. *N* = 515 students in Grades 7–12. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for students who had credit hours data: 5.9 days (Q1), 24.9 days (Q2), 53.4 days (Q3), 174.9 days (Q4).

**p* < .05 and indicate that the mean percentage for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

Exhibit 34. Students with less than 2.0 GPAs tend to have the lowest program attendance levels.



Note. N = 548 students in Grades 7–12. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for students who had GPA data: 6.1 days (Q1), 25.1 days (Q2), 51.0 days (Q3), 170.6 days (Q4).
*$p < .05$ and indicate that the mean percentage for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

Student Participation by Need for Intensive Reading and Mathematics Supports

To understand the types of experiences that youth have in programming, and the level of mathematics and readings supports they receive, we asked programs to report on both the anticipated level of support each student would need at enrollment and the actual level of supports students received each month. These support levels are as follows:

- **Level 1: Incidental Support for Mathematics or Reading/Literacy.** Youth receive incidental support in response to an in-the-moment problem or question they have while completing a mathematics- or reading/literacy-related task. This is the most commonly seen in homework help, where youth need assistance in completing a given assignment. These activities are reactive to the in-the-moment needs of participating youth and are not predicated on a preplanned set of activities designed to support skill building in targeted areas. Youth participation in activities where incidental support could be provided should be identified in this level.
- **Level 2: Intentional Mathematics or Reading/Literacy Enrichment or Instruction.** Youth participate in enrichment or instructional activities intentionally constructed to support skill development and/or interest (e.g., poetry club, reading circles). Youth may have been recruited to participate in these activities given their need to further develop skills or self-selected into the activity given their own interests. Activities are primarily delivered in a

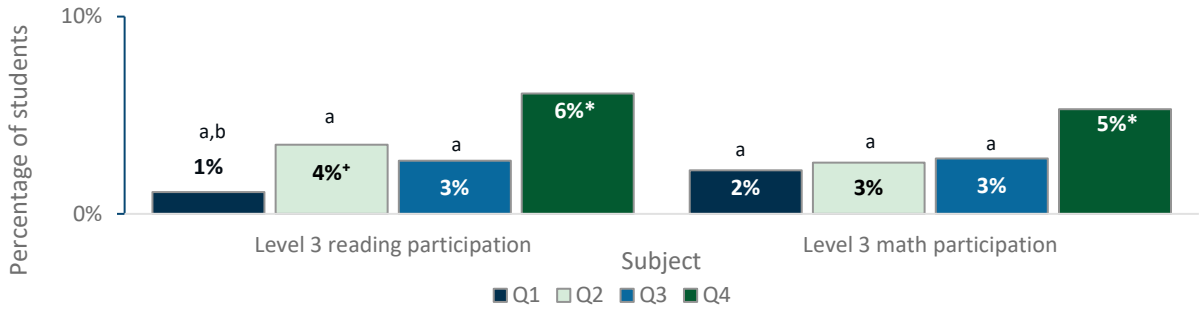
whole-group format and tend to have higher youth to activity leader ratios than those associated with Level 3. Activity lesson plans typically articulate the specific skills the activity is designed to cultivate or how youth interest will be cultivated, although less effort is dedicated to assessing formatively how individual youth progress in the areas of interest.

- **Level 3: Intensive Support for Reading/Literacy or Mathematics Skill Building.** Youth identified as needing substantive assistance to address skill deficits receive targeted and intensive support and attention from qualified activity leaders to improve specific reading or mathematics skills. Instructional support is either individualized or provided in small groups (activity leader to youth ratios are approximately one activity leader per five youth or less). Literacy and mathematics skills areas targeted for improvement have been identified through feedback received from school-day teachers and/or the use of validated assessments. Youth progress is periodically assessed, and instructional supports are modified to support further youth growth and development in the targeted areas.

We examined what differences might exist between students who received the most intensive supports (Level 3) in reading or mathematics versus those who did not. Our goal was to determine if the population of students who receive Level 3 supports is meaningfully different from students who receive Level 1 or Level 2 supports. To do this, we ran an independent sample *t*-test on students classified as needing Level 3 supports at enrollment versus those classified as Level 1 or Level 2.

A review of participation in intensive reading and mathematics supports shows that elementary and middle school students had higher attendance levels, while high school attendance levels were mixed (Exhibits 35 through 37).

Exhibit 35. Elementary-school-age students who participate in intensive reading and mathematics support also tend to have the highest program attendance.

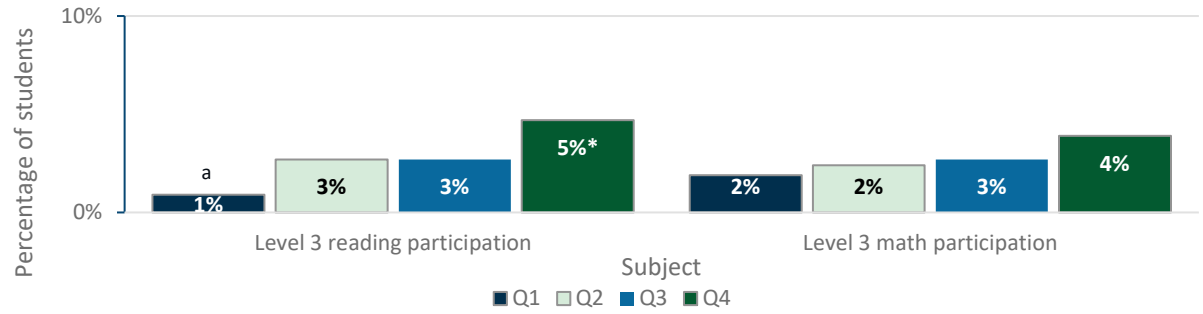


Note. N = 4,521 elementary-school-age students (Grades PK–5). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for elementary-school-age students receiving Level 3 Reading or Math supports: 4.0 days (Q1), 13.5 days (Q2), 40.4 days (Q3), 117.4 days (Q4).

**p* < .05 and indicate that the mean percentage for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

^{+}p <.05 and indicate that the mean percentage for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "b" value.

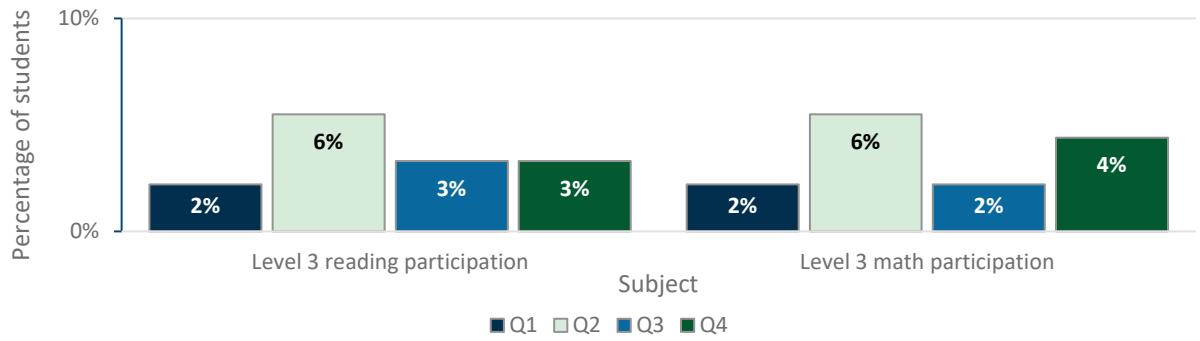
Exhibit 36. Middle-school-age students who participate in intensive reading, but not mathematics, support also tend to have the highest program attendance.



Note. N = 2,236 middle-school-age students (Grades 6–8). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for middle-school-age students receiving Level 3 Reading or Math supports: 2.7 days (Q1), 10.5 days (Q2), 28.5 days (Q3), 104.9 days (Q4).

**p* < .05 and indicate that the mean percentage for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

Exhibit 37. No association was found between participation in intensive reading and mathematics support and program attendance for high school students.

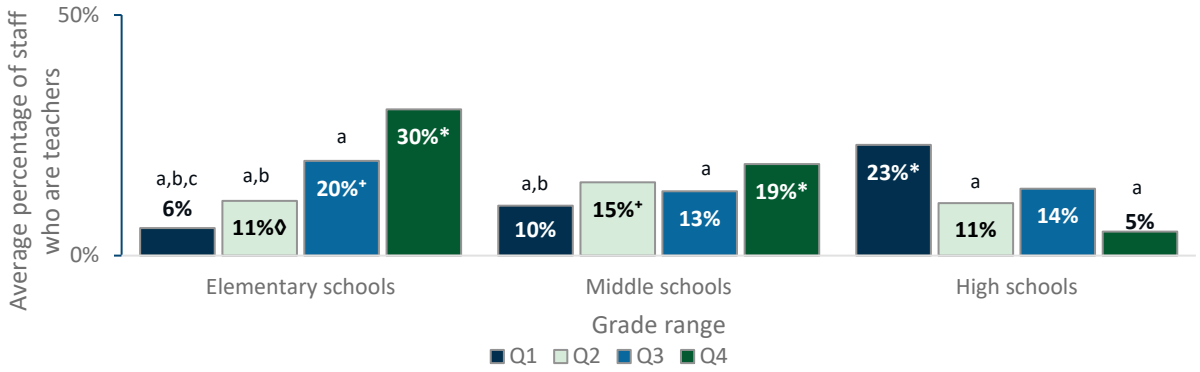


Note. *N* = 361 high-school-age students (Grades 9–12). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for high-school-age students receiving Level 3 Reading or Math supports: 6.8 days (Q1), 28.7 days (Q2), 59.4 days (Q3), 183.3 days (Q4).

Student Participation by Proportion of Staff Who Are Teachers

The evaluation team also looked at the association between the proportion of staff who are teachers and students' overall program attendance. For elementary school students, a higher proportion of teachers involved in programming was associated with higher attendance levels, while the inverse was true for high school students, where a higher proportion of teacher involvement was associated with lower attendance levels (Exhibit 38). A review of the high school students in the highest attendance quartile (*n* = 90) shows that the staff at their centers tended to be classified as other staff (35%), administrators (27%), and community members (19%).

Exhibit 38. Elementary-school-age students in programs with higher percentages of teachers involved in programming had higher attendance levels, whereas high-school-age students in programs with higher percentages of teachers involved in programming tended to have lower attendance levels.



Note. *N* = 4,521 elementary-school-age students (Grades PK–5); 2,236 middle-school-age students (Grades 6–8); and 361 high-school-age students (Grades 9–12). Data are from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for elementary school students: 4.0 days (Q1), 13.5 days (Q2), 40.4 days (Q3), 117.4 days (Q4); for middle school students: 2.7 days (Q1), 10.5 days (Q2), 28.5 days (Q3), 104.9 days (Q4); for high school students: 6.8 days (Q1), 28.7 days (Q2), 59.4 days (Q3), 183.3 days (Q4).
*$p < .05$ and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.
$^{+}p < .05$ and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "b" value.
◊$p < .05$ and indicate that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "c" value.

By classifying youth into higher and lower attending quartiles, we discovered that youth attending more frequently tended to spend more time in activities such as STEM, the arts, and youth leadership. We also found that centers with a higher proportion of school-day teachers as staff and a higher proportion of students who needed to improve on their mathematics or reading skills were associated with higher youth attendance levels for elementary school students, but not for high school students.

These findings, however, are not causal and do not indicate that offering more STEM or arts activities will increase student participation. Some of these results, however, are consistent with expectations (e.g., the positive relationship between program quality and program participation), whereas others suggest a relationship that may warrant additional exploration in the future. For example, are programs that afford students more choices in what activities to attend more likely to be characterized by a higher percentage of students spending the majority

of their time in, for example, STEM and the arts? How do these youth in these types of programs describe their experiences relative to students attending more diverse types of programming? These questions may be useful to explore when undertaking future evaluation activities.

Student Program Attendance Across Multiple Years

> Evaluation Question 6: To what extent do youth remain in 21st CCLC programming across multiple years?

The first step in this process was identifying the students who participated in multiple years of 21st CCLC programming. Across the 2015–21 program years, 58,510 students participated in at least 1 year. As noted in Exhibit 39, the majority of students attended for just 1 year; however, 38% of students participated for more than 1 year. We traced their participation back to the 2014–15 program year to get a full picture of multiyear participation for all students who attended in any year and also students who attended for multiple consecutive years (*n* = 20,126).

Exhibit 39. Most students attended 21st CCLC programming for 1 year, and the majority of students who attended for consecutive years attended 2 consecutive years of programming

Years of participation	All students, any year		All students, multiple consecutive years	
	Number of students	Percentage of students	Number of students	Percentage of students
1 Year	36,165	61.8%	NA	NA
2 Years	14,283	24.4%	13,300	66.1%
3 Years	5,619	9.6%	4,864	24.2%
4 Years	1,762	3.0%	1,454	7.2%
5 Years	506	0.9%	357	1.8%
6 Years	137	0.2%	113	0.6%
7 Years	38	0.1%	38	0.2%
Total	58,510	100.0%	20,126	100.0%

We also wanted to get a sense of the how many students within each program year had also attended program in multiple years, consecutively. As shown in Exhibit 40, the distribution of

students participating in consecutive years fluctuates from year to year, which may be, in part, because of programs cycling on and off of funding.

Exhibit 40. The percentage of students participating in 21st CCLC programming for multiple consecutive years fluctuated from year to year.

Consecutive years of participation	2014–15 (*n* = 14,675)	2015–16 (*n* = 15,136)	2016–17 (*n* = 15,995)	2017–18 (*n* = 14,986)	2018–19 (*n* = 13,570)	2019–20 (*n* = 11,030)	2020–21 (*n* = 6,862)
1 Year	59.8%	36.0%	39.1%	40.3%	41.8%	44.2%	52.4%
2 Years	21.5%	36.9%	29.0%	30.7%	31.6%	34.0%	28.0%
3 Years	12.5%	18.0%	21.9%	15.9%	16.6%	13.9%	11.4%
4Years	4.3%	6.3%	6.8%	9.7%	6.2%	4.9%	5.6%
5 Years	1.2%	1.8%	2.2%	2.4%	2.6%	1.6%	1.3%
6 Years	0.4%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	1.0%	0.8%
7 Years	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

> *Evaluation Question 7: What are the characteristics of youth who stay engaged in programming? What are the differences between students who stay engaged in 21st CCLC programming across multiple years and those who do not on student characteristics?*

The evaluation team investigated differences in the characteristics of students who attended for multiple consecutive years versus those who did not. We first examined the differences between demographic characteristics and average, within-year program attendance. As shown in Exhibit 41, very small differences existed on the demographic characteristics, indicating that there are no apparent observable differences between the students who attend for multiple consecutive years versus those who do not. A large difference exists, however, on the average number of days a student attends within a program year between those who attend for multiple consecutive years and those who do not. Those who attend for multiple consecutive years attend, on average, approximately 14 more days within a given year than their counterparts attend.

Exhibit 41. Students who attend 21st CCLC programming for multiple consecutive years tend to have higher average attendance levels each year than students who participate for only a year have, but few other differences.

	Students engaged for only 1 year (*n* = 33,431)	Students engaged for multiple consecutive years (*n* = 19,991)
Gender (% male)	50.8%	50.1%
Race/ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaska Native	3.1%	3.5%
Asian	3.6%	3.1%
Black/African American	6.3%	5.7%
Hispanic/Latino	47.2%	52.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1.1%	0.7%
Multiracial	6.2%	5.9%
White	32.4%	28.7%
Free or reduced-price lunch	80.0%	82.6%
English language learner	25.2%	26.6%
Special needs	15.0%	15.7%
Homeless	6.1%	5.6%
Average number of days attended	31.7	46.0

Note. Students whose demographic characteristics were unknown are not included.

> Evaluation Question 8: What are the characteristics of programs that have high levels of cross-year retention in programming?

After taking student characteristics into consideration, the evaluation team explored whether any center-level characteristics might have contributed to high levels of cross-year retention for centers operating in the 2014–15 to 2020–21 program years. To determine high levels of cross-year retention, the evaluation team determined the percentage of students for each center that participated for 2 or more consecutive years. We then ran descriptive analyses to determine the top and bottom 50th percentiles. The centers that were in the top 50th percentile were considered high retention, while those in the lower percentile were considered low retention. Because some centers had only 1 year of retention possible (new centers that were in their first year of funding in 2020–21), they were not considered in these analyses. As shown in Exhibit 42, the largest differences appear to be related to program attendance and number of students served.

Exhibit 42. Larger centers tend to have low cross-year retention.

	Centers with low cross-year retention (*n* = 54)	Centers with high cross-year retention (*n* = 54)
Gender (% male)	48.6%	47.0%
Race/ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0%	3.2%
Asian	2.2%	3.0%
Black/African American	1.6%	3.8%
Hispanic/Latino	63.9%	62.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.3%
Multiracial	4.3%	4.2%
White	26.9%	22.9%
Free or reduced-price lunch	76.1%	82.3%
English language learner	34.7%	32.1%
Special needs	15.4%	14.5%
Homeless	4.0%	7.8%
Average number of students served	82.0	49.9
Average number of days attended	31.0	58.7
Percent regular attendees	31.0%	58.1%

Note. Students whose demographic characteristics were unknown are not included.

Summary

By looking at program attendance across a range of youth and center characteristics, we could get a better picture of the many factors that may be informative for supporting youth engagement and retention. Youth with the highest attendance levels tend to participate in particular activities, namely STEM, arts and music, and youth leadership. In addition, looking more closely at student participation when considering certain student characteristics, some interesting differences can be seen between younger and older youth and youth with differing academic needs, which may be important for informing targeted recruitment and retention strategies.

Some notable differences in participation levels may warrant additional exploration in the future. For example, are programs that afford students more choices in what activities to attend more likely to be characterized by a higher percentage of students spending most of their time in, for example, STEM and the arts? How do youth in these types of programs describe their experiences relative to students attending more diverse types of programming? These questions may be useful to explore when undertaking future evaluation activities.

Chapter 3. Youth Experiences in Programming

With health and safety concerns continuing through the 2020–21 school year, many 21st CCLC programs adapted by offering virtual programming and resources to the youth they served, sometimes in combination with in-person operations. In the spring of 2021, the evaluation team administered a brief survey to students to gain insights into their experiences, with the goal of answering the following questions:

- What were the experiences of students attending 21st CCLC programming during the 2020–21 program year, during the COVID-19 global pandemic?
- Did student experiences in programming differ for students who attended in mostly online settings, hybrid settings, and mostly in-person settings?
- Did student experiences in programming differ between students in elementary, middle, and high school settings?

Below we provide a brief summary of findings we presented in the fall of 2021, based on the data obtained from the student survey. For a more thorough review of the data, please see the full report located in Appendix B.

Findings

SCHOOL AND PROGRAM ATTENDANCE

- Hybrid school attendance was more common than attending school mostly in person or mostly online, with 50% of students attending school both online and in person, about equally.
- About half (51%) of students attended 21st CCLC online.
- Students who attended school mostly online or mostly in person tended to participate in 21st CCLC in the same environment (78% of students who attended school online participated in 21st CCLC online; 65% of students who attended school in person participated in 21st CCLC in person).
- Hybrid school attendance corresponded more often with online 21st CCLC participation (49%) than with hybrid (27%) or in person (24%) participation.
- Many students (82%) participated in 21st CCLC at least once a week.
- Elementary school students (70%) were more likely to participate in 21st CCLC several times a week than were middle school students (59%).
- Solely online 21st CCLC participation was more common for elementary school students (45%) than for middle school students (27%).

STUDENT CONCERNS AND ANXIETY

- The two largest concerns for students regarding current events in the world were that a family member will get COVID-19 (52%) or that they will not learn as much as normal in school because of the COVID-19 pandemic (45%).
- Many students (almost 70%) felt at least a little anxiety due to the pandemic, with 49% feeling a little anxious, 10% very anxious, and 9% extremely anxious.
- Students with hybrid 21st CCLC participation felt more extreme pandemic-related anxiety than students participating mostly in person or mostly online felt.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT

- Many students (75%) felt safe most days or every day, but fewer students felt hopeful (57%) or excited (52%) with the same frequency.
- Some students experienced negative emotions most days or every day:
  - 50% of students felt bored;
  - 32% of students felt stressed or frustrated; and
  - 26% of students felt lonely.
- An independent sample *t*-test showed a statistically significant difference in affect for elementary and middle school students, with elementary school students experiencing both higher positive affect and lower negative affect.

STUDENT OPINIONS OF STAFF

- Students who participated in 21st CCLC in an online or hybrid setting had slightly more positive views of staff than those who participated in person had.
- Overall, elementary students reported more positive views of staff than middle school students reported.

ONLINE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

- On most days or every day, most students (85%) had access to a computer or device when they needed it.
- 33% of students felt their internet connection was not fast enough to participate some days or at all.
- Slightly more than half of students (54%) would prefer not to have the option of continuing 21st CCLC programming virtually.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

- Students were asked to describe a positive program experience. Common themes included:
  - Fun activities and projects
  - Spending time with friends
  - Making new friends
  - Receiving homework help
  - Learning something new
  - Kind and caring staff and students
- Students described what they gained or learned from this positive experience. Common themes included:
  - Improved academic skills
  - Improved social skills

Findings

  - Creativity
  - Learned new games or art skills
  - Perseverance
  - Self-confidence and to express themselves
  - Collaboration and teamwork skills
- Students described how they applied what they gained or learned to the challenges of this year. Common themes included:
  - Continued to try when things got hard
  - Focused on the positive
  - Used an outlet to manage/cope with stress
  - Became more social and made new friends
  - Taught new skills/activities to family members
- Students were asked what they felt they missed this year. Common themes included:
  - Seeing friends or teachers in person
  - Socializing and connecting with people
  - Making new friends
  - Having a normal school experience
  - Field trips
  - Sports
  - Recess
- Students were asked how they felt about going back to school in person last spring and how they felt about going to school in person this fall. Common feelings included:
  - Happy
  - Nervous
  - Excited
  - Scared or stressed

Based on these findings, it might be beneficial for OSPI to consider how continued disruptions in programming caused by the pandemic may affect student engagement in programming as well as the social and emotional well-being and work with program staff to stay abreast of challenges they face with these disruptions. OSPI would be advised to consider parent insights to gain information about the emotions and experiences of students and their families in ever-evolving 21st CCLC programming amidst the ongoing pandemic.

Chapter 4. State and Federal Targets

The last evaluation question that AIR explored related to aggregate statewide performance on a series of KPIs. In the past several years, AIR and OSPI worked together to revise the state's performance targets in a series of domains. These KPIs were developed in accord with current

federal Government Performance and Results Act indicators; the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 legislation; Washington's updated accountability framework in response to ESSA; and feedback from the Evaluation Advisory Group, which comprised Washington 21st CCLC project directors, local evaluators, and other community stakeholders. Exhibit 43 outlines the three domains of the KPIs (Program Implementation, Program Quality, Student Program Attendance, and Student Outcomes), associated indicators within each domain, and the 2019–20 and 2020–21 results for each indicator. It is important to note that some data were not available to analyze the KPIs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, either because the data were not collected or could not be analyzed as defined in the indicators below. For example, program improvement efforts were disrupted in both years resulting in either incomplete data or missing data altogether. Additionally, state assessments were not administered during spring 2020 or spring 2021, resulting in missing data for some of the student outcome indicators.

Finding	Aligned recommendation
• Statewide indicators point to strong performance across centers related to program implementation.	• KPIs should be developed to align with available data to enable the analysis of progress across all indicators.

Exhibit 43. 2019–20 and 2020–21 Washington 21st CCLC Key Performance Indicator Results

Indicator name	Indicator	Target	2019–20 Results	2020–21 Results
Program implementation (PI)			***N* = 112 centers**	***N* = 108 centers**
PI 1	The percentage of centers providing opportunities for academic support.[a]	100%	99%	99%
PI 2	The percentage of centers offering students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities (enrichment).[b]	100%	99%	100%
PI 3	The percentage of centers offering families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development.	100%	99%	52%
PI 4	The percentage of centers offering services at least 12 hours per week, on average, during the school year.	100%	96%	73%
PI 5	The percentage of centers offering a summer program for 20 hours per week and lasting at least four consecutive weeks	100%	63%	59%

Indicator name	Indicator	Target	2019–20 Results	2020–21 Results
Program quality (PQ)			***N* = 112 centers**	***N* = 108 centers**
PQ 1	The percentage of centers submitting at least one completed consensus program self-assessment using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) or the School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA)	100%	Not available	Not available
PQ 2	The percentage of centers submitting at least two completed external assessments using the YPQA or the SAPQA	100%	Not available	Not available
PQ 3	The percentage of centers submitting one Program Quality Assessment Form B Interview	100%	Not available	Not available
PQ 4	The percentage of centers participating in either the Planning with Data workshop (live training for new cohorts) or the Advanced Planning with Data training (webinar training for continuing cohorts)	100%	Not available	Not available
PQ 5	The percentage of centers submitting at least one program improvement plan annually	100%	Not available	Not available
Student program attendance (PA)			***N* = 11,223 students**	***N* = 7,118 students**
PA 1	The percentage of youth enrolled in 21st CCLC programming more than 30 days (or 80 hours) during the school year and the summer of interest	80%	52%	41%
PA 2	The percentage of youth enrolled in 21st CCLC programming more than 60 days (or 120 hours) during the school year and the summer of interest	60%	24%	26%
PA 3	The percentage of youth enrolled in 21st CCLC programming in the prior school year/summer for 60 days (or 120 hours) or more that also participated in 60 days (or 120 hours) or more of programming in the school year and the summer of interest	TBD	7%	8%
PA 4	Percentage of youth participating in 21st CCLC programming in both the fall and spring semesters of the school year of interest.	TBD	90%	88%
Student outcomes (SO) *Sample size varies by outcome*				
SO 1	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who were in need of improvement and increased in their student growth percentile (SGP) for reading. Grades 4–8	Not applicable	Not available	Not available

Indicator name	Indicator	Target	2019–20 Results	2020–21 Results
SO 2	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who were in need of improvement and increased in their SGP for mathematics. Grades 4–8	Not applicable	Not available	Not available
SO 3	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who are identified as English language learners (ELLs) and show progress toward English language proficiency. Grades K–8	Not applicable	Not available	Not available
SO 4	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who had unexcused school-day absences in the prior school year and demonstrated fewer absences. Grades 6–12	Not applicable	Not available	21% (*N* = 196)
SO 5	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who are earning less than 100% of credits attempted in the prior school year and demonstrated a higher percentage of credits earned. Grades 9–12	Not applicable	Not available	40% (*N* = 24)
SO 6	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who earned a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or less in the prior year and demonstrated an increase in cumulative GPA in the current year. Grades 9–12	Not applicable	Not available	12% (*N* = 54)
SO 7	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who had school-day disciplinary incidents in the prior school year and demonstrated fewer incidents as compared with the previous school year. Grades 1–12	Not applicable	Not available	Not available
SO 8	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program promoted to the next grade. Grades K–3	Not applicable	Not available	99% (*N* = 856)

[a] Tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet the challenging state academic standards.

[b] Youth development activities, service learning, nutrition and health education, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, arts, music, physical fitness and wellness programs, technology education programs, financial literacy programs, environmental literacy programs, mathematics, science, career and technical programs, internship or apprenticeship programs, and other ties to an in-demand industry sector or occupation for high school students that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.

Summary

The KPIs represent our best thinking on what would be useful for the state, but we must either wait for these data to become available from the state or develop ways to collect this information, while also considering the data collection burden on subgrantees. Also worth considering is how these indicators may need to change, based on new information about available data sources and forthcoming changes in state and federal data reporting requirements.

Report Conclusion

The findings presented in this report are meant to offer important insights and recommendations that can support learning and improvement of the 21st CCLC program in Washington. Specifically, this report aimed to answer questions related to:

- The primary characteristics of grants, centers, and the student population served by the program.
- How the Covid-19 pandemic affected program operations.
- What program attendance looked like and how that differed based on student characteristics and experiences in program, including during the pandemic.
- The extent to which youth remained in 21st CCLC programming across multiple years and the characteristics of youth who stay engaged in programming.
- The characteristics of programs that had high levels of cross-year retention in programming.
- If 21st CCLC programs in Washington State met state and federal performance targets for program implementation and student outcomes.

It is important to note that the information captured in this report is descriptive. A review of findings based on descriptive analyses requires caution when interpreting and using these results because they do not support causal inferences about the impact of the program on youth outcomes; however, they provide a useful starting point for understanding the key characteristics of the Washington 21st CCLC program. It also is important to reiterate that the pandemic interrupted normal program operations staring in spring of the 2019–20 program year. Differences between program year may be due to interruptions in data collection or transitions in normal program operations.

Demographic and baseline outcome data show that the 21st CCLC program in Washington is serving youth in lower performing schools who need to improve academically and who experience poverty. A large majority of youth participants in Washington was eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in each year under investigation, and the majority of youth who regularly attend programming were similarly eligible. Youth attending programming saw a slight decrease in GPA in the 2020–21 school year, and an increase in school-day absences. More than half of youth met the threshold for missing 5% or more of the school year in that same year. Based on this information, the 21st CCLC program in Washington is serving the youth that the program is intended to serve and is thereby fulfilling one of its primary goals.

In recent years, 21st CCLC programming in Washington has seen the average number of all attendees as well as regular attenders decrease, with approximately half of participants attending regularly (attending 30 days or more) in 2019–20 and only 41% of participants attending regularly in 2020–21, which is likely due to challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We found a range of youth and center-level characteristics to be associated with program attendance. For example,

- Youth who attend more frequently spend more time in activities such as STEM, arts and music, and youth leadership.
- Students with lower GPAs tended to attend programming less frequently, while students who earned a lower percentage of credits out of possible credits tended to attend the most frequently.
- Younger students who participated in intensive reading and mathematics support also had high attendance levels.
- Larger centers had lower average attendance levels, and centers that had a large proportion of teachers involved had higher attendance levels among younger youth but lower attendance levels among older youth.
- In examining program target and goal completion, we found that statewide indicators point to strong performance across centers related to program implementation.

It is important to note, however, that these findings are descriptive and do not indicate a causal relationship between time spent in a certain activity and student outcomes. Given these findings, the evaluation team has the following high-level recommendations to consider during future evaluation planning:

- Consider how continued disruptions in programming caused by the pandemic may affect student engagement in programming as well as their social and emotional well-being. Work with program staff to stay abreast of challenges they face with these disruptions.
- Explore ways to recruit harder to engage youth populations, particularly those students struggling academically and high school students. Consider ways to promote youth choice in programming that enable youth to self-direct into activities that represent their interests as well as how different staffing roles promote recruitment and retainment of youth.
- Talk with programs about what went well in supporting students and their families and what could be improved moving forward. Consider parent insights to gain information about the emotions and experiences of students and their families in ever-evolving 21st CCLC programming amidst the ongoing pandemic. Connect programs with one another to learn from each other's experiences.

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Appendix A. Brief on the Spring 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic Response

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Washington 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Brief on the Spring 2020 COVID-19 Response

December 2020

Matt Vinson | Arielle Lentz | Samantha Sniegowski

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DECEMBER 2020

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1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202-3239
202.403.5000

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Contents

Introduction

On March 13, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee closed all Washington schools to limit the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Ultimately, the closure of schools extended through the remainder of the 2019–20 school year.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) are out-of-school time programs, many of which are based on school campuses. When the school buildings closed, the programs could not continue face-to-face operations. However, many Washington 21st CCLC subgrantees continued to serve youth and families by offering virtual programming and providing resources to families.

In this report, we describe how 21st CCLC subgrantees responded to the COVID-19–related school closures. The evaluation team administered a brief online survey to subgrantees to gather data that would answer the following evaluation questions:

1. **Which programs still operated during spring 2020 and how?**
2. **What were the programs' plans for summer 2020?**
3. **How were programs thinking about preparation for the 2020–21 school year?**
4. **What were the characteristics of online learning solutions implemented by programs during spring 2020?**

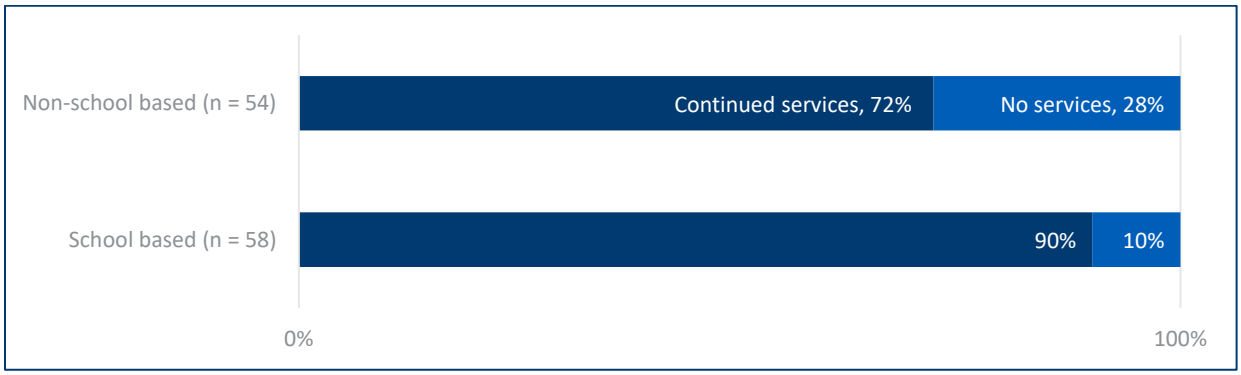
Between May and August 2020, the evaluation team administered the survey (see Appendix A) to 21st CCLC coordinators concerning their programming under conditions of COVID-19 school closures. Program directors accessed the survey as part of their program attendance data submission process, where they log in to an online data portal. The vast majority (more than 90%) of the surveys were completed during June and July. A total of 112 surveys were collected, for a 100% completion rate, representing each site funded during the 2019–20 program year.

The remainder of this brief provides data and analysis of coordinator responses to the questions on the survey. Questions answered by all coordinators are presented first, followed by a data spotlight capturing responses of those coordinators who indicated they provided online learning in spring 2020. For some questions, we review survey responses alongside center characteristics.

Program Operations During Spring 2020

The first question the evaluation team asked respondents was whether their center was continuing to provide afterschool services and supports during the 2019–20 COVID-19 outbreak. Overall, 91 respondents (81%) indicated that their centers were continuing to provide services and supports during the 2019–20 school year. When comparing school-based grants with non-school-based grants, a higher proportion of centers overseen by school-based grants (about 90%) indicated they were continuing to provide services versus 72% of centers overseen by non-school-based grants (Figure 1).

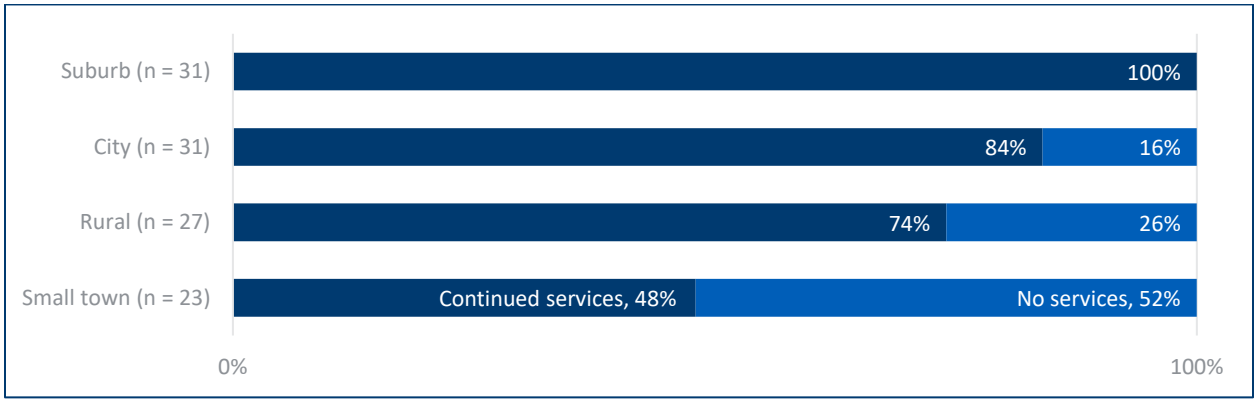
Figure 1. Program services in spring 2020, school based versus non-school based



N = 112

Also, when analyzing this question by center locale (city, suburb, town, or rural), less than half of centers located in towns (48%) indicated they continued to provide services, compared with 74% of rural centers and nearly all city-based and suburban centers (94% and 100% respectively). Note that this finding was not based on low numbers of town-based centers or on an overlap with school-based grants (Figure 2).

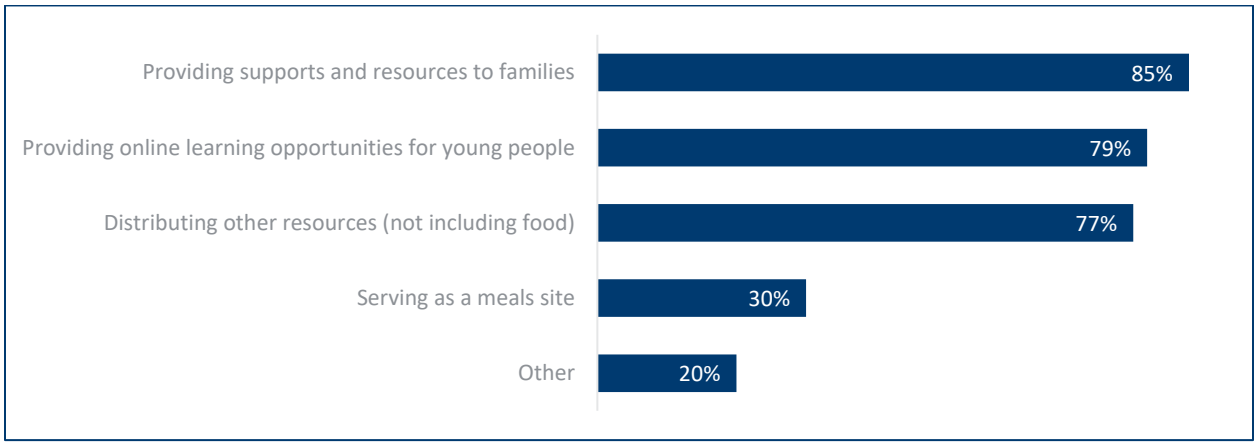
Figure 2. Program services in spring 2020, by locale



N = 112

The evaluation team also asked center staff about the ways in which the program was helping students and families during COVID-19. Respondents were given a series of options. The three items selected most were "providing supports and resources to families," "providing online learning opportunities for young people," and "distributing other resources (not including food)." Only 30% of respondents indicated that they planned to serve as a meals site, and none of the respondents selected "providing care for children of essential workers" (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentage of centers providing services under school closure, by service type



N = 91

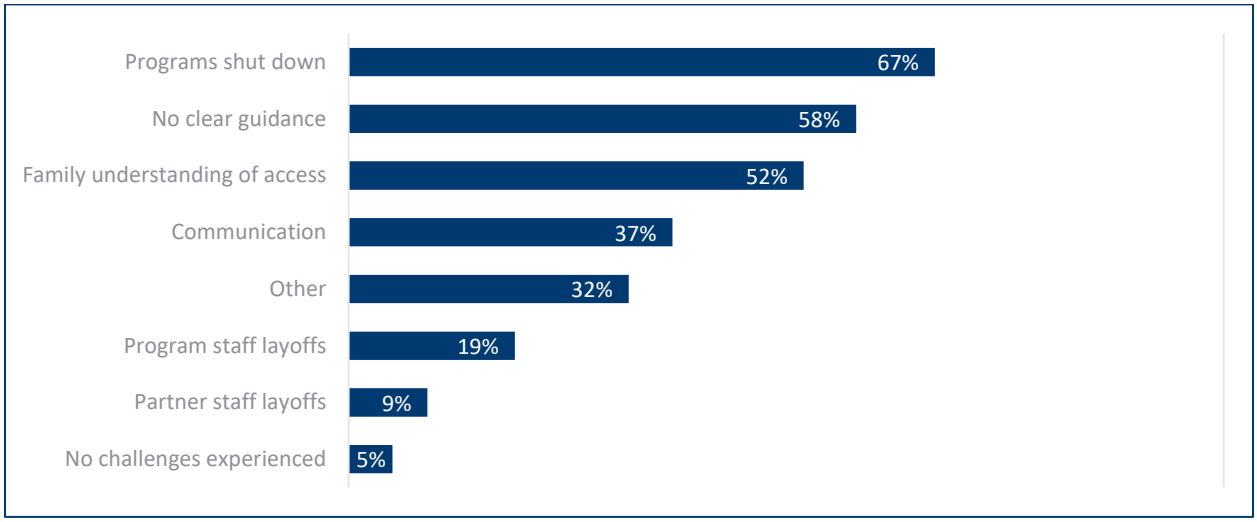
It bears highlighting that rural and town-based centers were less likely to offer online programming than city-based or suburban centers. Only 60% of rural centers and 36% of town-based centers said they were offering online programming, compared with 90% of city-based centers and 97% of suburban centers.

The survey asked respondents about the sorts of challenges they are experiencing while continuing these supports. About two thirds of respondents indicated that their programs had been shut down due to social distancing or shelter-in-place orders. Interestingly, the majority of respondents who selected this answer were associated with centers overseen by school-based grants; 44 out of 52 respondents associated with school-based grants identified school shut downs as a challenge, compared with 17 out of 39 respondents associated with grants that were not school based (85% compared with 44%, respectively). City-based centers were most likely to report program shutdowns as a challenge (85%), and rural centers were least likely to report shutdowns as a challenge (50%; a little more than 60% of suburban and town-based centers reported shutdowns as a challenge).

Respondents associated with non-school-based grants, although less likely to report shutdowns as a challenge, were more likely to indicate challenges associated with school program communication and staff layoffs. More than half of all respondents also indicated that they

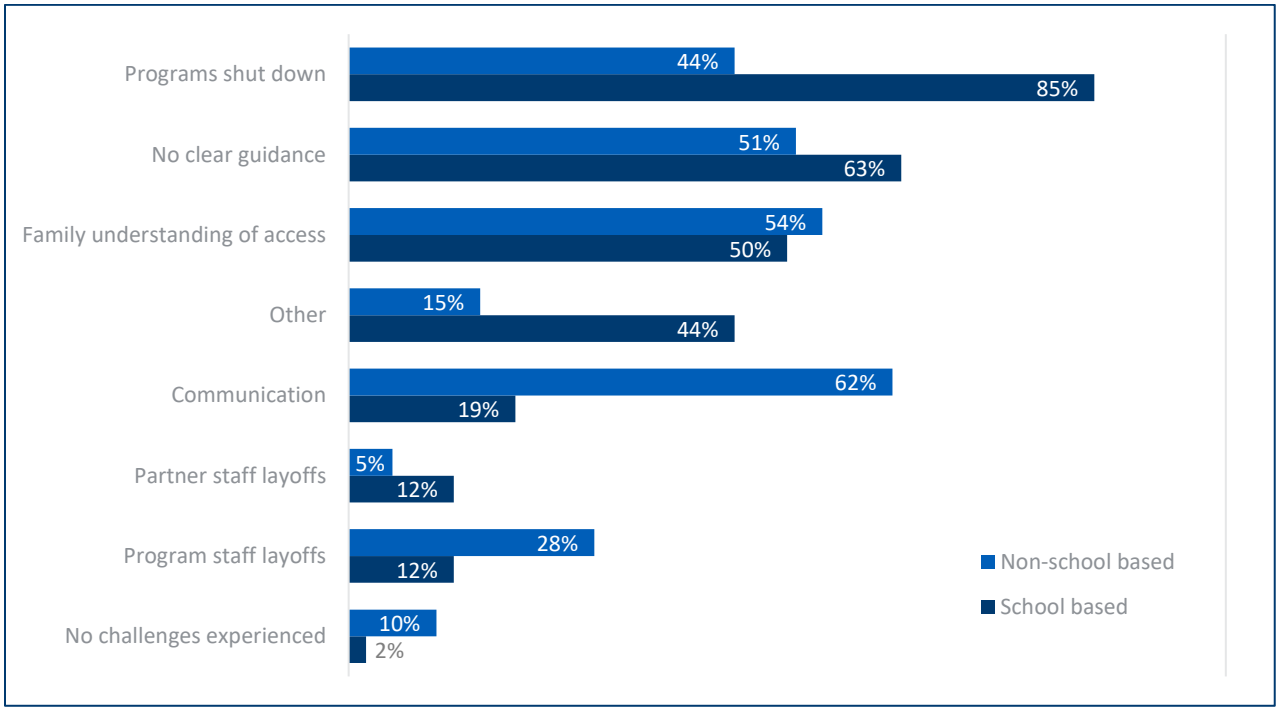
lacked clear guidance on how to offer programming during the COVID-19 outbreak and that families do not know how to access the programming they do offer. Note, however, that rural programs were least likely to report communication challenges or difficulty informing families about how to access programming, and suburban programs were most likely to report these two challenges (about 15% of rural programs reported these two challenges, compared with 55% of suburban programs saying communication is a challenge and 77% of suburban programs saying families do not know how to access programming). See Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. Challenges to supporting students and families during COVID-19 (all responses)



N = 91

Figure 5. Challenges to supporting students and families during COVID-19 (responses divided based on type of grant overseeing each respondent's center)



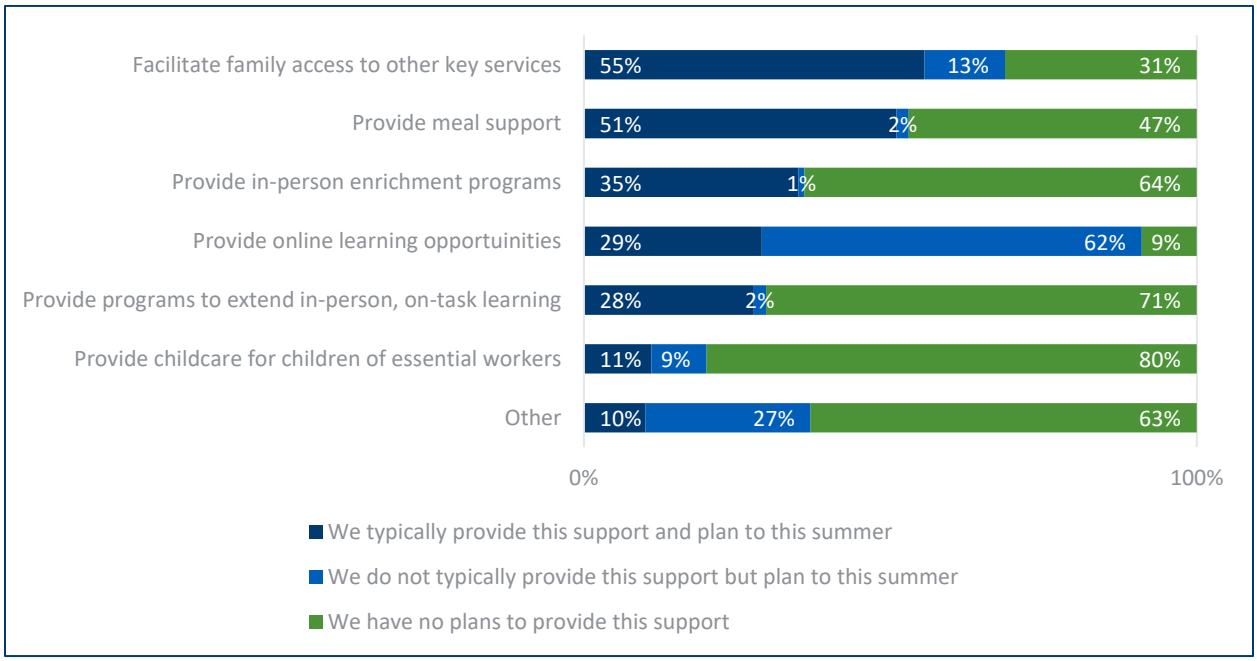
N = 91

Respondents who selected "other" as a challenge to supporting students and families during COVID-19 were asked to specify. Thirty respondents specified other challenges. More than half of these respondents cited technology-related challenges, such as device and internet access. Less frequently, respondents mentioned difficulty in engaging students and getting in contact with families.

Planning for Summer 2020 Programming

The survey asked all respondents to indicate their plans for providing student and family supports during the summer months. Interestingly, well over half of respondents indicated that, despite not currently offering online activities, they planned to begin offering online activities during the summer. Nearly a quarter of respondents also indicated that there were "other" activities not previously offered that they would begin offering (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Planned services offered to students and families, during summer 2020



N = 112

Respondents who selected "other" were asked to specify what planned services they would offer to students and families during summer 2020. Forty-five respondents wrote in information. More than half of written responses (53%) discussed sending materials to students' homes. Other responses included providing access to technology and transportation.

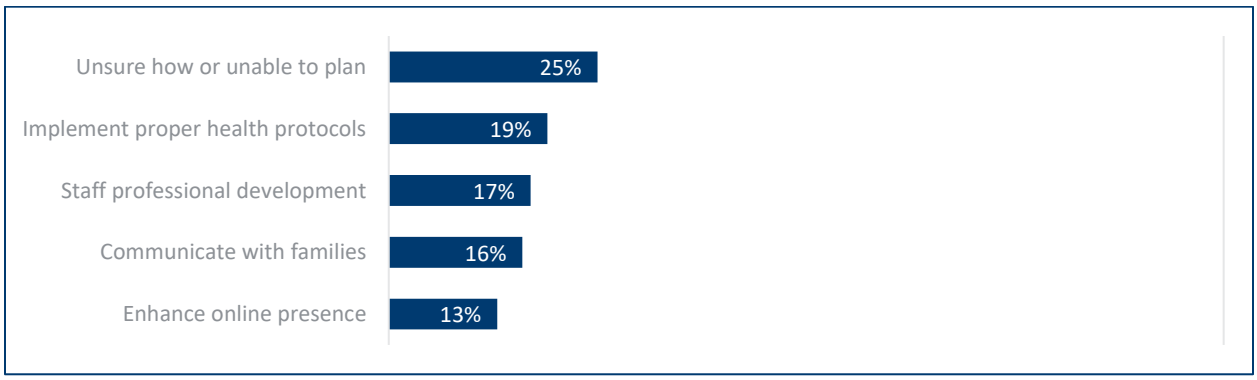
Preparing for the 2020–21 Program Year

The survey asked all respondents to provide open-ended responses to describe specific steps they planned to take to prepare for students returning to programming for the 2020–21 program year. At the time of the survey, one quarter of respondents (*n* = 28, 25%) noted they were unsure how or unable to plan the programming they will provide for the 2020–21 program year because they were still awaiting guidance from the state or district. Although many respondents did not note, specifically, what type of programming they would offer in the 2020–21 program year, other respondents reported steps they were taking to be prepared for interactions with students.

One fifth of respondents (*n* = 21, 19%) noted that, to prepare for interactions with students, they would implement proper health protocols, such as social distancing, enhanced cleaning, and teaching the students proper safety practices. Several respondents (*n* = 19, 17%) noted their staff would undergo professional development to meet the needs of students. Some respondents (*n* = 15, 13%) reported they would enhance their online presence or platforms to prepare for the upcoming program year. Several programs (*n* = 18, 16%) noted they would communicate with

families to prepare students for returning to programming. The intent of this communication would be primarily to inform families of school and program updates and to ask for family feedback on what they need or hope to see from the 21st CCLC program (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Planned steps to prepare for student return in the 2020–21 program year

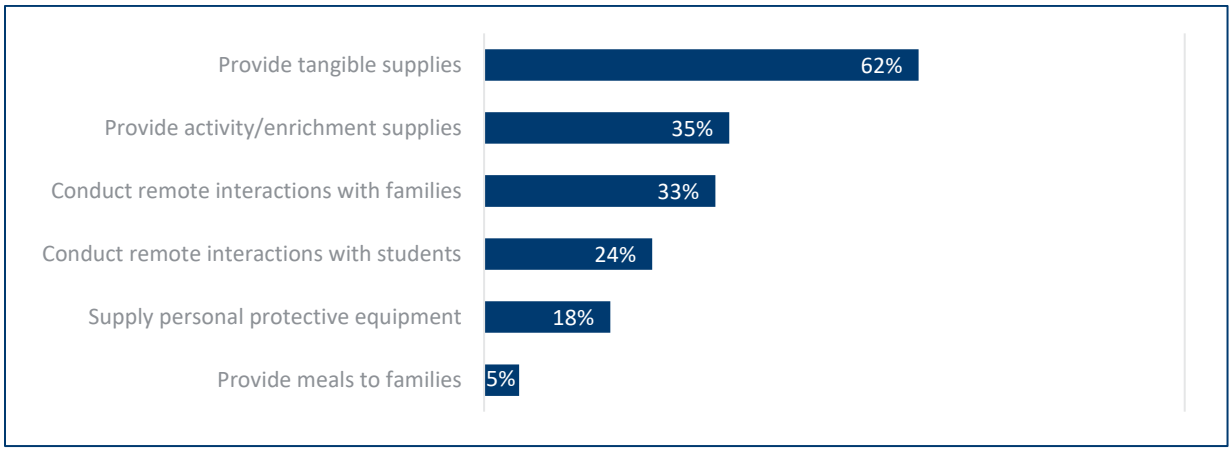


N = 112

When asked how they hoped to better meet the needs of students and their families impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, more than half of respondents (*n* = 69, 62%) reported they wanted to provide tangible supplies to their students and families in some way. Just over one third of programs (*n* = 39, 35%) reported the desire to provide activity/enrichment supplies, such as activity kits, hands-on enrichment, and journals. Several respondents (*n* = 20, 18%) also reported they hoped to supply personal protective equipment, such as face masks and gloves, to families. Few programs (*n* = 6, 5%) noted they hoped to provide meals to families. Of these programs, some respondents (*n* = 16, 14%) noted these materials would be delivered to the student's home, and other respondents noted materials would be picked up at distribution sites (*n* = 6, 5%).

Many respondents reported they hoped to utilize remote interactions (phone calls, e-mail, mailing letters and packages) to help meet the needs of students and their families. One third of respondents (*n* = 37, 33%) reported the intention of these interactions is to generally provide support and resources to families and to let families know the program is "there for them." One quarter of respondents (*n* = 27, 24%) shared the intent of these interactions is to positively engage students. Similarly, one fifth of respondents (*n* = 23, 21%) stated the intent of these interactions is to connect students and families with the program. Few programs (*n* =11, 10%) reported academic support as a motive for remote interactions.

Figure 8. How to better meet the needs of students and families

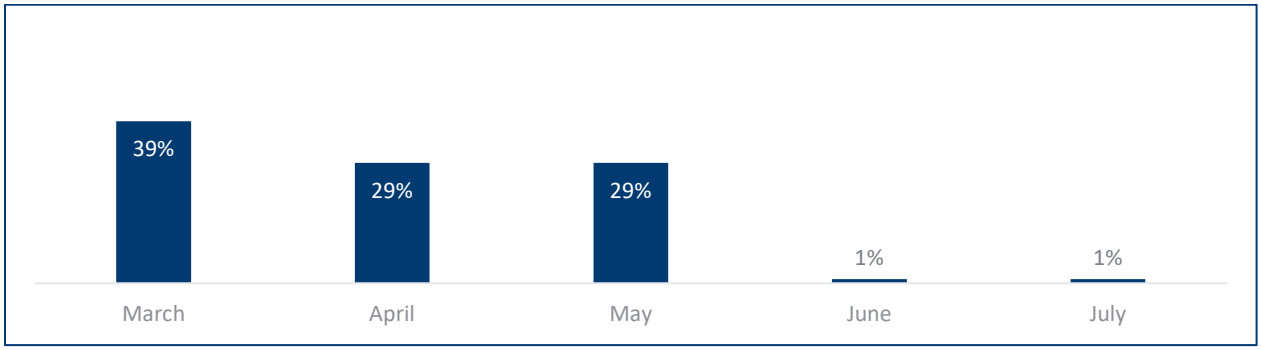


N = 112

Spotlight: Online Learning During Spring 2020

Coordinators who indicated they offered online learning in spring 2020 were asked to provide more information about the frequency, duration, format, and engagement of these activities. Nearly two thirds of all respondents (*n* = 72, 64%) responded to the following questions. Of those programs offering online activities, most programs began providing online content in March, April, or May 2020. A plurality began in March (39%), with a similar percentage of centers beginning in April and May (29% in each month) (see Figure 9).

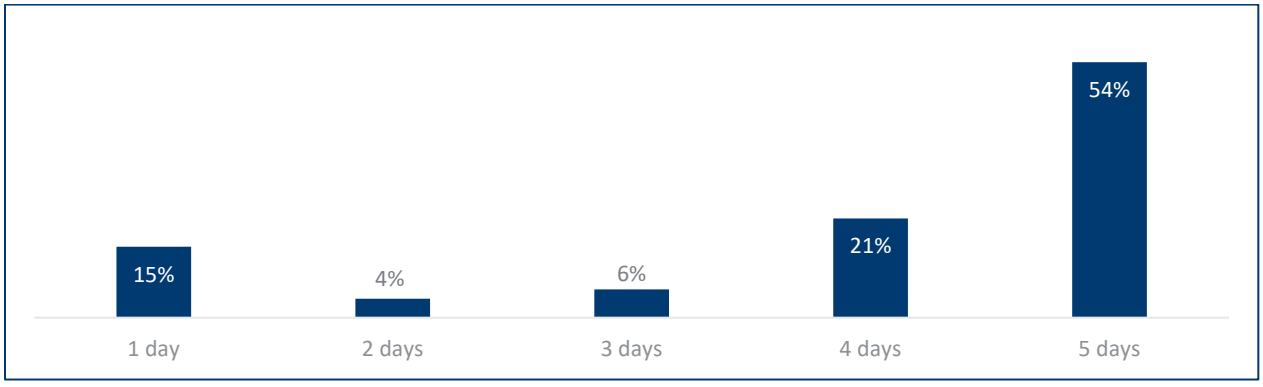
Figure 9. Month when centers began offering online learning opportunities



N = 72

At centers where online activities are offered, those activities are typically offered four or five times a week (about 75% of responses). A small group of respondents indicated that their programs only offer online activities about once a week, however (see Figure 10).

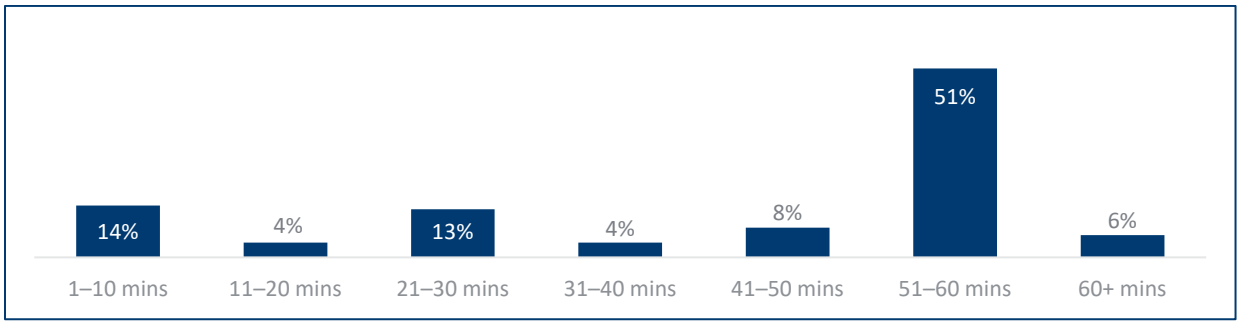
Figure 10. Frequency of online learning opportunities, days per week



N = 72

The majority of respondents who indicated that their centers offered online activities reported that such activities, when offered, last about an hour. Very few respondents indicated that online activities last longer than an hour (see Figure 11).

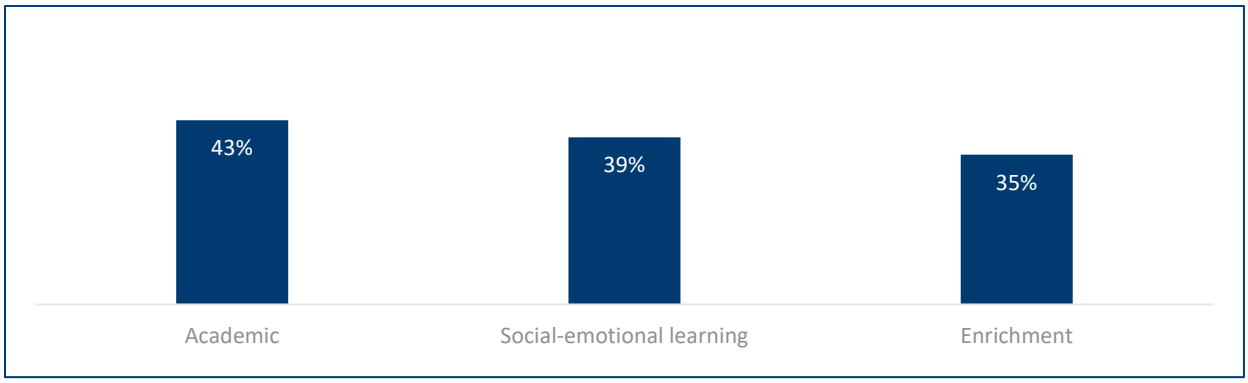
Figure 11. Typical online activity duration



N = 72

When asked to describe the types of online learning opportunities they are offering, many respondents (*n* = 31, 43%) reported providing academic online learning opportunities, such as homework help, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and literacy. More than one third of programs (*n* = 28, 39%) reported providing online social-emotional learning. Slightly fewer respondents (*n* = 25, 35%) reported providing enrichment activities, such as arts and crafts, trivia and games, physical activity, and cooking. See Figure 12.

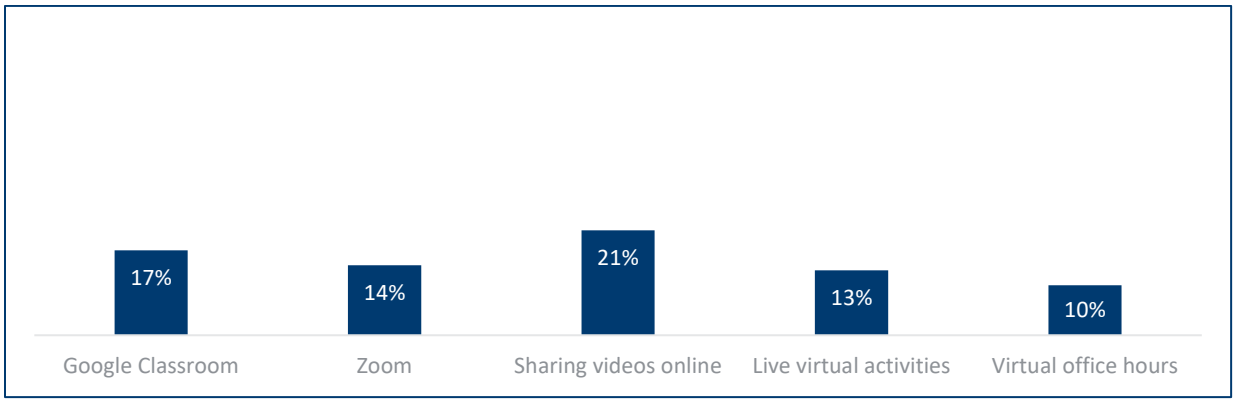
Figure 12. Types of online learning activities



N = 72

Although most respondents did not share the online platform they use to provide learning opportunities, those respondents who did most frequently referenced Google Classroom (*n* = 12, 17%), followed by Zoom (*n* = 10, 14%). Respondents often mentioned sharing videos as an online learning opportunity (*n* = 15, 21%). Respondents also noted using live virtual activities (*n* = 9, 13%), as well as virtual office hours (*n* = 7, 10%), as learning opportunities for students (see Figure 13).

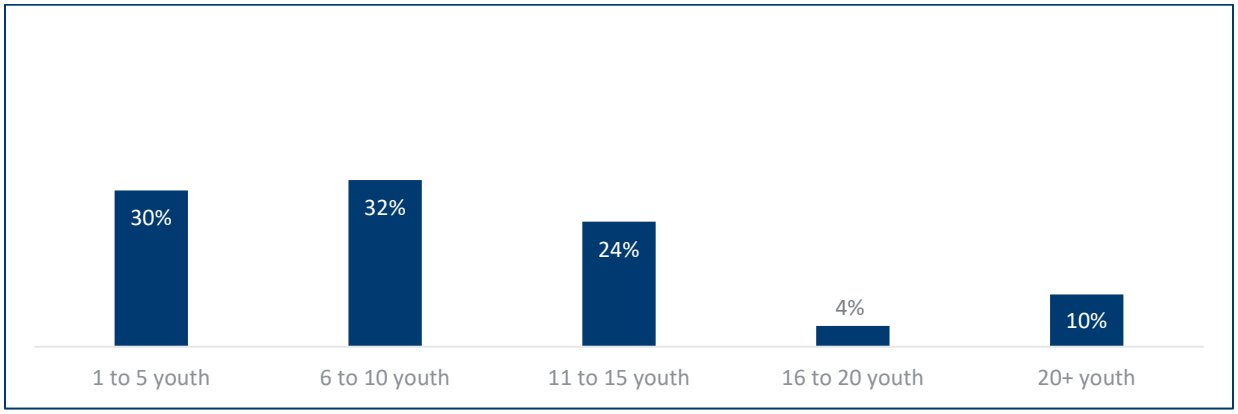
Figure 13. Online technology use



N = 72

Respondents reported that most online activities are attended by a small number of youth, with nearly two thirds of respondents indicating that 10 or fewer youth typically participate in each online activity, when offered. However, it is possible that multiple sessions could be offered (an unknown) and that smaller groups could be more conducive to youth discussion and individual student attention. That is, small groups may or may not be desirable, depending on the design and purpose of the online activities themselves (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Typical number of youth participating in online activities, when offered



N = 72

Conclusion

Washington schools closed on March 12, 2020, for the remainder of the 2019–20 school year. As a result, many 21st CCLC programs could not continue face-to-face operations. Many Washington 21st CCLC subgrantees continued to serve youth and families by offering virtual programming and providing resources to families.

Between May and August 2020, 21st CCLC coordinators completed a survey concerning their programming under conditions of COVID-19 school closures. A total of 112 surveys were collected, for a 100% completion rate, representing each site funded during the 2019–20 program year. In Table 1, we provide a summary of findings and aligned recommendations for next steps.

Table 1. Summary of findings and aligned recommendations

Findings	Aligned Recommendations
• Many coordinators (81%) indicated their centers continued to provide services and supports during the 2019–20 school year. • A higher proportion of school-based grant centers (about 90%) indicated they continued to provide services than did non-school-based grant centers (72%). • Fewer centers located in towns indicated they continued to provide services (48%), as compared to rural (74%), city (94%), and suburban centers (100%). • Programs helped students and families by providing supports and resources (85%), online learning opportunities (79%), and other non-food resources (77%). • Rural and town-based centers were less likely to offer online programming than city or suburban centers. • More than half of programs indicated that, despite not currently offering online activities, they planned to begin offering online activities during the summer.	• Communicate with non-school-based grant centers to determine if additional resources are required to support operations. • Determine if specific barriers existed in town-based programs that prevented their abilities to provide services. • Communicate with rural and town-based centers to determine if additional resources are required to enhance their abilities to provide online programming. • Continue communicating with programs to provide updated information about the impact of COVID-19 on program operations. • Determine if programs have resources necessary to implement proper health protocols. • Talk with programs about what went well in supporting students and their families and what could be improved moving forward. • Continue communicating with programs to begin to identify online learning best practices and areas for improvement.

Findings	Aligned Recommendations
• One quarter of respondents (25%) noted they were unsure how to plan programming for the 2020–21 program year. • To prepare for interactions with students, some respondents (19%) noted they will implement proper health protocols, such as social distancing, enhanced cleaning, and teaching proper safety practices. • More than half of respondents (62%) hoped to better meet the needs of students and their families by providing tangible supplies. • One third of respondents (33%) reported the intention of their remote interactions with students and families was to generally provide support and resources and to let them know the program is "there for them." • Two thirds of coordinators (64%) indicated they offered online learning in spring 2020. • Of those programs offering online activities, most of the programs began providing online content in March (39%), April (29%), or May (29%). • Activities were typically offered four or five times a week (about 75% of responses). • When offered, activities lasted about an hour (51%). • Many respondents (43%) reported providing academic online learning opportunities, such as homework help, STEM, and literacy. • Nearly two thirds of coordinators (62%) indicated that 10 or fewer youth typically participate in each online activity.	• Connect programs with one another to learn from each other's experiences.

Appendix A. COVID-19 Center-Level Survey

1. Is your program continuing to provide afterschool services and supports to students and families during the 2019–20 school year during the COVID-19 outbreak?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No

If yes, move on to Question 2. If no, skip to Question 9.

2. In which of the following ways is your program helping students and families during COVID-19? *Please select all that apply.*
   - ❑ Serving as a meals site
   - ❑ Distributing other resources (not including food)
   - ❑ Providing care for children of essential workers
   - ❑ Providing online learning opportunities for young people
   - ❑ Providing supports and resources to families
   - ❑ Other (please specify)

If online learning is selected, move on to Question 3. If not, skip to Question 8.

3. What date did you start providing online learning opportunities for young people?

4. How often are these opportunities typically offered each week?
   - ○ 1 day
   - ○ 2 days
   - ○ 3 days
   - ○ 4 days
   - ○ 5 days
   - ○ 6 days
   - ○ 7 days

5. Please describe the types of online learning opportunities are you offering.

6. When you offer these activities, how long does each activity typically last (in minutes)?

7. When you offer these activities, how many students typically participate in a single activity?

8. What challenges have you encountered in supporting students and families during the COVID-19 outbreak? *Please select all that apply.*
   - ❑ Our programs have been shut down due to social distancing or shelter in place.
   - ❑ We are laying off staff due to programs not operating.
   - ❑ Our partners/vendors are laying off staff due to program not operating.
   - ❑ We do not have clear guidance on how to provide programming during this time.
   - ❑ There are not good lines of communication between schools and the afterschool providers and community partners in my district.
   - ❑ Families do not know how to access the programming we are offering at present.
   - ❑ Other (please specify)
   - ❑ We have not experienced challenges in supporting students and families during the COVID-19 outbreak.
9. How would you describe your plans for providing student and family supports during the summer months?

	We typically provide this support and plan to this summer.	We do not typically provide this support but plan to this summer.	We have no plans to provide this support.
a. Provide meal support	❑	❑	❑
b. Provide in-person enrichment programs (e.g., camps, reading programs, art programs)	❑	❑	❑
c. Provide programs to extend in-person, on-task learning (i.e., academic hours)	❑	❑	❑
d. Provide childcare for children of essential workers	❑	❑	❑
e. Provide online learning opportunities for students	❑	❑	❑
f. Facilitate family access to other key services (i.e., mental health, health care, housing assistance)	❑	❑	❑
g. Other (please specify)	❑	❑	❑

10. Please describe any ways you hope to better meet the needs of students and their families impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

11. Please describe any specific steps you are taking to prepare for students returning to programming for the 2020–21 program year.

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Appendix B. Brief on the Spring 2021 COVID-19 Pandemic Student Survey

Washington 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Brief on the Spring 2021 COVID-19 Student Survey

Allison Belmont, Samantha Sniegowski

October 2021

American Institutes for Research® | AIR.ORG

Washington 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Brief on the Spring 2021 COVID-19 Student Survey

October 2021

Authors:
Allison Belmont, Samantha Sniegowski

AIR® Headquarters
1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202-3289
+1.202.403.5000 | **AIR.ORG**

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact schools and the services they provide to students in Washington. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) are out-of-school time programs, many of which are based on school campuses. With health and safety concerns continuing through the 2020–21 school year, many 21st CCLC programs adapted by offering virtual programming and resources to the youth they served, sometimes in combination with in-person operations.

In this report, we describe the experiences and feelings of students who participated in 21st CCLC programming virtually, in person, or a combination of both. In the spring of 2021, the evaluation team administered a brief survey to students to gain insights into the following questions:

1. What were the experiences of students attending 21st CCLC programming during the 2020–21 program year, during the COVID-19 global pandemic?
2. Did student experiences in programming differ for students who attended in mostly online settings, hybrid settings, and mostly in-person settings?
3. Did student experiences in programming differ between students in elementary, middle, and high school settings?

In the following sections, a summary of findings for the main survey topics is presented, followed by a more in-depth discussion of data and analysis of student responses to the survey items.

Summary of Findings

SCHOOL AND PROGRAM ATTENDANCE

- Hybrid school attendance was more common than attending school mostly in person or mostly online, with 50% of students attending school both online and in person about equally.
- About half (51%) of students attended 21st CCLC online.
- Students who attended school mostly online or mostly in person tended to participate in 21st CCLC in the same environment (78% of students who attended school online participated in 21st CCLC online; 65% of students who attended school in person participated in 21st CCLC in person).
- Hybrid school attendance corresponded more often with online 21st CCLC participation (49%) than with hybrid (27%) or in-person (24%) participation.
- Many students (82%) participated in 21st CCLC at least once a week.
- Elementary students (70%) were more likely to participate in 21st CCLC several times a week than middle school students (59%).
- Solely online 21st CCLC participation was more common for elementary students (45%) than middle school students (27%).

STUDENT CONCERNS AND ANXIETY

- The two largest concerns for students regarding current events in the world were that a family member would get COVID-19 (52%) or that they would not learn as much as normal in school because of COVID-19 (45%).
- Many students (almost 70%) felt at least a little anxiety due to COVID-19, with 49% feeling a little anxious, 10% very anxious, and 9% extremely anxious.
- Students with hybrid 21st CCLC participation felt more extreme COVID-19–related anxiety than students participating mostly in person or mostly online.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT

- Many students (75%) felt safe most days or every day, but fewer students felt hopeful (57%) or excited (52%) with the same frequency.
- Some students experienced negative emotions most days or every day:
  - 50% of students felt bored
  - 32% of students felt stressed or frustrated
  - 26% of students felt lonely
- An independent-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference in affect for elementary and middle school students, with elementary students experiencing both higher positive affect and lower negative affect.

STUDENT OPINIONS OF STAFF

- Students who participated in 21st CCLC in an online or hybrid setting had slightly more positive views of staff than those who participated in person.
- Overall, elementary students reported more positive views of staff than middle school students.

ONLINE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

- On most days or every day, most students (85%) had access to a computer or device when they needed it.
- 33% of students felt their internet connection wasn't fast enough to participate some days or at all.
- Slightly more than half of students (54%) would prefer not to have the option of continuing 21st CCLC programming virtually.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

- Students were asked to describe a positive program experience. Common themes included:
  - Fun activities and projects
  - Spending time with friends
  - Making new friends
  - Receiving homework help
  - Learning something new
  - Kind and caring staff and students
- Students described what they gained or learned from this positive experience. Common themes included:
  - Improved academic skills
  - Improved social skills
  - Creativity
  - Learned new games or art skills
  - Perseverance
  - Self-confidence and ability to express themselves
  - Collaboration and teamwork skills
- Students described how they applied what they gained or learned to the challenges of this year. Common themes included:
  - Continued to try when things got hard
  - Focused on the positive
  - Used an outlet to manage/cope with stress
  - Became more social and made new friends
  - Taught new skills/activities to family members

- Students were asked what they felt they missed out on this year. Common themes included:
  - Seeing friends or teachers in person
  - Socializing and connecting with people
  - Making new friends
  - Having a normal school experience
  - Field trips
  - Sports
  - Recess
- Students were asked how they felt about going back to school in person last spring and how they felt about going to school in person this fall. Common feelings included:
  - Happy
  - Nervous
  - Excited
  - Scared or stressed

Measure and Sample

As part of evaluation efforts each year, AIR typically administers a survey called the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs (YMEB) survey during mid-to-late spring. This survey administration process typically collects information in an online format at the student level, including identifiable information such as student school identification numbers, in an effort to connect survey responses with other data points to answer specific evaluation questions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic affected many aspects of programming, including program learning environment (moving from in-person programming to hybrid or online programming), and the availability of data points we have typically relied upon to answer our evaluation questions. The YMEB survey was no exception to the effects of COVID-19. Varying program learning environments and overwhelmed staff made it very difficult to collect information from students in the same format we have used in the past, which was based on the assumption of in-person programming. Additionally, in order to better understand youth experiences in programming as they related to the pandemic, we opted to revisit our evaluation questions and associated measures.

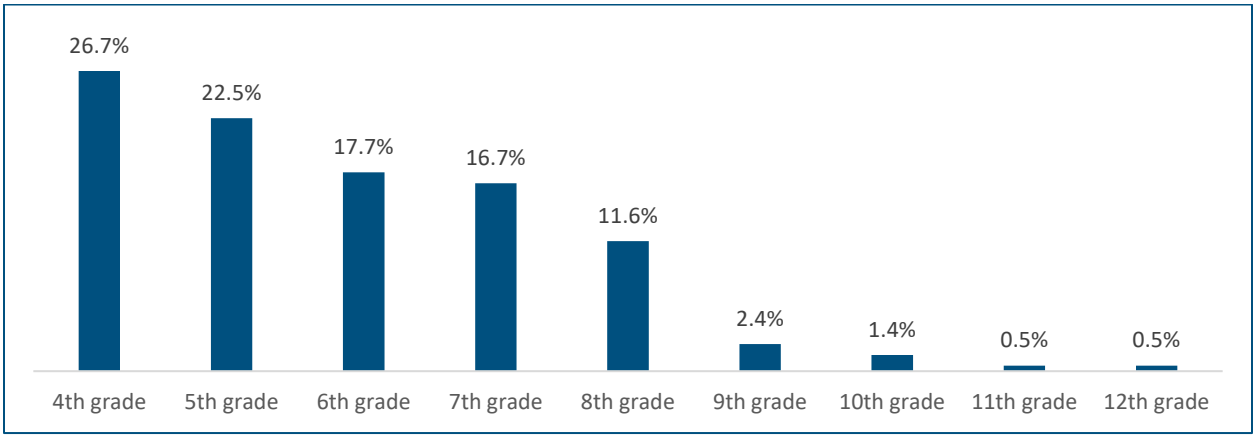
As a result, and in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI), we constructed a youth experience survey aimed at capturing how students in grades 4–12 experienced programming in the midst of this pandemic (see Appendix A for a copy of the survey). Additionally, we opted to collect student survey responses anonymously within each

center to make the survey administration process easier on program staff. Therefore, we administered an online survey via a center-specific link that was emailed to each project director. Each project director was asked to distribute this link to their program staff, who could either administer the survey in person using similar protocols to prior years for survey data collection, or send the link out to student participants and/or their parents asking them to complete the survey.

Surveys were administered between May 17, 2021, and June 30, 2021. Prior to opening the survey, project directors received parent passive-consent forms to send along to parents and guardians, giving them the opportunity to opt their child out of the survey if they wished.

Given the nature of both our survey administration approach and the variation in how programs were being delivered, we fully expected a lower response rate than we had seen in past survey administrations. A total of 884 students completed surveys, representing 71 different 21st CCLC centers in the state of Washington. Most students who completed the survey (95%) reported being in either elementary or middle school, with 49% in elementary grades (4–5), 46% in middle school grades (6–8), and only 5% in high school grades (9–12) (Exhibit 1). Due to this distribution, limited information was gained on the experiences of high school students. When examining school-level comparisons, we focused largely on elementary and middle school students.

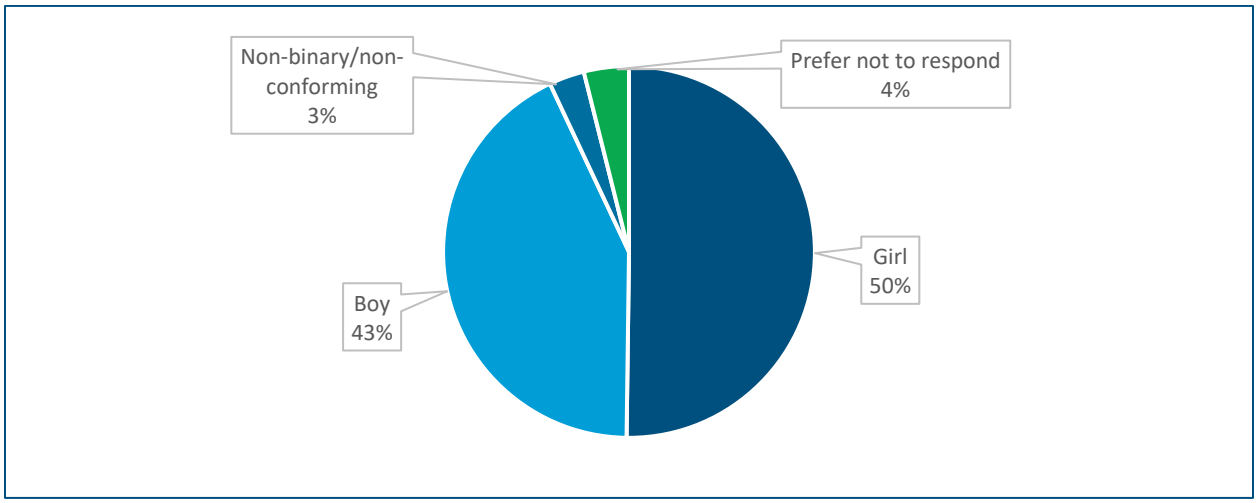
Exhibit 1. The majority of survey respondents were elementary and middle school students.



N = 622

Students were asked to report their gender identity. The majority of students identified as male (43%) or female (50%), while a small percentage identified as non-binary or non-conforming (3%). See Exhibit 2.

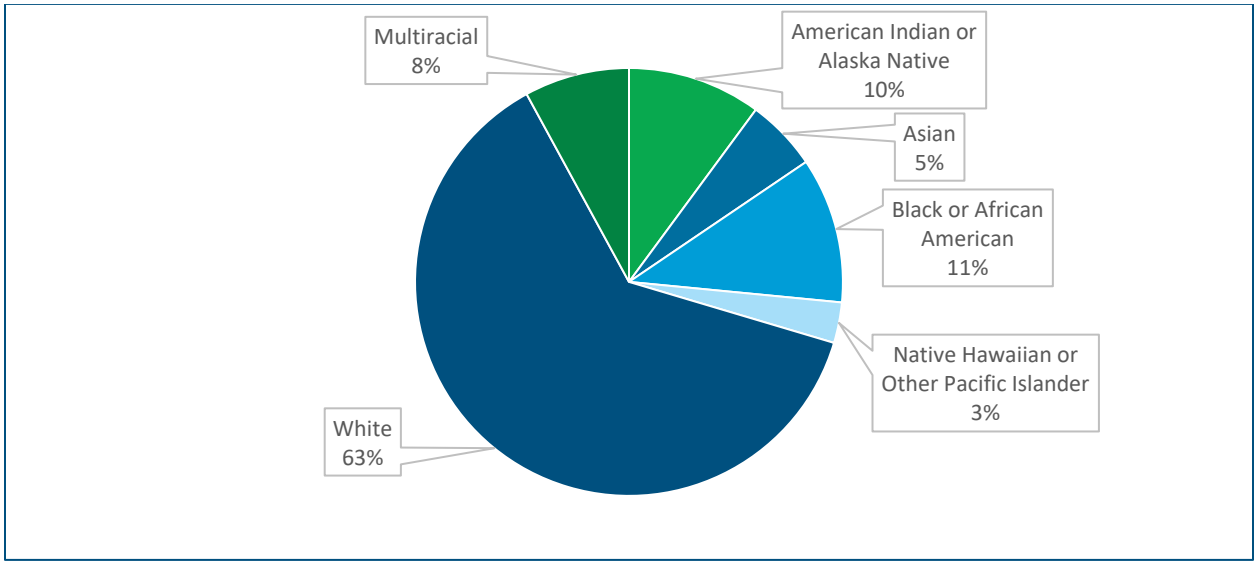
Exhibit 2. Most students identified as male or female.



N = 715

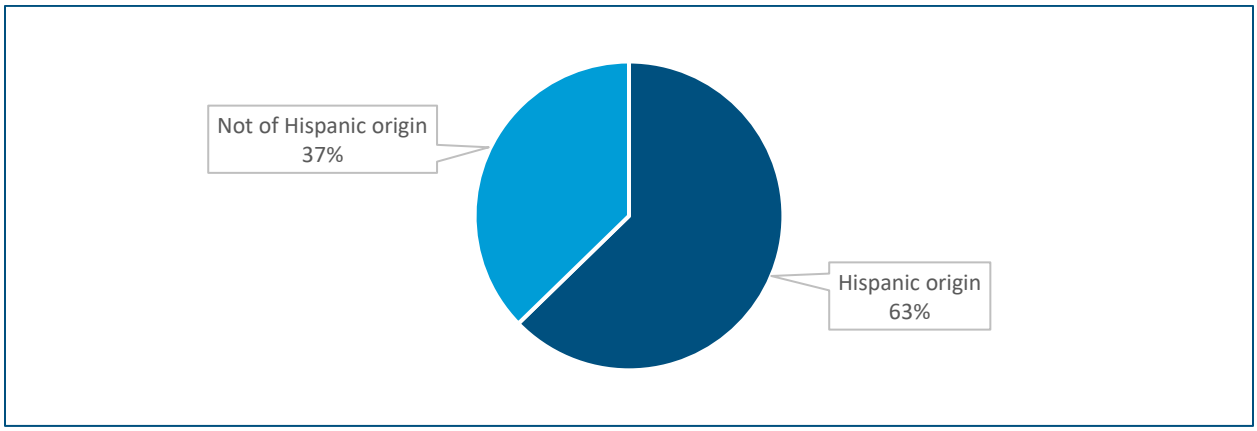
Students were also asked to share their race and ethnicity. The sample was predominantly made up of students who identified as White (63%) and as being of Hispanic origin (63%). See Exhibits 3 and 4.

Exhibit 3. Almost two thirds of students identified as White.



N = 554

Exhibit 4. Almost two thirds of students were of Hispanic origin.

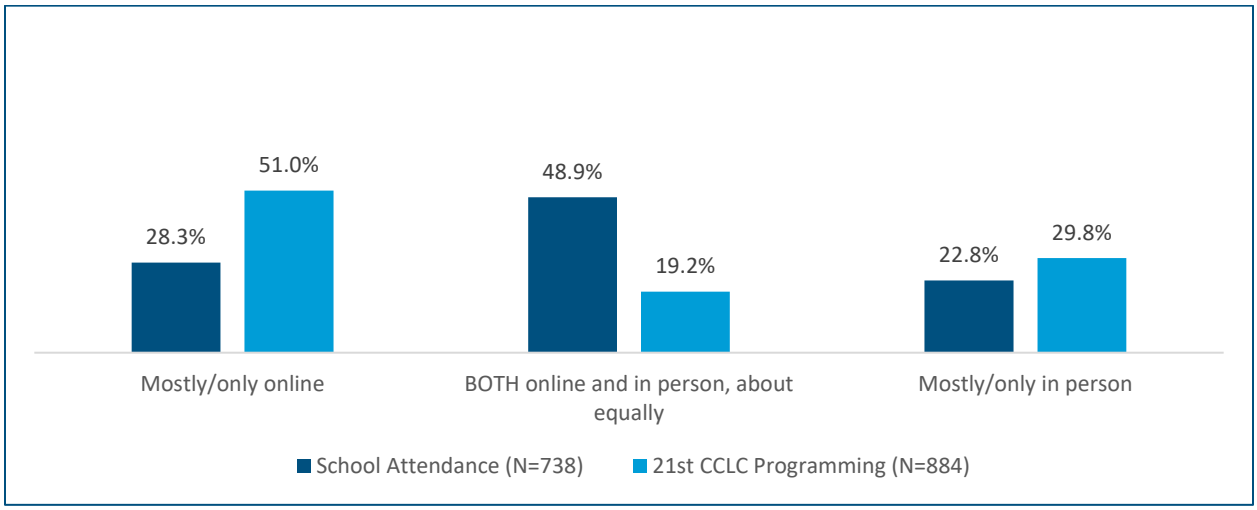


N = 684

School and Program Attendance

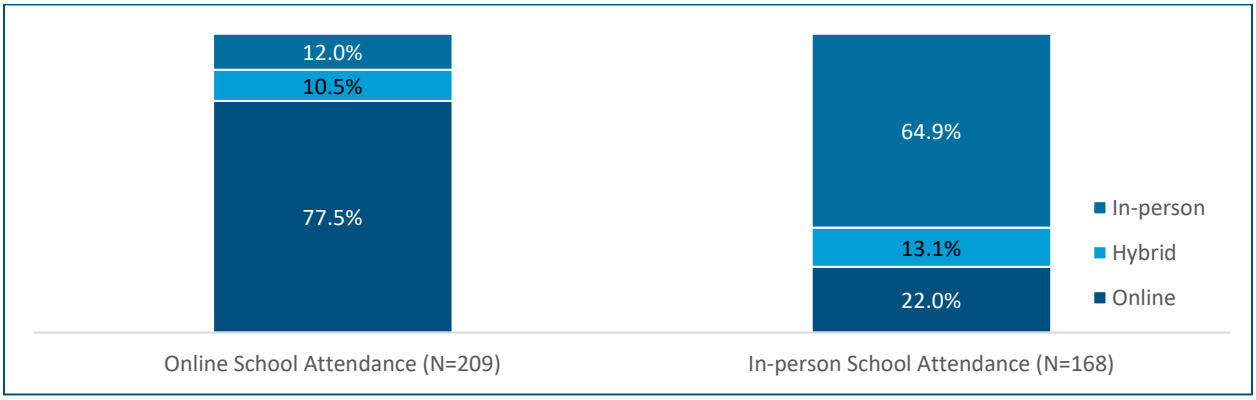
Students were asked about the environment (online, in person, or a combination of both) in which they attended school and participated in 21st CCLC during the 2020–21 school year. While 49% of students responded that they attended school both online and in person equally, only 19% participated in 21st CCLC in this same way. In comparison, 51% of students indicated they participated in 21st CCLC predominantly in an online setting, with 13% of students participating mostly online and 38% participating only online (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5. About half of students attended school in a hybrid setting, while half of students reported attending 21st CCLC mostly or only online.



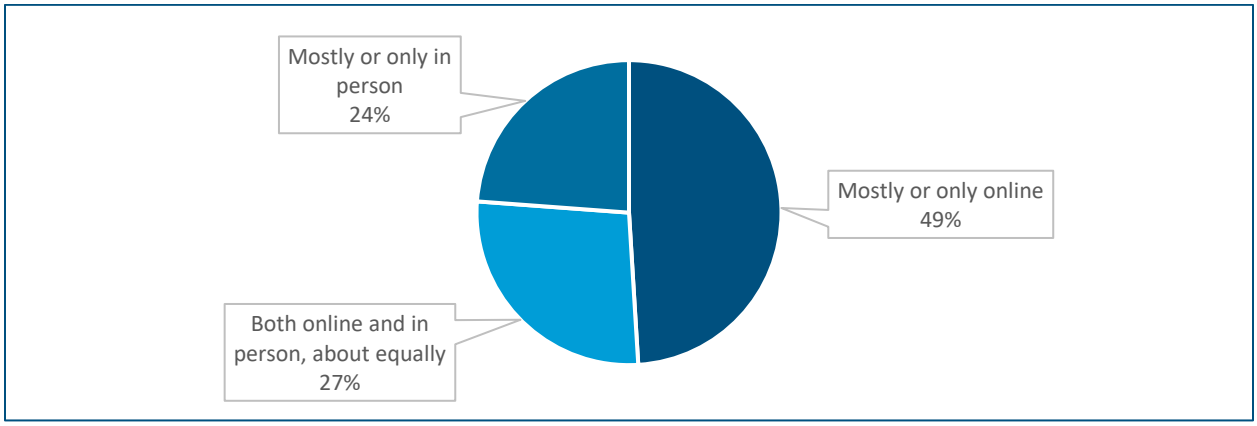
For some students, the learning environment for both the regular school day and 21st CCLC was the same. When looking specifically at students who attended school in an online setting or an in-person setting, they tended to participate in 21st CCLC in the same way: 78% of students with online school attendance participated in 21st CCLC online, while 65% of students attending school in person also participated in 21st CCLC in person (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Most students who attended school online or in person participated in 21st CCLC in the same way.



This pattern does not continue when analyzing students who attended school in a hybrid setting, however. For students who attended school both online and in person equally, 49% reported that they participated in 21st CCLC in an online setting (Exhibit 7). Students who split their time between in-person and remote learning for the regular school day were more likely to remain remote for 21st CCLC programming. Further examination of program offerings may reveal whether the number of in-person program offerings limited the in-person options available to students, or whether schools required a certain level of in-person school attendance in order for in-person 21st CCLC programming to be an option.

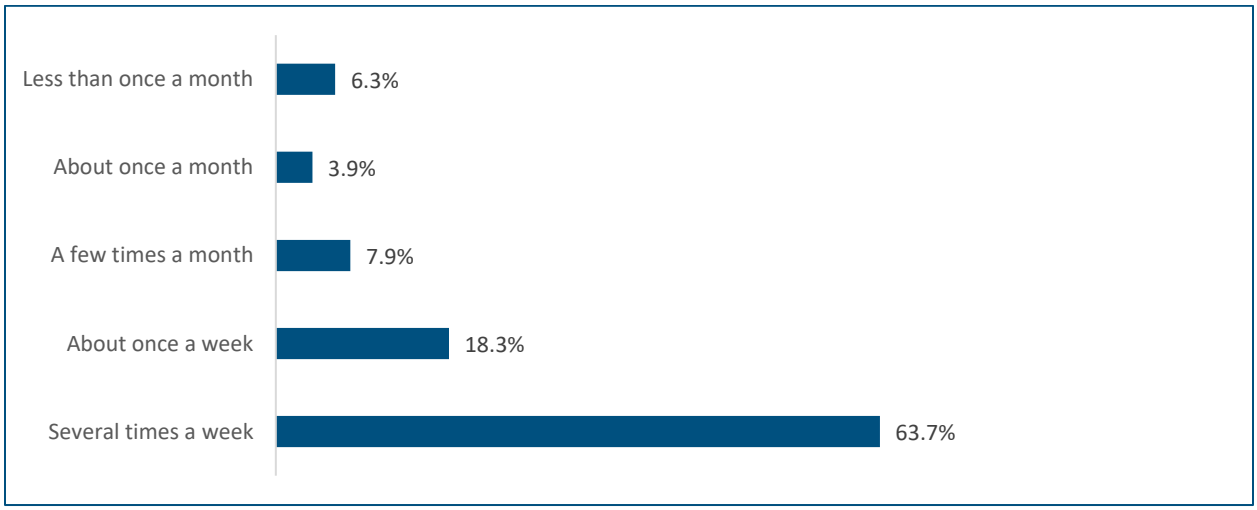
Exhibit 7. For students who attended school in a hybrid setting, about half participated in 21st CCLC mostly or only online.



N = 361

Next, we analyzed how frequently students participated in 21st CCLC programming. Students reported frequent participation, with 64% attending several times a week and 18% participating about once a week (Exhibit 8).

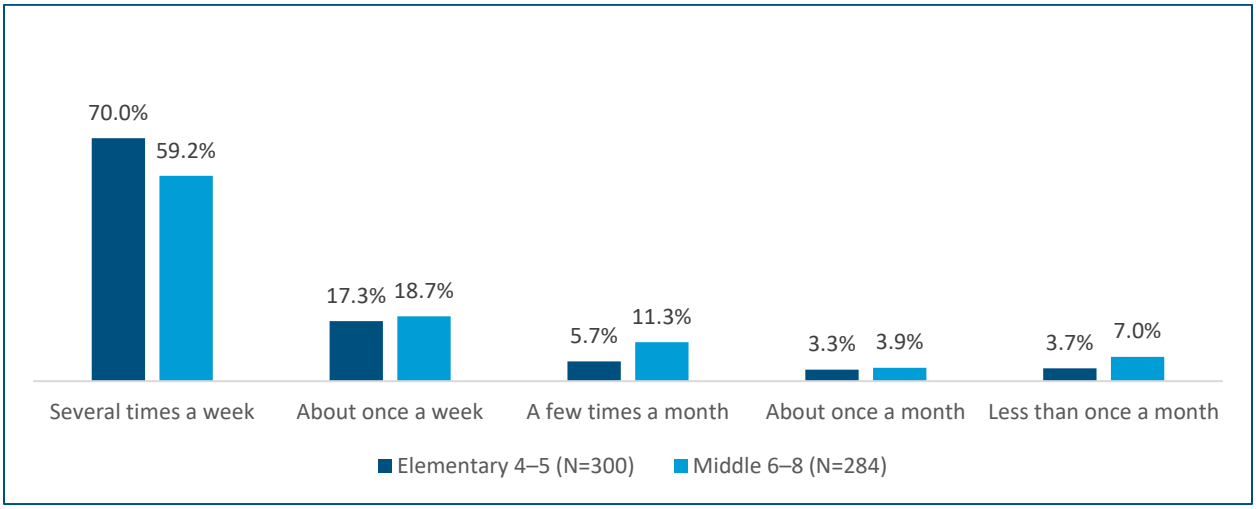
Exhibit 8. Over 80% of students participated in 21st CCLC at least once a week.



N = 750

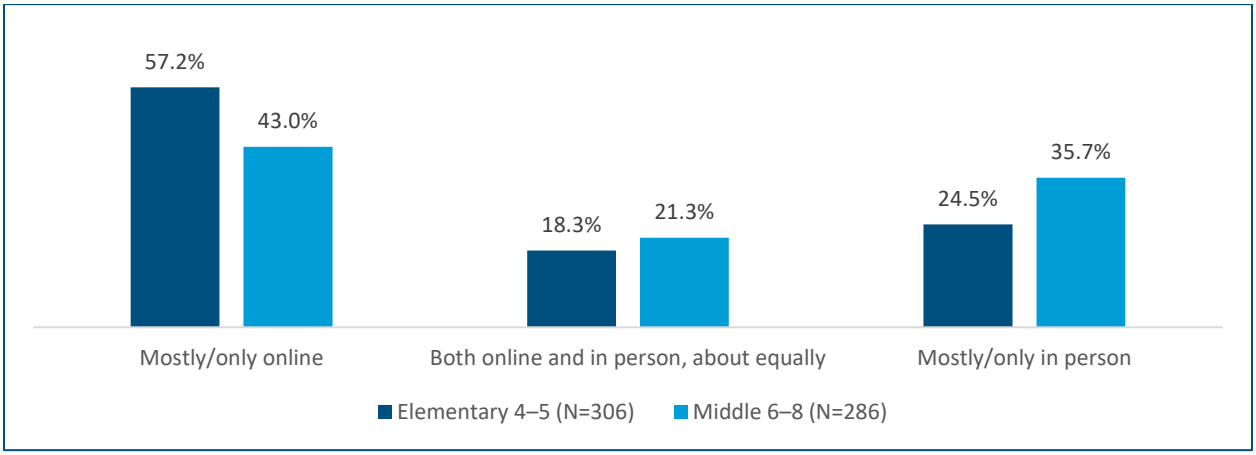
When analyzing student participation by school level (elementary or middle), elementary school students were more likely to participate several times a week (70%), compared to 59% of middle school students (Exhibit 9). Again, note that the analysis focused on elementary and middle school students due to the small number of high school respondents.

Exhibit 9. Elementary students attended 21st CCLC more frequently than middle school students.



The learning environment for 21st CCLC programming also differed when comparing elementary and middle school students. A larger percentage of elementary students indicated that they participated in 21st CCLC mostly or only online (57%) compared to middle school students (43%). Middle school students (36%) were more likely to participate in 21st CCLC mostly or completely in person compared to elementary school students (25%; Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10. Online 21st CCLC participation was more common for elementary students compared to middle school students.

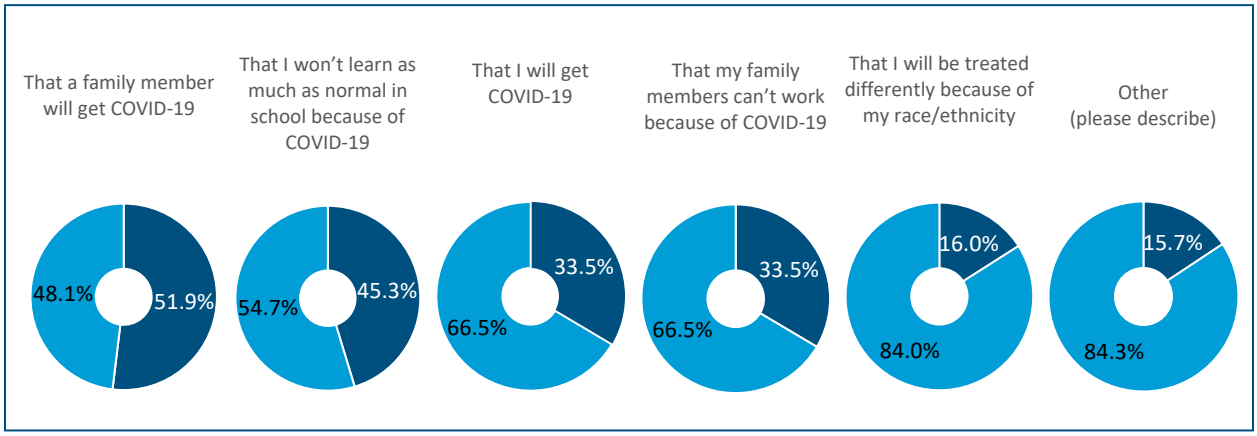


Student Concerns and Anxiety

The survey asked students to indicate any concerns they had about current events in the world. Students were given a series of options related to topics such as COVID-19 or concerns of

experiencing racial bias or discrimination. More than half (52%) of students were concerned that a family member would get COVID-19, while 45% worried that they wouldn't learn as much as normal in school because of COVID-19. About one third (34%) of students worried that either they would get COVID-19 or that their family members couldn't work because of the coronavirus. Fewer students reported concerns that they would be treated differently because of their race or ethnicity, with 16% of students indicating they felt this way (Exhibit 11).

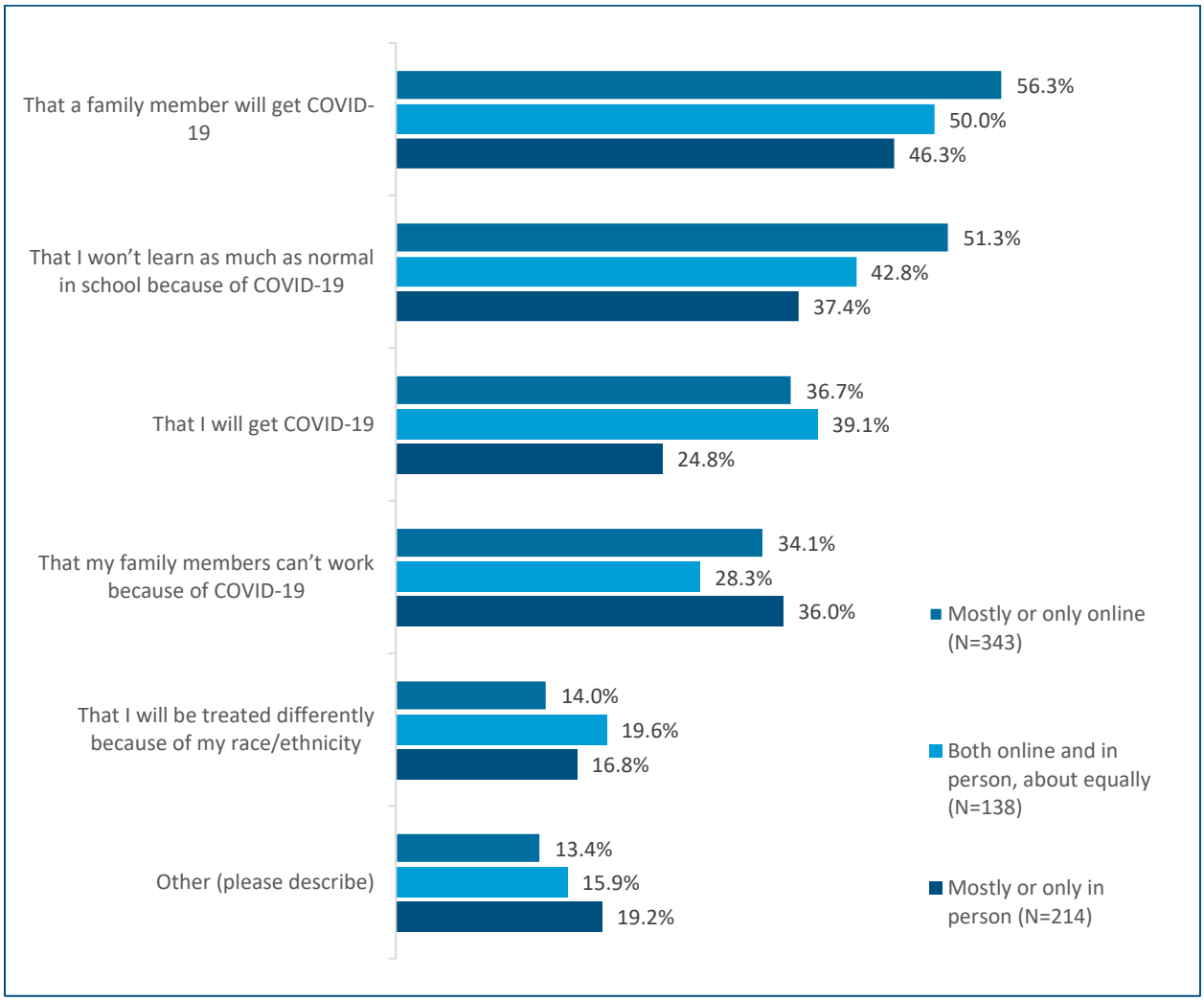
Exhibit 11. Overall, students were most concerned that a family member will get COVID-19 or that they wouldn't learn as much as normal in school because of COVID-19.



N = 695

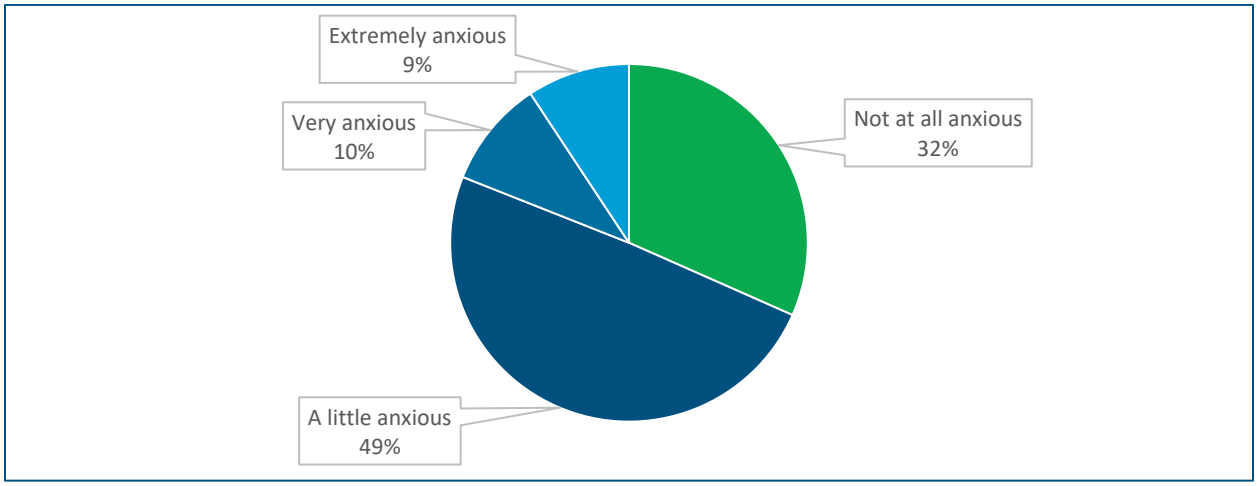
When analyzing student concerns between the three learning environments, notable differences exist. Students participating in 21st CCLC mostly or only online (56%) were more concerned that a family member would get COVID-19 than students participating mostly or only in person (46%). Students participating online were also more likely to be concerned that they wouldn't learn as much as normal in school due to the pandemic; 51% of students participating mostly or only online expressed this concern, compared to 37% of students participating in person. Notably, a smaller percentage of students participating in person were concerned they would get COVID-19 (25%) compared to students participating online (37%) or in a hybrid setting (39%). See Exhibit 12.

Exhibit 12. Students participating in 21st CCLC online were more concerned than those participating in person about learning as much as normal in school or a family member or themselves getting COVID-19.



Anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic was quite prevalent among the students surveyed. Almost 70% of students indicated they felt at least a little anxiety due to COVID-19, with 49% feeling a little anxious, 10% feeling very anxious, and 9% feeling extremely anxious (Exhibit 13).

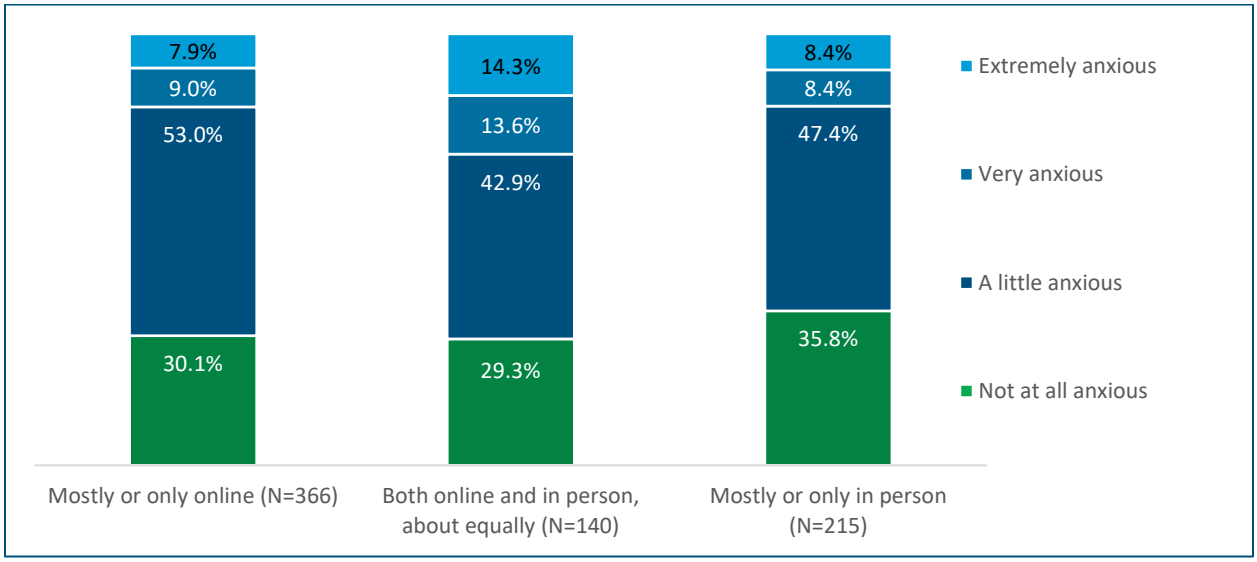
Exhibit 13. Almost 70% of students reported feeling at least a little anxiety due to COVID-19.



N = 721

It is noteworthy that rates of COVID-19–related anxiety differed among students in different learning environments. For students who participated in 21st CCLC only in person or only online, only 7% of students felt extremely anxious, compared to 14% of students who participated in a hybrid setting. Students participating in a hybrid setting were also more likely to feel very anxious (14%) compared to students participating only in person (10%) or only online (8%). Students participating in person had the highest percentage of respondents indicating they did not feel any COVID-19–related anxiety (36%). See Exhibit 14.

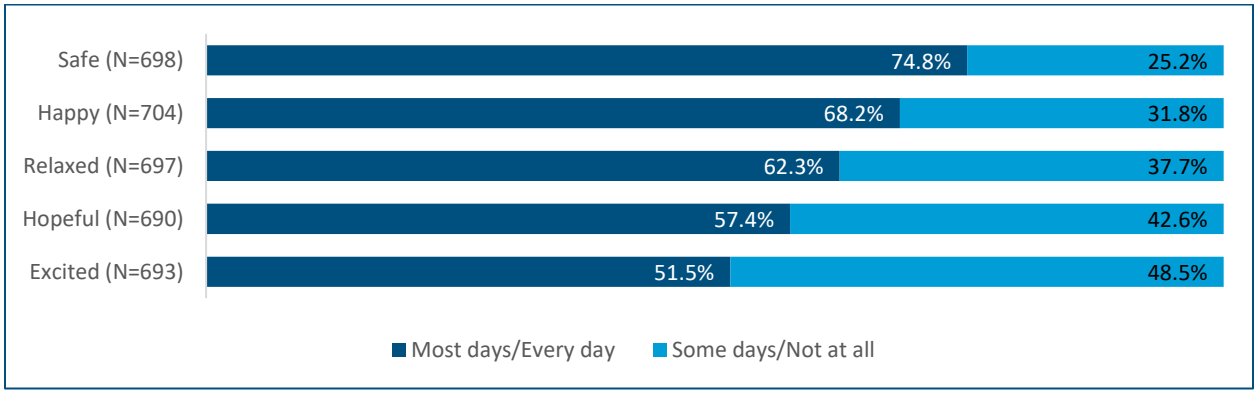
Exhibit 14. Students who participated in 21st CCLC in a hybrid setting reported the most COVID-19–related anxiety, with almost 30% feeling very or extremely anxious.



Positive and Negative Affect

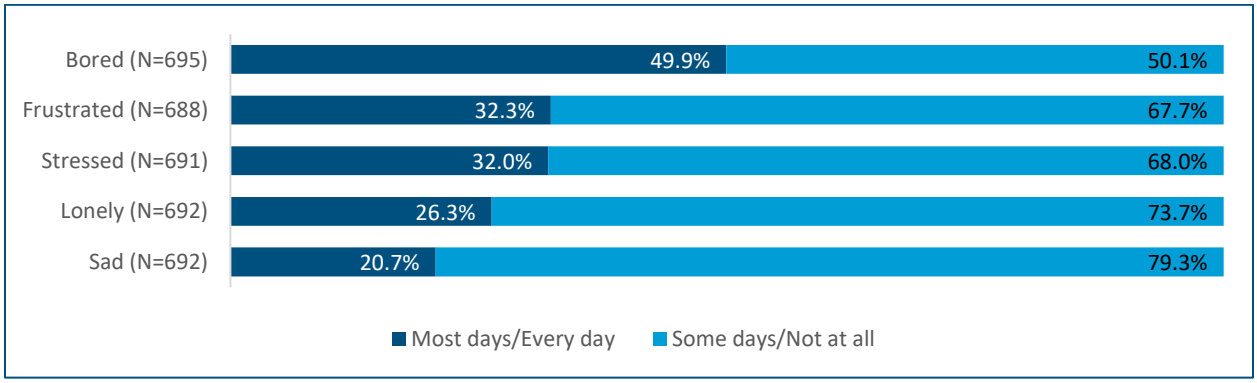
Students reported on the positive and negative emotions they experienced. These responses were not in reference to their experiences in 21st CCLC programming specifically, but rather their overall feelings day to day. On most days or every day, 75% of students felt safe, 68% felt happy, and 62% felt relaxed. Fewer students felt hopeful (57%) or excited (52%) with the same frequency (Exhibit 15).

Exhibit 15. On most days or every day, three quarters of students felt safe, while just over half felt hopeful or excited.



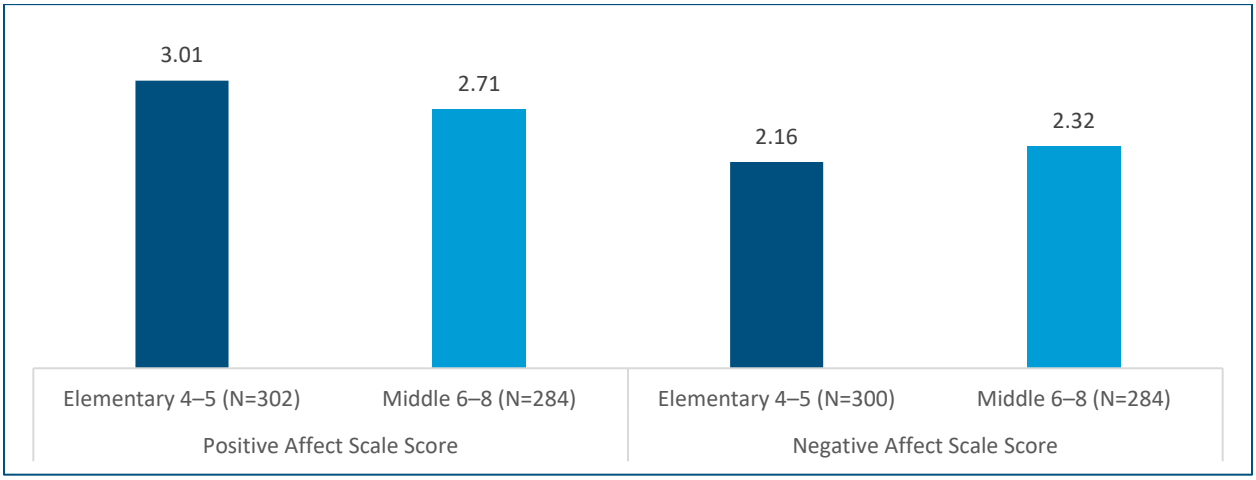
The most common negative emotion reported by students was boredom, with 50% of students feeling bored most days or every day. Again, note that these emotions pertain to students' overall daily experiences, not only their time spent in 21st CCLC programming. A similar number of students indicated feeling frustrated or stressed (32%), while 26% of students felt lonely most days or every day (Exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16. On most days or every day, one quarter of students felt lonely, one third felt stressed or frustrated, and one half felt bored.



In order to analyze differences in positive and negative affect, an average score was calculated for each scale for students, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (every day). When analyzing these differences for elementary and middle school students, an independent-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference in affect for elementary and middle school students, with elementary students experiencing both higher positive affect ($p<.001$) and lower negative affect ($p<.01$). See Exhibit 17. Differences in positive and negative affect were also analyzed for students participating in either an online, in-person, or hybrid program setting. Students reported similar amounts of positive and negative affect regardless of the environment in which they participated in 21st CCLC programming.

Exhibit 17. Elementary students had both higher positive affect and lower negative affect than middle school students on average.

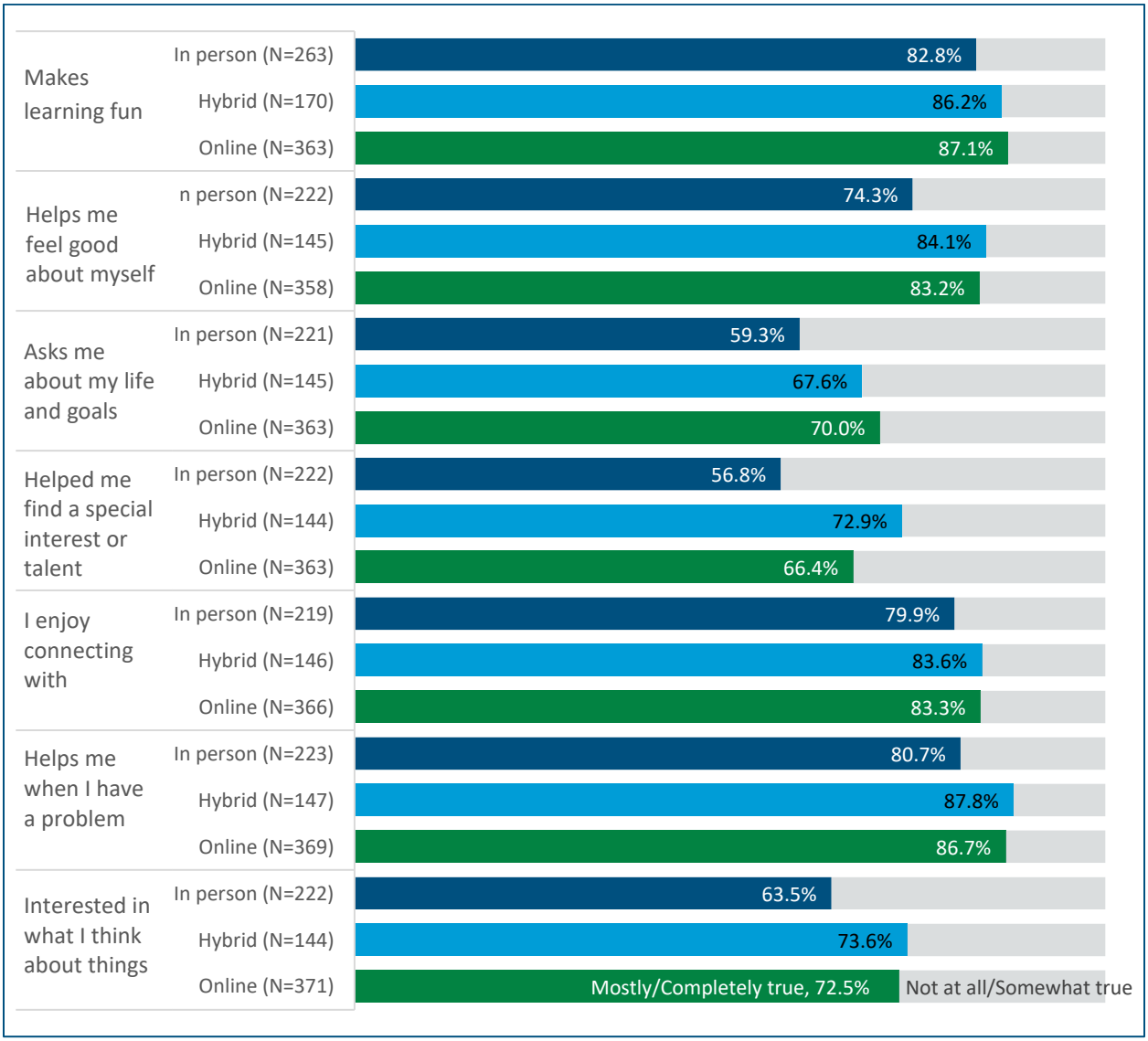


Positive affect: p<.001; Negative affect: p<.01.

Student Opinions of Staff

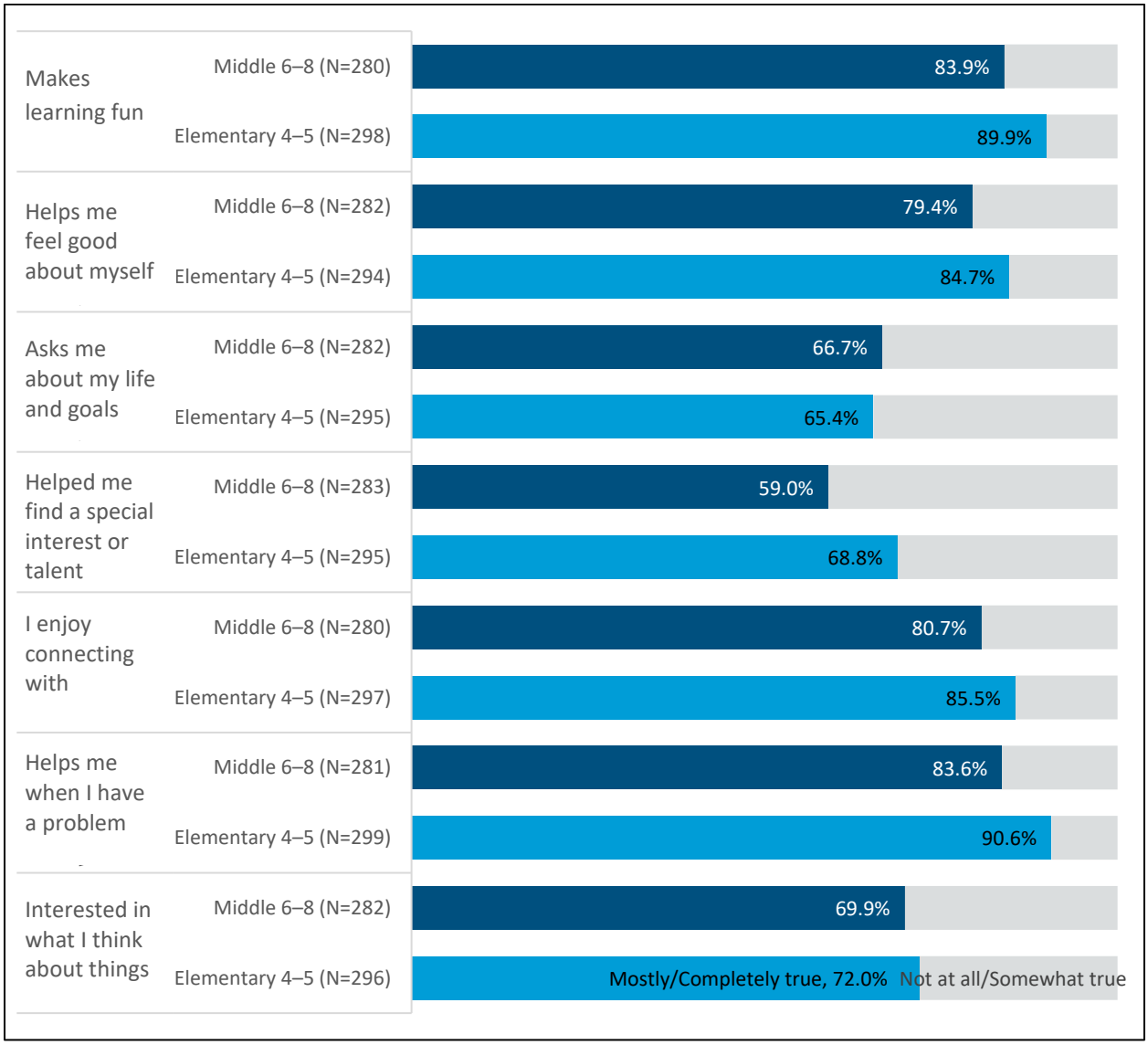
The survey asked students to indicate whether a number of positive statements were true about the staff who worked in their afterschool program. We analyzed whether students held different views of their staff depending on the environment in which they participated in 21st CCLC programming. Overall, students who participated online or in a hybrid setting held more positive views of staff than those who participated in person (Exhibit 18). This finding is interesting and perhaps unexpected. One possible explanation is that students may have felt they received more individualized attention from staff when online compared to being in person, where multiple things could be taking place in the space at one time, leading to more distractions or divided attention. On the other hand, this result could also simply be a reflection of the underlying programs themselves.

Exhibit 18. Students who participated in 21st CCLC in an online or hybrid setting had more positive views of staff than those who participated in person.



We also compared students' opinions of their staff among different school levels (elementary and middle). Overall, elementary students indicated more positive views of staff than middle school students (Exhibit 19).

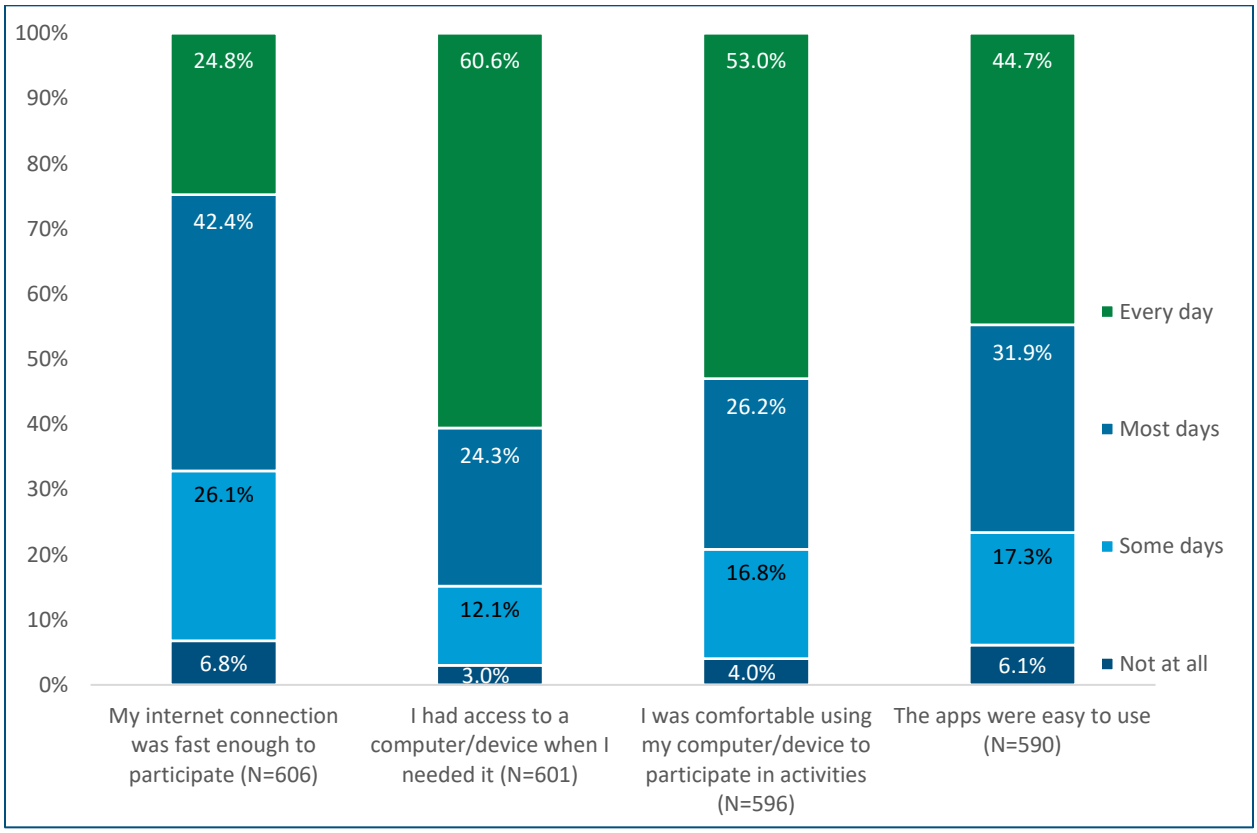
Exhibit 19. Overall, elementary students reported more positive views of staff members than middle school students.



Online Program Experience

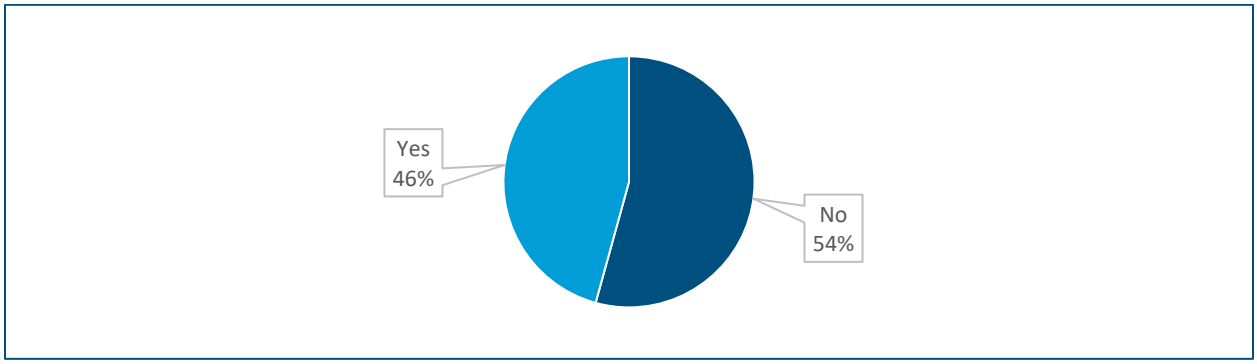
For students who participated in 21st CCLC programming online, the survey asked about their experiences with technology. Overall, students reported a positive online experience most days or every day, with 77% indicating the apps were easy to use, 79% reporting they were comfortable using their computer or device to participate, and 85% saying they had access to a computer or device when they needed it. The most common issue for online participants concerned their internet connection speed, with only 67% reporting their internet connection was fast enough to participate most days or every day (Exhibit 20).

Exhibit 20. Students' experiences with technology for online programming were positive overall, with internet connection speed being the most frequent issue.



Students expressed mixed levels of interest in continuing 21st CCLC programming online, with 46% indicating they would like the option to continue attending virtually, and 54% indicating they would not (Exhibit 21).

Exhibit 21. Less than half of students would have liked the option to continue 21st CCLC virtually.



N = 595

Qualitative Findings

The survey asked students to provide open-ended responses to elaborate on their experiences and feelings during the 2020–21 school year. Each question is highlighted below, with a discussion of the main themes in students' responses.

Positive Program Experiences

The survey asked students to describe a positive experience they had in the program during the past year. Many students noted that they participated in fun activities and projects, including art activities (e.g., painting, drawing), crafts (e.g., jewelry making, origami), science experiments (e.g., making slime, building a volcano), and outdoor activities (e.g., dodgeball, scavenger hunt). Students also described playing games and learning something new as positive experiences.

Another common positive experience for students involved receiving homework or academic help. Students mentioned receiving help in subjects such as math, reading, and writing. One student noted, "I got many missing assignments done during this program, it helped me focus more on what I had to do."

Notably, many students indicated that the social aspect of 21st CCLC programming was a positive experience for them. Students reported that spending time with friends, meeting new people, and just having the opportunity to socialize and have people to talk to were positive experiences for them, especially since social interaction was limited during the pandemic. One student said they enjoyed "talking with my friends because I couldn't see them during Covid-19," while another student enjoyed "having people to talk and laugh with."

> "One positive thing I've done in this program is getting to know new people."
>
> – *Student response*

A number of students commented on positive experiences with the program staff. Students described the staff as kind, caring, and welcoming individuals. One student said that "the teachers made me feel welcome," while another appreciated "how the teachers took time to connect with us." Another student noted that the teacher "listens and genuinely cares about what I have to say."

In addition to the staff, students also noted that the other student participants were kind and caring. One student recalled a positive experience "when I tried my best and no one was laughing." Another student said, "Everyone has been really kind to me, especially the LGBTQ+ club. I'm really able to be myself."

> "I felt accepted and welcomed which made me be a lot more comfortable in participation."
>
> – *Student response*

What Was Gained or Learned From Positive Experiences

Building off of the qualitative question above, students were asked what they gained or learned from their positive experience. Many students noted the academic gain, describing how they learned more math, reading, or writing skills. Others felt they had gained creativity through learning new games, crafts, and art skills.

A number of students described the interpersonal growth they had experienced. Some students had learned improved social skills and how to become more social. Other students had learned how to collaborate with others and work as a team. Students also described learning patience and learning to be kinder and more respectful toward others. Some students also noted the important self-confidence they had gained from their experiences. One student said, "I have gained so much confidence from this, I went from not believing in myself, and being scared to put things out, to being able to share things."

> "I have learned that my opinion matters."
>
> – *Student response*

Students also noted the perseverance they gained from their experiences. Students described learning that it is okay to fail, and that if they continue working hard, they can get better. One student said they learned "that when things go wrong, just try again."

Applying What Was Gained or Learned

Continuing to build off the previous questions, the survey next asked students to describe how they had applied what they gained or learned to the challenges of that year. Many students described focusing on the positive when facing new problems or challenges. Students noted that they "think about the positive" and have learned "to be positive and just keep trying." One student said, "I tried to remember times where I had been through a challenge like this and tried to be open minded about and learn from that challenge." Several students also described applying their perseverance in difficult situations, noting how they try their best when things get hard and don't give up.

> "To be patient, persistent, and never give up during tough situations."
>
> – *Student response*

Similar to what was seen in students' responses to the first two questions, the theme of social interaction continued to be prevalent in students' responses to this item. A number of students noted that they applied their improved social skills to push themselves to become more social or to make new friends.

Student responses also focused on applying the creative skills they had gained. Some students described teaching the new skills or activities they had learned to siblings or other family members. Other students mentioned using their new skills as a way to cope with stress. One student responded, "Art has been my outlet," while another said, "I start painting or drawing when I'm stressed out."

Experiences Missed Out On

Students were asked to describe what they felt they missed out on during the previous school year. Interestingly, some of the most common responses centered on social interactions, similar to students' positive experiences from the past year. Many students missed seeing their friends in person, which is understandable given the percentage of students who were attending 21st CCLC online. Students also reported that they missed out on socializing and being around people. Some also mentioned missing out on making new friends. One student commented that they missed out on "getting to know people better" while another said they missed "being with the teacher and my friends in the same classroom."

> "I feel I missed out on interacting with my friends more."

– *Student response*

Many students noted that they missed out on having a normal school experience. Students said they missed "feeling normal" or having "a normal learning experience." They described a number of aspects related to a typical in-person school day, such as participating in sports, playing at recess, and spending time with friends either on the bus or in the cafeteria. Students also felt they missed the opportunity to go on field trips, another valuable aspect of in-person school and 21st CCLC programming.

> "I think that I missed out on how the first year of middle school should feel."
>
> – *Student response*

Feelings Toward Returning to School In Person

The survey asked students both how they felt about going back to school in person that year (2020–21) as well as how they felt about going back to school in person in the fall of 2021. For both questions, students expressed similar feelings. Many students felt excited or happy about returning to school in person because they missed having in-person social interaction. One student said, "I hadn't realized how much human interaction I missed," while another shared, "I was really excited to see real human beings again and to be able to do more things like eat lunch with people." Students were happy to return in person not only for the social aspect, but also for the academic support that in-person schooling can provide. One student responded, "I feel good about it because you can ask for help," and another student said, "It was better than online because if I needed help, I was able to ask and when online I had to wait for a response back from the teacher." A common response was that the student felt "good" about it, with one student saying, "I feel great knowing that it will be easier for me to learn."

> "I felt good because I could see my friends in person and I was able to have resources."
>
> – *Student response*

Other students expressed feeling a mixture of both excitement and nervousness. One student responded, "I feel very nervous, it's been a long time since I went to school." Some students responded that they felt scared about returning to school in person, with one student indicating they felt "scared that we can get sick easily." A few students also indicated feeling stressed, citing concerns about the ongoing pandemic or about the possibility of being bullied. Predominantly, students expressed a mixture of emotions, with one student sharing, "I still feel cautious and think we should still have safety precautions, but I'm really excited to go back in

person as I/we have missed a whole year of social interaction and immediate help on an assignment during the school hours."

Conclusion

21st CCLC programs have adapted to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by providing a combination of online and in-person programming for students in Washington. Through a brief online survey, students shared their feelings and experiences during the past academic year. While students who attended school predominantly in person or online tended to participate in 21st CCLC in the same environment, it is noteworthy that students attending school in a hybrid setting were more likely to participate in 21st CCLC online. As health and safety concerns from the ongoing pandemic continue to impact schools as they begin the new school year, it will be interesting to see whether a majority of students continue to participate in an online setting, or whether in-person participation becomes more common. As seen from the open-ended responses provided by students, many are happy or excited to return to school in person, emphasizing the value they put on in-person social interactions and academic support.

As seen from both the survey items and short-answer responses, many students still have feelings of concern and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some students are nervous about returning to school in person while health concerns remain an issue: many are concerned that they or their family members will get COVID-19. It is worth highlighting that almost 70% of students felt some level of anxiety due to the pandemic. Particularly for students participating online, it is concerning that more than half of students worry they won't learn as much as normal because of the pandemic. It will be important for schools and programs to recognize these feelings and promote students' emotional wellbeing as the pandemic continues to affect students' lives.

Looking forward to next steps, it would be valuable to review the results of this survey with OSPI and other 21st CCLC stakeholders to gain input on key findings and then determine whether additional data collection is warranted, depending on how 21st CCLC programs are operating in the current school year. Future data collection efforts for consideration include a parent survey to gain parent insights into 21st CCLC programming. Through further data collection and discussion, additional valuable information may be gained about the emotions and experiences of students and their families in ever-evolving 21st CCLC programming amidst the ongoing pandemic.

Appendix A. COVID-19 Student Survey

This survey will ask you about your experience in 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programming during this school year, as well as questions about school and the COVID-19 pandemic. Your answers are private and will not be shared with anyone. The survey is also voluntary. You can stop taking the survey at any time. We appreciate your honest feedback!

Please answer the following questions about your experience in your 21st CCLC out-of-school-time programming.

During this school year, in what ways have you participated in 21st CCLC out-of-school-time programming?

- ○ ONLY online
- ○ MOSTLY online
- ○ BOTH online and in person, about equally
- ○ MOSTLY in person
- ○ ONLY in person
- ○ I have not participated in 21st CCLC out-of-school activities this school year.

Whether in person or online, about how often have you participated in 21st CCLC out-of-school-time activities this year?

- ○ Several times a week
- ○ About once a week
- ○ A few times a month
- ○ About once a month
- ○ Less than once a month

Thinking about the staff who work in your afterschool program, how true are these statements for you? There is an afterschool staff member, like a teacher, …

	Not at all true	*Somewhat true*	*Mostly true*	*Completely true*
a. Who is interested in what I think about things	○	○	○	○
b. Who helps me when I have a problem	○	○	○	○
c. Who I enjoy connecting with	○	○	○	○
d. Who has helped me find a special interest or talent (something I'm good at)	○	○	○	○
e. Who asks me about my life and goals	○	○	○	○
f. Who helps me feel good about myself	○	○	○	○
g. Who makes learning fun	○	○	○	○

If attended the afterschool program virtually from home:

Please choose the answer that reflects your online experience this program year.

Connecting to your afterschool program online, how often did you feel that …	Not at all	Some days	Most days	Every day
a. My internet connection was fast enough to participate	○	○	○	○
b. I had access to a computer/device when I needed it	○	○	○	○
c. I was comfortable using my computer/device to participate in activities	○	○	○	○
d. The apps were easy to use	○	○	○	○

Would you like to continue the option of attending 21st CCLC virtually?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

For all students:

Describe a positive experience you had in the program this year.

What did you gain or learn from this experience?

How have you applied what you gained or learned to the challenges of this year?

What do you feel you missed out on this year?

Please answer the following questions about your experience in school this year.

How did you attend school this year?

- ONLY online
- MOSTLY online
- BOTH online and in person, about equally
- MOSTLY in person
- ONLY in person

How did you feel about going back to school in person this year?

How do you feel about going back to school in person in the fall?

Please answer the following questions about your thoughts on the COVID-19 pandemic.

How anxious are you about COVID-19?

- Not at all anxious
- A little anxious
- Very anxious
- Extremely anxious

What concerns you most about what is happening in the world right now? Select all that apply.

- I'm concerned that I will get COVID-19
- I'm concerned that a family member will get COVID-19
- I'm concerned that my family members can't work because of COVID-19
- I'm concerned that I won't learn as much as normal in school because of COVID-19
- I'm concerned that I will be treated differently because of my race/ethnicity
- Other (please describe)

Do you think you have less communication with family and friends because of COVID-19?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

How often do you see, in person or virtually, family and friends that do not live with you?

- Every day
- A few times per week
- Once per week
- Less than once per week
- Never

Please tell us a little bit more about yourself.

What grade are you in?

- 4th grade
- 5th grade
- 6th grade
- 7th grade
- 8th grade
- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade

What is your gender identity?

- Girl
- Boy
- Non-binary/non-conforming
- Prefer not to respond

What is your race?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic origin
- Not of Hispanic origin

How often do you feel …	Not at all	Some days	Most days	Every day
Positive Affect				
a. Happy	○	○	○	○
b. Excited	○	○	○	○
c. Relaxed	○	○	○	○
d. Hopeful	○	○	○	○
e. Safe	○	○	○	○
Negative Affect				
f. Frustrated	○	○	○	○
g. Bored	○	○	○	○
h. Sad	○	○	○	○
i. Stressed	○	○	○	○
j. Lonely	○	○	○	○

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AIR® Headquarters
1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202-3289
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