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

2021–22 Program Year Report

Allison Belmont, Sarah Kazi, and Samantha Sniegowski

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Contents

Exhibits

Executive Summary

For almost two decades, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programs in Washington state have provided afterschool and expanded learning programming to enhance the academic well-being of students living in high-poverty communities. 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 CCLC program in Washington. 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 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. In summer 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 they also addressed multiple reopening scenarios as the circumstances surrounding the pandemic continued to evolve. These contextual factors are important to consider in relation to the results, specifically in looking at trends across prior years, as well as the 2021–22 program year—the focus of this report.

In 2021–22, program operations began to resemble prepandemic conditions, with students in Washington returning to a predominantly in-person setting for both the school day and afterschool programming. Key findings and recommendations for the 2021–22 program year 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 2021–22 programming year, 140 centers were associated with 56 21st CCLC grantees and provided summer programming. These centers served 14,283 youth in Grades K–

12. For the most part, the domain of Washington 21st CCLC grantees and centers operating during 2021–22 was comparable with prior years in terms of organizational and operational characteristics.

Program Characteristics for the 2021–22 Program Year

- Most 21st CCLC programming (96%) took place in school-based locations even if the funding agency was not school based.
- 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).
- Most program partnerships were with community-based organizations or other not-for-profit organizations (40%) and school districts (19%) in 2021–22.
- Nearly 80% of centers offered in-person programming during summer and fall 2021 and the spring and summer 2022.
- Most staff were paid during both the regular school year and the summer.
- All centers reported offering science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and literacy programming in the 2021–22 program year. Art and music (93%), physical activity (98%), and homework help (79%) also were common in most programs.
- Centers in Washington mostly served youth in Grades 1–5, with 61% of all participants in these grades.
- In 2021–22, 70% of youth attendees had a 5% school-day absence rate, whereas more than 33% were chronically absent.

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 academically at risk are served in the program.
- Given the large proportion of students chronically absent from school during the 2021–22 program year, explore how 21st CCLC staff and programming can support student school-day attendance and academic engagement.

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 should provide a starting point for further exploration and analyses to inform outcome analyses carried out in future years.

Student Program Attendance

- Overall program attendance increased during the 2021–22 program year; 14,283 students attended programming, of whom 6,040 (42%) attended regularly.
- Overall, attendance during 2021–22 was closer to prepandemic levels; attendance was higher than the previous year across all 30-day attendance bands, except for the 120 or more days of attendance band.

Student Program Attendance and Student Characteristics

- Most regular (68%) and nonregular (58%) attendees identified as Hispanic in 2021–22.
- Most regular attendees (84%) qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.
- A few regular attendees were limited English proficient (38%) or identified as having special needs (14%).

Student Program Attendance and Program Characteristics

- Less than 50% of student attendees spent most of their time in STEM- or arts-related activities for 3 months or more. Approximately 20% participated in these activities for 6 months or more.
- Students with high attendance levels across all school levels (elementary, middle, and high) tended to spend more time in specific activities, such as STEM, the arts, and sports.
- No association was found between program attendance levels and students earning less than 100% of attempted credits or having less than a 2.0 grade-point average (GPA).
- Elementary and middle school students anticipated to need intensive reading and mathematics supports also tended to have the highest program attendance.
- High school students in programs with higher percentages of teachers involved in programming had higher attendance levels, whereas middle school students tended to have lower attendance levels when more teachers provided programming.

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.
- 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 and Learning Engagement in the Classroom

AIR collected data from student attendees and the school-day teachers of student attendees in spring 2022 to learn about the experiences of students and teacher perceptions of student learning engagement in the school-day classroom. The target sample for the student survey consisted of regular program attendees (students attending 30 days or more) in Grades 6–12, whereas the target sample for the teacher survey was school-day teachers of students in Grades K–5. A summary of findings obtained from the surveys is outlined below.

Student Program Experiences

- Most (92%) students reported that they attended 21st CCLC primarily in person, and greater than 80% of students said they participated in 21st CCLC at least once a week.
- More than 33% of students thought their afterschool program helped them make new friends, find out what they like to do, or feel good about themselves.
- Approximately 75% of students felt their afterschool program provided them with things to do that they enjoyed, helped them get better at something they were interested in, or helped them feel connected to caring adults most days or every day.
- Most students got to choose how they spent their time (84%) or which activities to participate in (77%).
- Students were asked to describe a positive program experience. Common themes included the following:
  - Making new friends/socializing with other students
  - Spending time with friends
  - Playing games or sports

  - Participating in fun activities and projects
  - Participating in hands-on activities/creating something
  - Cooking/participating in activities with food
  - Going on field trips
  - Receiving academic support
  - Spending time with a supportive/caring adult
  - Self-improving/getting better at something
  - Being in a happy/safe environment
  - Experiencing something new
  - Helping someone
- Students described what they gained or learned from this positive experience. Common themes included the following:
  - Learning something new
  - Improving academic skills
  - Forming new friendships
  - Improving self-confidence
  - Improving social skills
  - Making connections with other students or staff
  - Feeling happy and having fun
  - Showing empathy and kindness for others
  - Having new experiences
- Students described how they applied what they gained or learned to the challenges of this year. Common themes included the following:
  - Using new skills outside the program (e.g., at home or with friends)
  - Self-improving
  - Talking to new people
  - Using skills during the school day
  - Improving on schoolwork/grades
  - Persevering/overcoming challenges or fears
  - Using skills to cope with stress/feel happy
  - Pursuing interests further/trying new things

Students' Expectations for Programming Experiences

- For many experiences, such as getting help with homework, working on projects, playing games or sports, or making new friends, a larger percentage of students reported that they did this in their afterschool program compared with the proportion that hoped to do so.
- Approximately 66% of students had their expectations met for numerous experiences (e.g., try new things, play games or sports, make new friends, become better at doing things I'm interested in, and have lots of fun).

Middle School and High School Programming Experiences

- Middle school and high school students' reports of 21st CCLC program attendance frequency were similar, with nearly 65% of students in both age groups reporting they attended program several times a week.
- In-person 21st CCLC participation was common for middle school students (93%) and high school students (87%).
- Almost 50% of middle school students and more than 33% of high school students thought their programs helped them make new friends.
- A large percentage (70% or more) of middle school students felt their afterschool programs provided them with things that they enjoyed and helped them get better at something they were interested in. A large percentage of high school students indicated a broader range of experiences were offered.
- For many experiences, such as having lots of fun, becoming better at doing things they are interested in, and making new friends, approximately 66% of middle and high school students had their expectations for programming met. Almost 50% of middle and high school students hoped to go to a new place but did not.

Changes in Student Learning Engagement in the Classroom

- According to school-day teachers, approximately 50% of all students made improvements in their learning engagement, whereas 20% of students saw no change.

Findings on Differences in Youth Program Assessments (PQAs)

During the 2021–22 program year, centers selected one of three types of program quality assessments (PQAs) to use when assessing their programs: the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), the School Age Program Quality Assessment (SA-PQA), or the Social-Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL-PQA). The following findings describe the

characteristics of the centers and the student populations that elected to use each of these versions of the PQA:

- Most PQA external assessments aligned with the age group being served at the center; more than 80% of the students at centers that used the YPQA were in middle school, whereas most students at centers using the SA-PQA and SEL-PQA were in elementary school.
- More centers selected to use the SEL-PQA, whereas centers using the YPQA served the largest number of students on average.
- Elementary school students at centers using the SA-PQA and SEL-PQA attended programming for the highest total days on average. For middle school students and high school students, average total attendance was slightly higher if the center used the SEL-PQA and YPQA, respectively.
- For centers that served primarily elementary and middle school students, those that used the SEL-PQA had more students who attended regularly.
- For centers serving elementary school students, more than 50% of students at centers using the SA-PQA and 66% of students at centers using the SEL-PQA were identified as Hispanic, compared with 28% of students at centers using the YPQA.
- For centers serving middle school students, more than 60% of students at centers using the SA-PQA and the SEL-PQA were identified as Hispanic, compared with 28% of students at centers using the YPQA.
- For centers serving elementary school and middle school students, those using the SEL-PQA tended to offer EL supports, cultural activities, and service-learning opportunities. Centers using the SA-PQA tended to offer tutoring and homework help activities.
- Centers serving primarily elementary school students tended to score higher on the SA-PQA on all four domains.
- Elementary school students at high-scoring centers attended slightly more days of programming on average compared with those at low-scoring centers, regardless of PQA version.
- Like comparisons by PQA version alone, almost all centers, despite high- versus low-scoring status, grade-level group, and PQA version, offered physical activity, literacy, and STEM programming regardless of their overall score on the PQA. A larger percentage of low-scoring centers offered many other types of programming compared with high-scoring centers.

Aligned recommendations

- Work with programs and other stakeholders to make sure they select the PQA version most appropriate for the grade levels they serve.
- Further explore connections between the race and ethnic groups of students served at a center, the version of the PQA selected, and the activities offered alongside other key data points. Consider if and what other data collections might be necessary.
- Further explore the use of the SEL-PQA in programs serving all grade levels, including an assessment of item difficulty, as compared with the SA-PQA and YPQA.

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 the 2021–22 program year.

- Data point to strong performance across centers on some indicators related to program implementation and to weaker performance on others.
- Program quality indicator results were lower than the associated targets, which might reflect changes in OSPI's expectations.

Aligned recommendations

- Consider revisiting the current KPI language and weighing those against current and anticipated expectations. An update to the KPIs or stronger communication to programs about key performance expectations might be required.
- Identify where data are not currently available to report on KPIs, and work with partners to retrieve that information.

Introduction

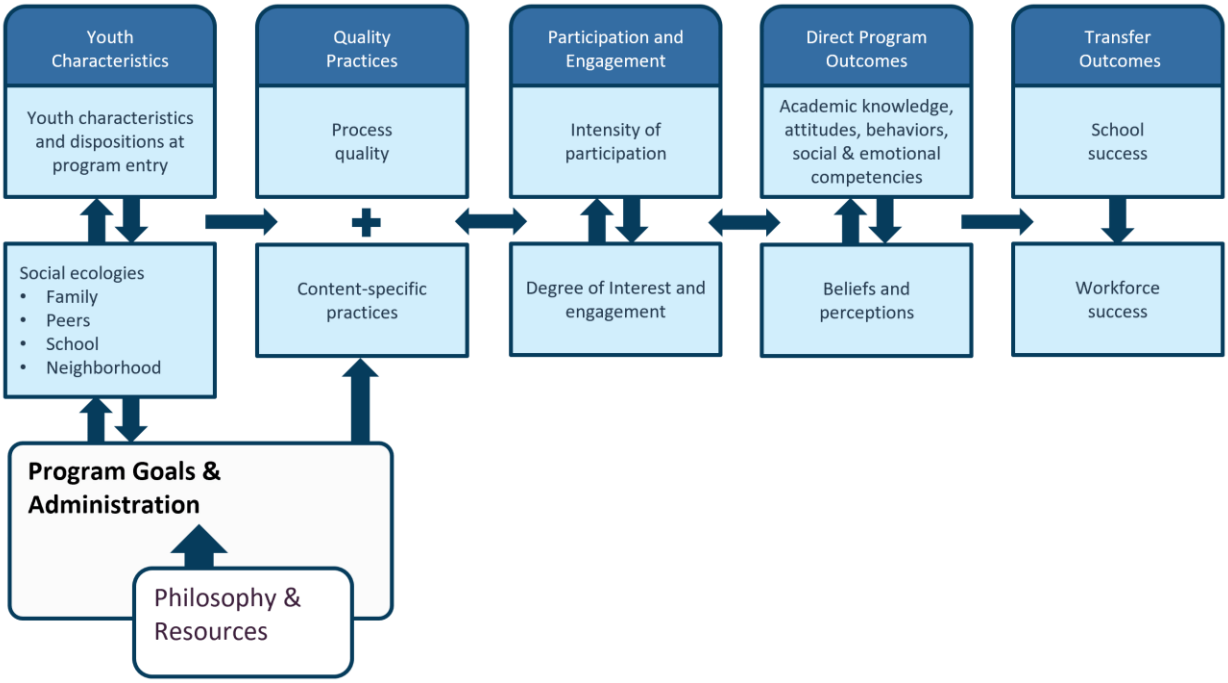
For almost two decades, the Washington Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program has provided afterschool programming to enhance the academic well-being of youth who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. Since 2011, the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to support the evaluation of the statewide 21st 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 2021–22 programming period, which included data collection and reporting to support OSPI in submitting federally required data, investigation of statewide evaluation questions, and support for continuous program quality improvement efforts using data. AIR built and monitored an online data collection system to support program improvement efforts and facilitate 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.

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 needed for afterschool programs to have an impact on youth outcomes. This conceptual framework, outlined in Exhibit 1, guides the approach we used to conduct the statewide evaluation of the 21st CCLC program in Washington.

Exhibit 1. Conceptual framework for how afterschool programs can have an impact on youth participants.



The framework starts with the youth 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 fare in the school-day classroom and (b) information provided by the youth on youth surveys.

After considering the predispositions and contextual factors influencing youth before they enter a program, several factors affect the experiences that youth have once they do. 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 learning and development. These universal practices 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 seeks 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 become engaged and active, they will 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.* The 21st CCLC programs typically measure these outcomes 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 helped to answer several evaluation questions. Data presented in this report

reflect 21st CCLC programming in Washington state as programs continue to adapt to and work through challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. All readers must consider the contextual implications of the pandemic when reviewing the data, key findings, and recommendations in this report. Differences in the results for the 2019–21 program years may be caused by interruptions in data collection or transitions in normal program operations. The pandemic continued to impact some data collection processes and data availability during the 2021–22 program year.

The evaluation questions for the 2021–22 program year are organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1. Program Characteristics

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

Chapter 2. Program Attendance

2. What did program attendance look like?
3. How did student characteristics relate to students' level of program attendance?
4. How did participation in different activity types relate to program participation rates and student academic performance?

Chapter 3. Youth Program Experiences and Learning Engagement in the Classroom

5. What were the experiences of students attending 21st CCLC programming during the 2021–22 program year?
6. How did students' expectations for programming compare with their actual experiences?
7. Did student experiences in programming differ between students in middle and high school settings?
8. To what extent did teacher-reported student engagement in learning change during the 2021–22 program year?

Chapter 4. Differences in Program Quality Assessments (PQAs)

9. What differences exist between programs that select the traditional Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), the School Age Program Quality Assessment (SA-PQA), and the Social Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL-PQA) in terms of center and student characteristics?
10. What differences exist between programs identified as high scoring or low scoring on the PQA in terms of center and student characteristics?

Chapter 5. State and Federal Targets

11. Are 21st CCLC programs in Washington state meeting state and federal performance targets for student outcomes?
12. Are 21st CCLC programs in Washington state meeting state and federal goals and objectives for program implementation?

In the remaining sections of this report, we address each of these questions.

Chapter 1. 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. 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 2021–22 program year.

Findings	Aligned recommendations
• Most 21st CCLC programming (96%) took place in school-based locations, even if the funding agency was not school based. • Nearly 80% of centers offered in-person programming during summer and fall 2021 and the spring and summer 2022. • Most staff were paid during both the regular school year and the summer. • All centers reported offering science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and literacy programming in the 2021–22 program year. Art and music (93%), physical activity (98%), and homework help (79%) also were common in most programs. • Programs mostly served youth in Grades 1–5, with 61% of all participants in these grades. • More than 66% of student attendees had an absence rate of at least 5% in 2021–22.	• 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 academically at risk are served in the program. • Given the large proportion of students chronically absent from school during the 2021–22 program year, explore how 21st CCLC staff and programming can support student school-day attendance and academic engagement.

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

Grantee Characteristics

OSPI distributes 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 2021–22 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.

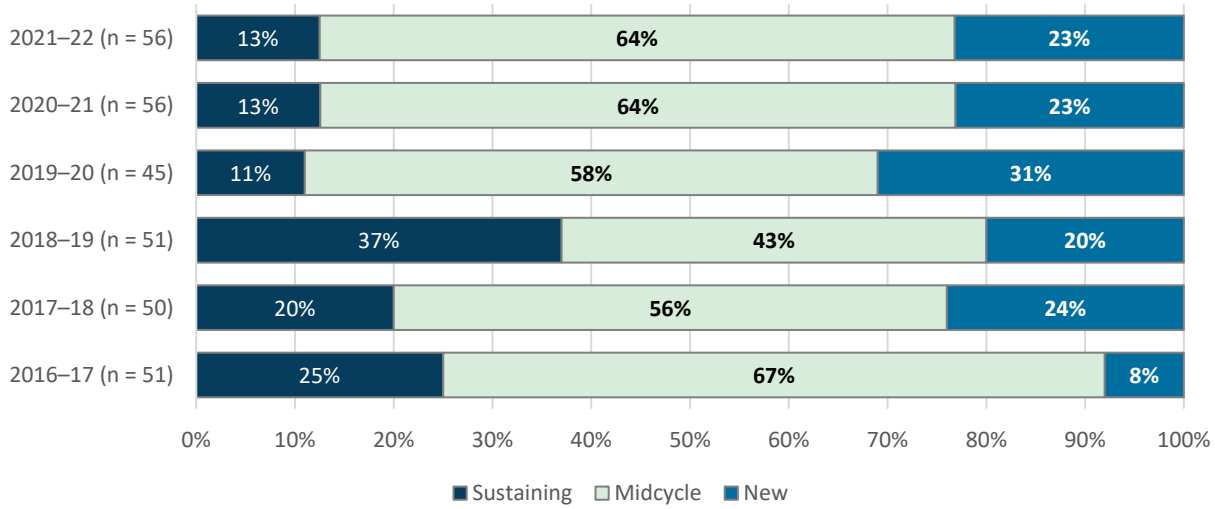
Grantee Maturity

The evaluation team examined grantee maturity from 2016–17 through 2021–22 (Exhibit 2). We classified Washington grantees into the following 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 first year of funding likely navigate compliance activities related to grant requirements and might need different supports than those midcycle who focus on things such as providing higher quality services, or than those sustaining their program and thinking about how to continue services once the grant funding ends.

Exhibit 2. During the 2021–22 programming period, of the 56 Washington state grantees, 23% were new, 64% were midcycle, and 13% were sustaining.



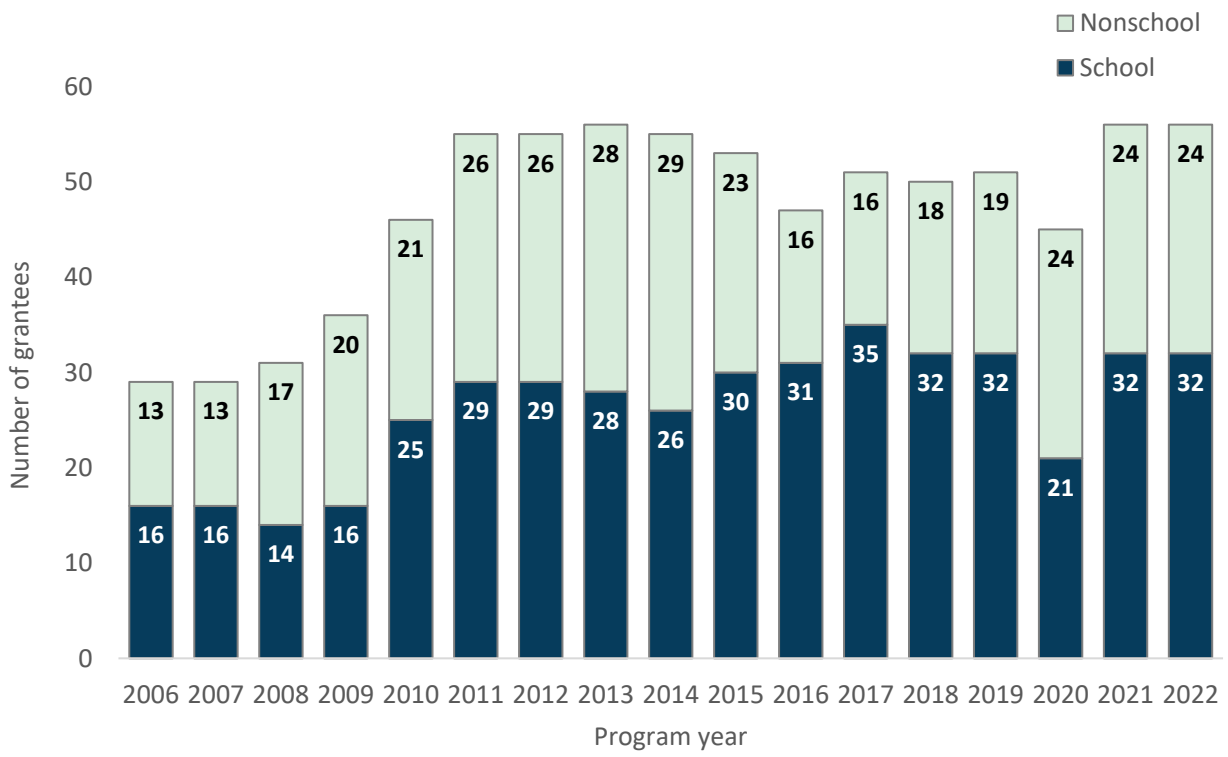
Note. OSPI awarded grants for a 5-year period; however, during the 2020–21 and 2021–22 program years, some programs received an extension. In addition, Cohort 17 programs were funded in the winter of the school year, months later than when traditional awards happen. As such, Cohort 17 programs used the remainder of Year 1 of their grant to for planning purposes. No new awards were made in 2021–22. Data from 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. Nonschool organizations include, among other entities, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, health-based organizations, and park districts. Both school and nonschool 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 state, school and nonschool organizations have been represented equally since the state-administered program began. This trend changed in the 2014–15 program year (Exhibit 3), however, with more school-based programs represented in 6 of the 7 following years (2019–20 being the exception).

Exhibit 3. During 2021–22, most grantees were funded through school entities.



Note. Data from OSPI records.

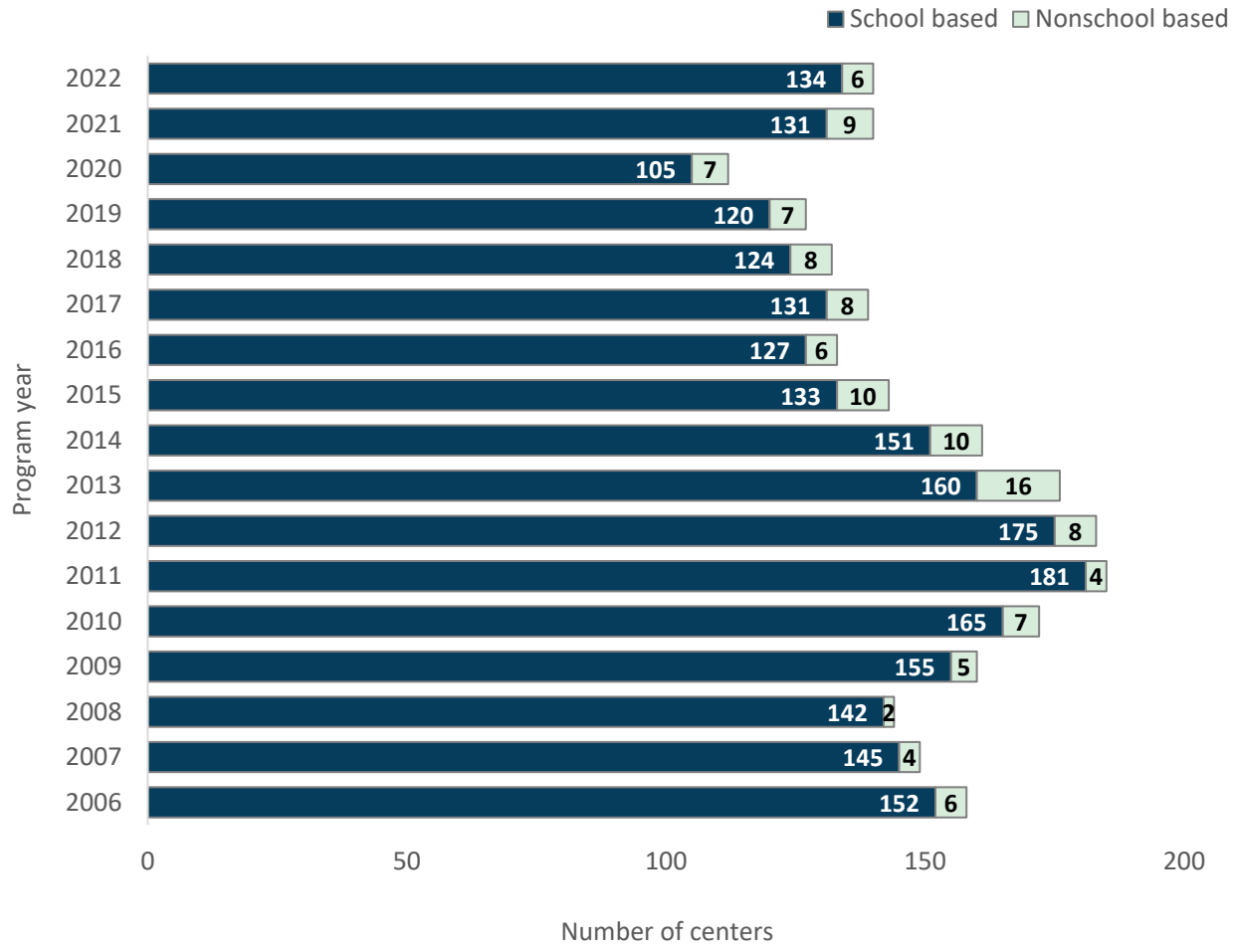
Center Characteristics

We use the term *center* in this report to refer to the physical location where 21st CCLC–funded services and activities take place. Centers have defined hours of operation, dedicated staff members, and usually site coordinator positions. Each 21st CCLC grantee in Washington has at least one center; many grantees have more than one center. During the 2021–22 program year, 140 centers were funded in Washington.

Center Organization Type

Like grantees, centers are either school or nonschool based (Exhibit 4). During the 2021–22 program year, most of Washington's 140 centers were in schools.

Exhibit 4. During the last 16 years, most centers have been based in schools.

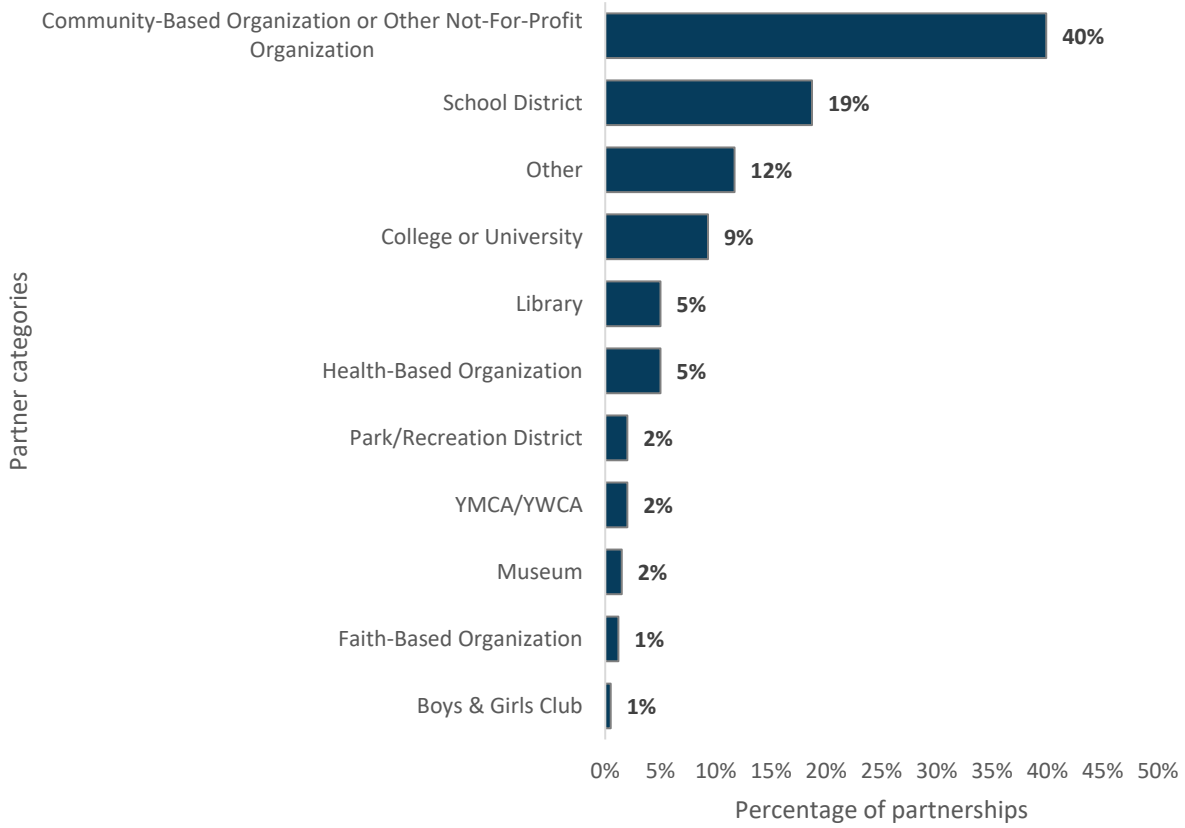


Note. Data from OSPI records.

Center Partners

The 21st CCLC programs in Washington work with a variety of partner organizations. In 2019–20, centers worked with a range of two to 52 partners, with an average of nine partners per center (*N* = 112 centers). In 2020–21, centers worked with a range of one to 11 partners per center, with an average of four partners per center (*N* = 108 centers). In 2021–22, centers worked with a range of one to 18 partners per center, with an average of four partners per center (*N* = 140 centers). The 140 centers in Washington held a total of 576 partnerships with these entities, with some partners working with multiple centers in Washington. The largest percentage of partnerships in the 2021–22 program year was with community-based organizations or other not-for-profit organizations (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5. The largest percentage of partnerships in 2021–22 was with community-based organizations or other not-for-profit organizations.

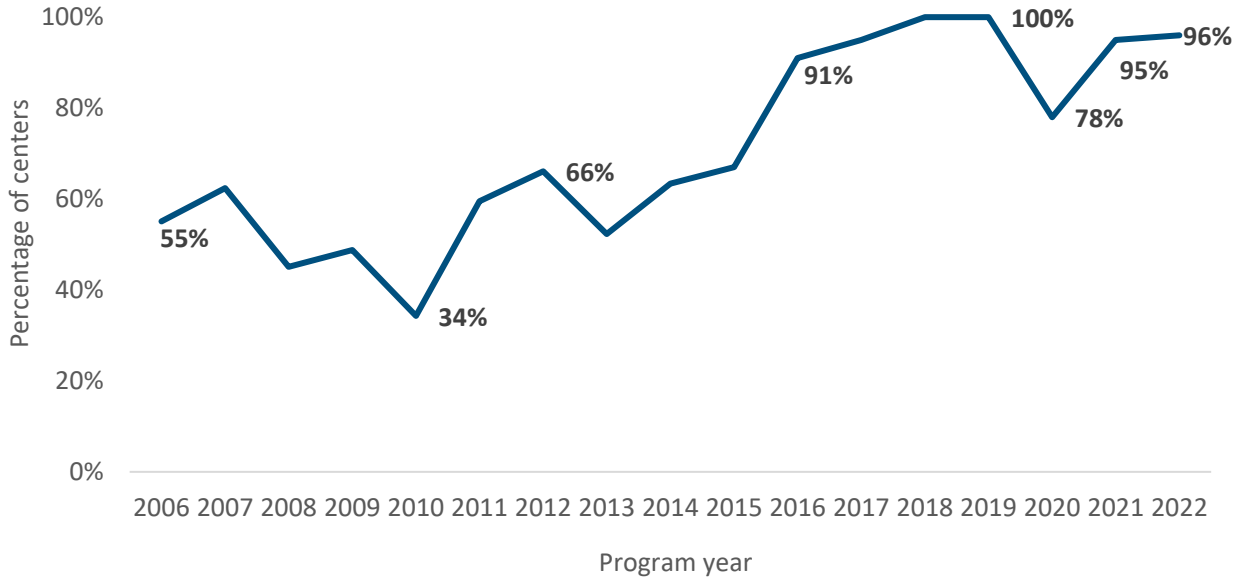


Note. 2022: *N* = 576 partnerships. Other partnerships included entities such as banks, local businesses, and individual vendors. In addition, two partnerships (0.2%) were made with the Bureau of Indian Affairs School. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

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 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). In 2021–22, the percentage of centers offering summer programming continued to increase to 96% (*N* = 140), which may indicate a gradual shift back to prepandemic operations. Washington centers operated on average 34 weeks during the 2019–20 school year, 36 weeks during the 2020–21 school year, and 34 weeks during the 2021–22 school year (*N* = 140); if they held summer programming, another 4.9 to 5.4 weeks were added (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. 2022: *N* = 140 centers. Data from continuation reports and the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Exhibit 7. Program operations by summer and school year.

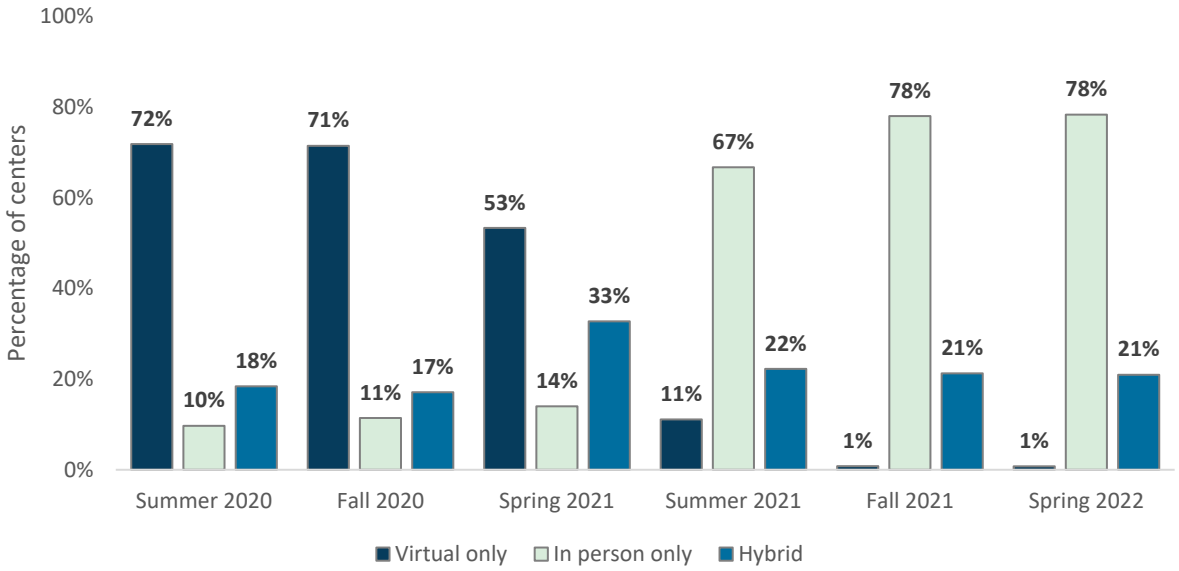
Program operations	2019–20		2020–21		2021–22	
	Summer (*N* = 87)	School year (*N* = 112)	Summer (*N* = 103)	School year (*N* = 108)	Summer (*N* = 135)	School year (*N* = 140)
Program **hours per week**	20.6	14.4	24.4	14.0	22.6	14.3
Program **days per week**	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.4	4.6
Program **weeks per summer/school year**	4.9	33.8	5.4	36.3	4.9	36.9

Note. Data from continuation reports and the 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 2021–22, most centers offered programming in person, illustrating a return to physical spaces after the pandemic (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Most centers offered in-person programming during the summer and fall 2021, which continued to increase in spring 2022.



Note. Summer 2020: *N* = 103 centers; fall 2020: *N* = 105 centers; spring 2021: *N* = 107 centers, summer 2021: *N* = 126, fall 2021: *N* = 127, spring 2022: *N* = 129, summer 2022: *N* = 8. Data from continuation reports and the 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 program improvement approaches used in the field emphasize the importance of staff for creating positive developmental settings for youth. The success of afterschool programs depends 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 with a wide spectrum of backgrounds and training. In 2021–22, school-year staff comprised administrators (16%), teachers (23%), other nonteaching school staff (19 %), college students (11%), community members (12%), subcontracted staff (5%), high school students (7%), parents (2%), and other staff (5%). Exhibit 9 shows the number of staff members who were paid and volunteered during the school year and the summer. The percentages of paid staff in 2021–22 demonstrated a large majority of staff paid during the regular school year (81%) and the summer (83%), like the 2020–21 programming year.

Exhibit 9. Most center staff in the 2019–20, 2020–21, and 2021–22 program years were paid staff.

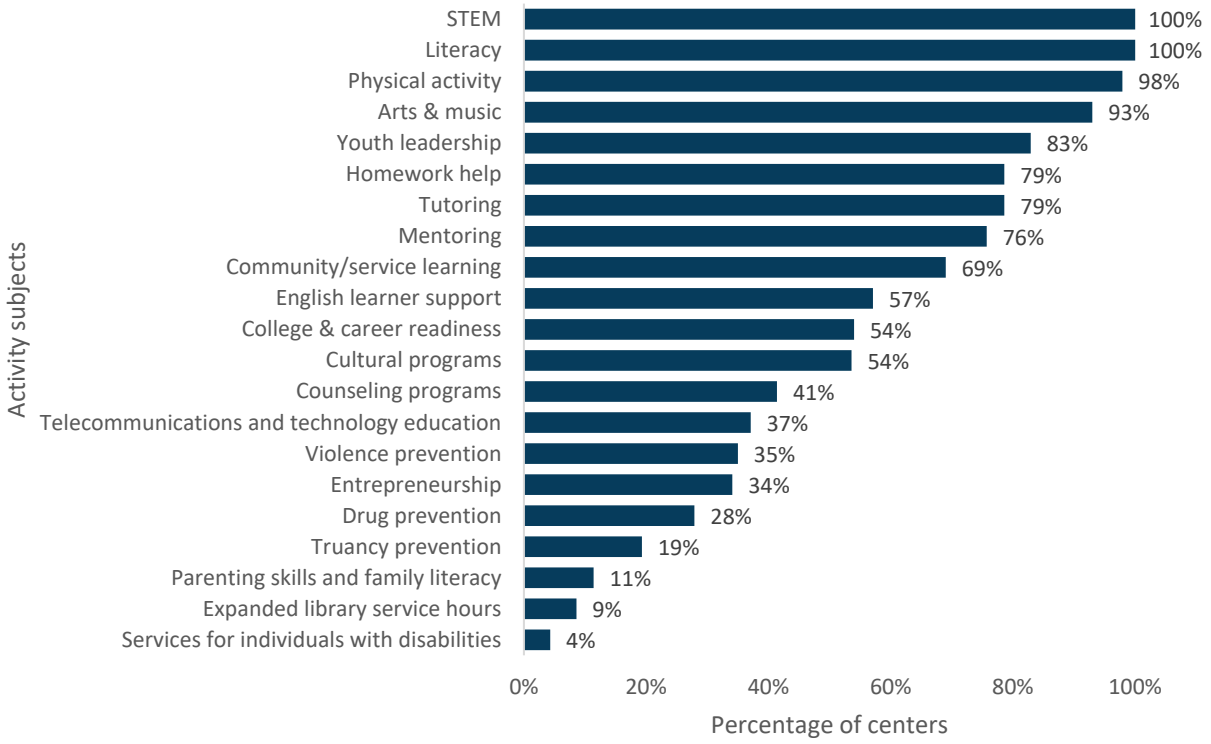
Program staff	2019–20		2020–21		2021–22	
	Summer (*N* = 87 centers)	School year (*N* = 112 centers)	Summer (*N* = 103 centers)	School year (*N* = 108 centers)	Summer (*N* = 135 centers)	School year (*N* = 140 centers)
Total staff	711	1,272	667	835	1,230	1,131
Paid staff	71%	61%	87%	80%	83%	81%
Volunteer staff	29%	39%	13%	20%	17%	19%

Note. Data from continuation reports and the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Center Activities

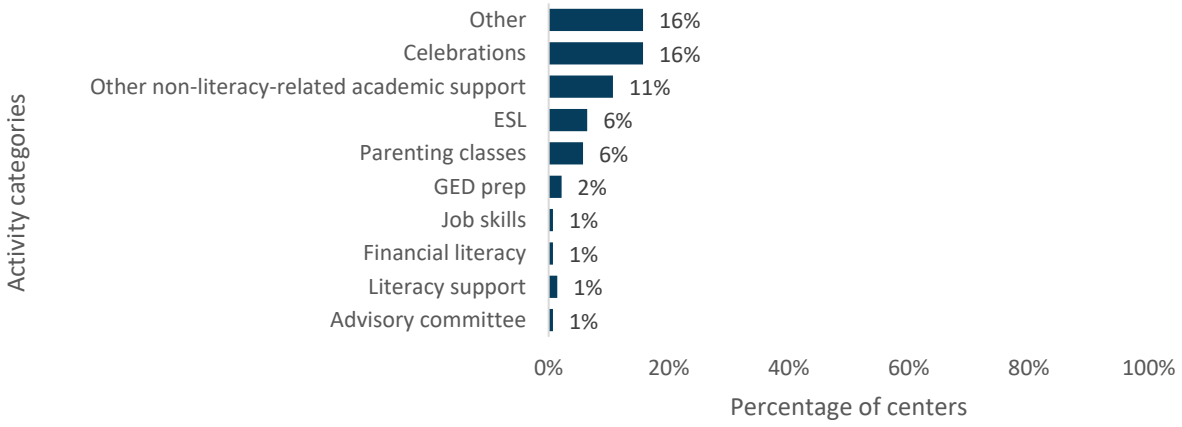
The staff working at a given 21st CCLC program and the activities offered to students attending it are critical elements for how youth experience and potentially benefit from their participation in 21st CCLC programs. Nationally, the 21st CCLC provide academic and nonacademic enrichment programs that reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students. This overarching charge encompasses multiple types of activities. During 2021–22, all centers offered STEM and literacy activities to students, whereas art and music, physical activity, youth leadership opportunities, and homework help also were offered at most centers (Exhibit 10). Of the 140 centers in Washington state, 55 offered adult family member activities, with activities categorized as *other* (e.g., resource/information sharing, produce delivery, and family engagement nights), celebrations, and other nonliteracy academic support being the most offered activities (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 10. Most centers offered STEM and literacy activities to students in 2021–22.



Note. N = 140 centers. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Exhibit 11. The most offered activities for adult family members (other and other support) in 2021–22 included activities such as information or resource sharing, produce and food deliveries, and family engagement nights.



Note. N = 55 centers. ESL = English as a second language. Prep = preparation. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

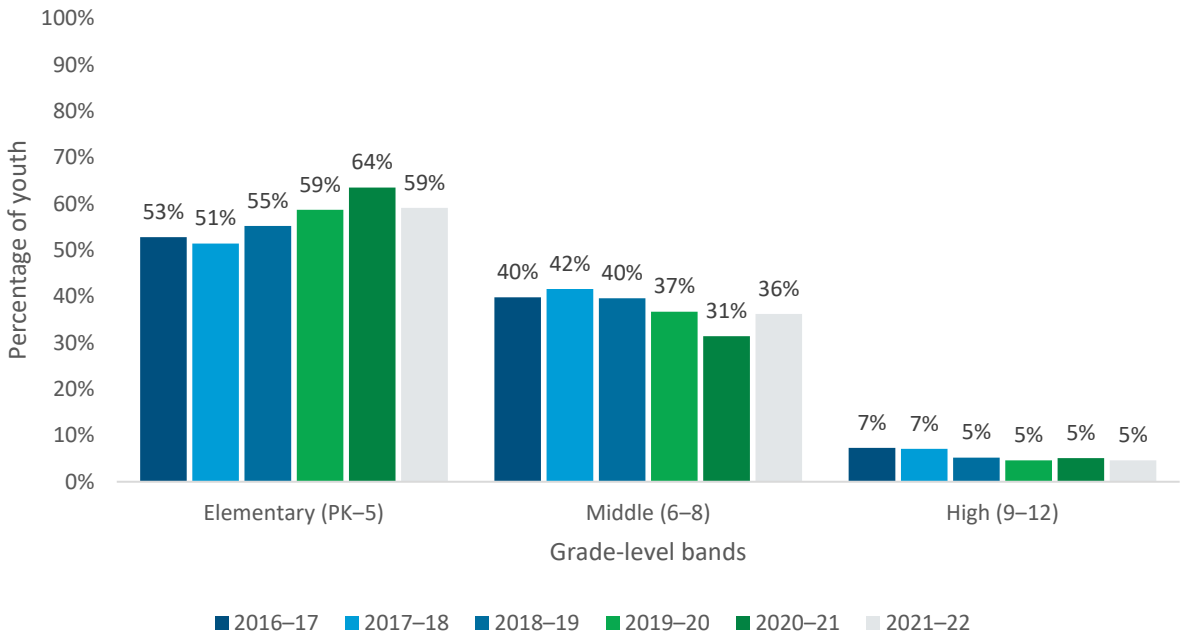
Student Characteristics

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 a set of unique qualities and experiences that can influence how they interact with the program. During the 2021–22 program year, programs in Washington served 14,283 students. In the exhibits that follow, some sample sizes reflect only the students we could match with state records (*n* = 12,588).

Exhibit 12 shows a consistent trend of centers serving elementary school youth across the last 7 program years. During the last 4 years, the percentage of youth in elementary school has increased slightly, whereas the percentage of youth in middle school has decreased slightly. Exhibit 13 shows the diverse needs of youth served by 21st CCLC programming.

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 12. In the last 7 program years, most 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, *N* = 14,283 in 2021—22. 2017–19 data: From the Washington Attendee Module and Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). 2021–22 data: From the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

Exhibit 13. Across the last 4 program years with data available, Washington 21st CCLC programs served diverse needs but overwhelmingly focused on serving youth eligible for and receiving free or reduced-price lunch. In 2021–22, a large drop in the number of English learners served occurred.

	% male	% female	% free or reduced-price lunch	% English learners	% special needs
2021–22	49%	51%	81%	35%	16%
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, *N* = 14,283 in 2021–22. We did not receive 2019–20 demographic data from OSPI. 2017–19 data: From the Washington Attendee Module and CEDARS. 2021–22 data: From the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

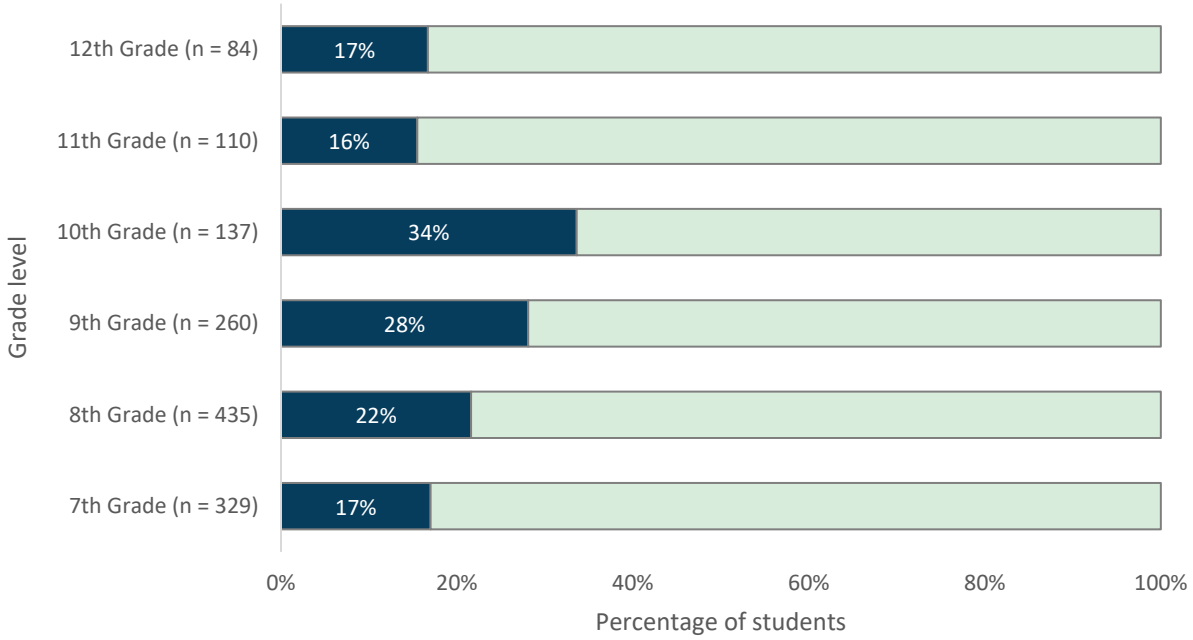
Student Baseline Descriptive Data: School Achievement and Attendance

The 21st CCLC program primarily serves youth academically at risk or who otherwise struggle in school. This subsection presents school-related data for youth who attended 21st CCLC programming in 2021–22. 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, 2020–21, and 2021–22 include grade-point averages (GPAs) and the percentage of attempted credits earned. After showing the academic data, we show data related to school-day absences for youth who participated in programming during the 2021–22 year.

None of the data in this subsection relates 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 were available for seventh through 12th graders who participated in 21st CCLC programming during the 2021–22 school year (*N* = 1,355). These middle and high school students averaged a GPA of 2.83 on a 4.0 scale during the 2021–22 academic year. To understand the proportion of students who might be academically at risk, we categorized students who had a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or below as at risk. Overall, 22% of students served in the 2021–22 program year had a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or less based on 2021–22 academic records. Exhibit 14 shows the proportion of students at risk by grade level.

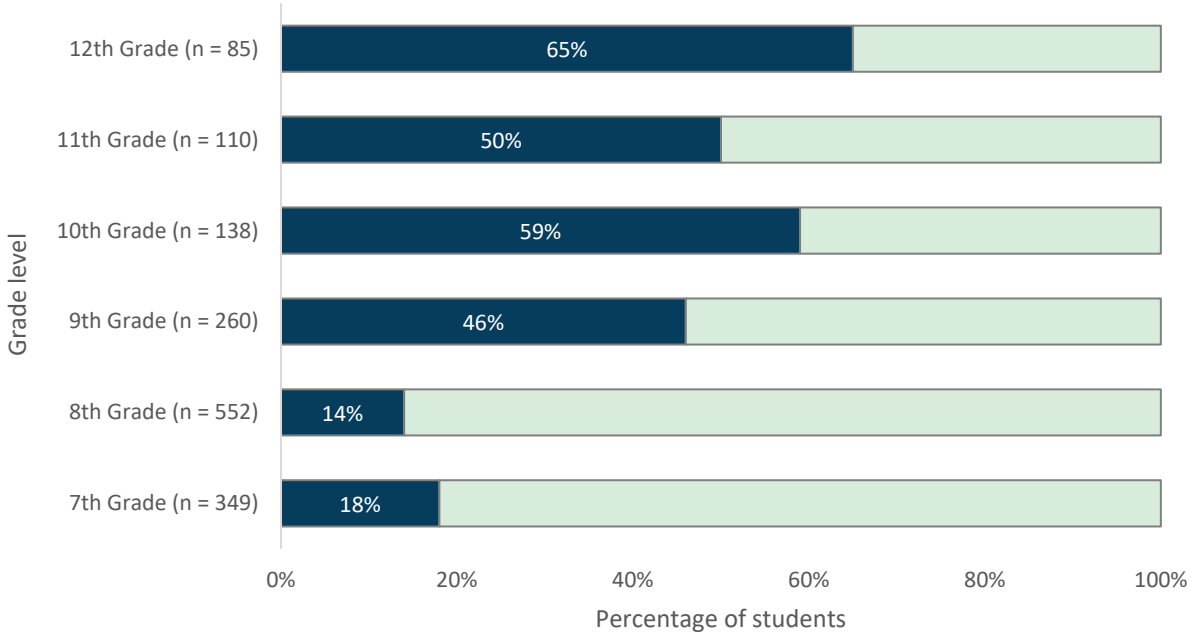
Exhibit 14. Tenth and 11th graders had the largest proportion of students with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or less.



Note. Students from seventh grade to 12: *N* = 1,355. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

Data for the percentage of attempted credits earned for the current school year were also available for seventh- through 12th-grade students who participated in 21st CCLC programming during the 2021–22 school year (*N* = 1,494). In 2021–22, these students earned 90% of the credits they attempted on average. Like the GPA data above, we wanted to understand the proportion of students who might be academically at risk. We categorized students who earned less than 100% of credits attempted as at risk. Overall, 30% of students served in the 2021–22 program year earned less than 100% of the credits they attempted based on 2021–22 academic records. Exhibit 15 shows the proportion of students at risk by grade level.

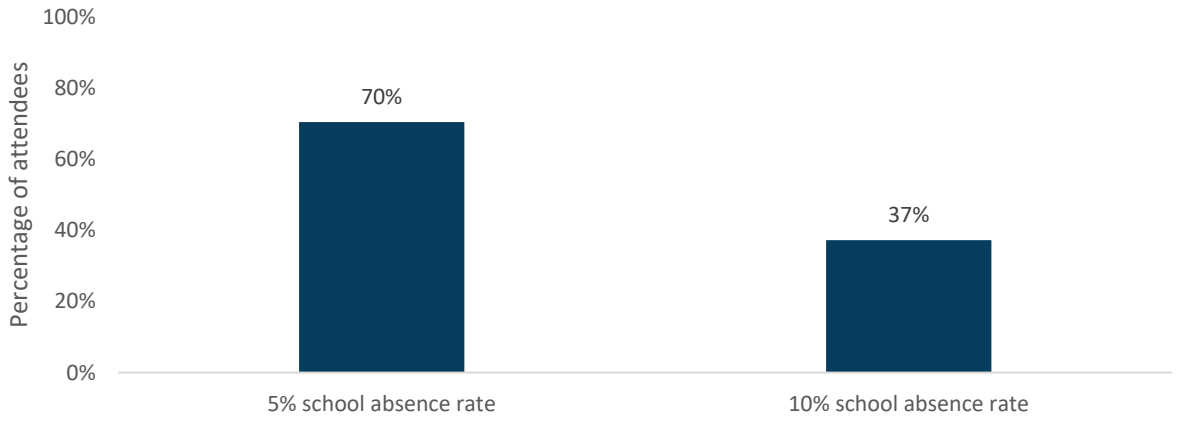
Exhibit 15. High school students served in the 21st CCLC program appear to be academically at risk, with 46% to 65% of students earning less than 100% of the credits they attempted.



Note. *N* = 1,494 students in Grades 7–12. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

For 2021–22, data on school days attended were 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* = 12,121 students). Chronic absenteeism is defined by OSPI 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 16).

Exhibit 16. In 2021–22, more than 66% of youth attendees had a 5% school-day absence rate, whereas more than 33% were chronically absent.



Note. N = 12,191 students. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

Summary

The 21st CCLC program, according to the authorizing legislation, serves youth who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. Our analysis of baseline outcome data showed that many youths attending 21st CCLC programming in Washington are, in fact, the students the 21st CCLC intends to serve. Students most in need of extra supports (academically at risk, chronically absent, and high poverty) appear to make their way to these programs. Of course, this finding 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 tend 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 did student characteristics relate to students' level of program attendance?
- How did participation in different activity types relate to program participation rates and student academic performance?

Findings	Aligned recommendations
Student program attendance • Student attendance levels increased in the 2021–22 program year; 14,283 students attended programming, of whom 6,040 (42%) attended regularly. • Overall, attendance during 2021–22 was closer to prepandemic levels; attendance was higher than the previous year across all 30-day attendance bands, except for the 120 or more days of attendance band. **Student program attendance and student characteristics** • Most regular (68%) and nonregular (58%) attendees identified as Hispanic in 2021–22.	• Continue to express the importance of students consistently attending programs. • Explore what strategies were successful in retaining students, and document these best practices. • Explore ways to promote youth choice in programming that enable youth to self-direct into activities that represent their interests.

Findings	Aligned recommendations
• Most regular attendees (84%) qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. • A few regular attendees were limited English proficient (38%) or identified as having special needs (14%). **Student program attendance and program characteristics** • Less than half of student attendees spent most of their time in STEM or art activities for 3 months or more. Approximately a fifth participated in these activities for 6 months or more. • Students with high attendance levels across all school levels (elementary, middle, and high) tend to spend more time in specific activities, such as STEM, the arts, and sports. • No association was found between program attendance levels and students earning less than 100% of attempted credits or having less than a 2.0 GPA. • Elementary and middle school students anticipated to need intensive reading and mathematics supports also tended to have the highest program attendance. • High school students in programs with higher percentages of teachers involved in programming had higher attendance levels, whereas middle school students tended to have lower attendance levels when more teachers provided programming.	• 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.

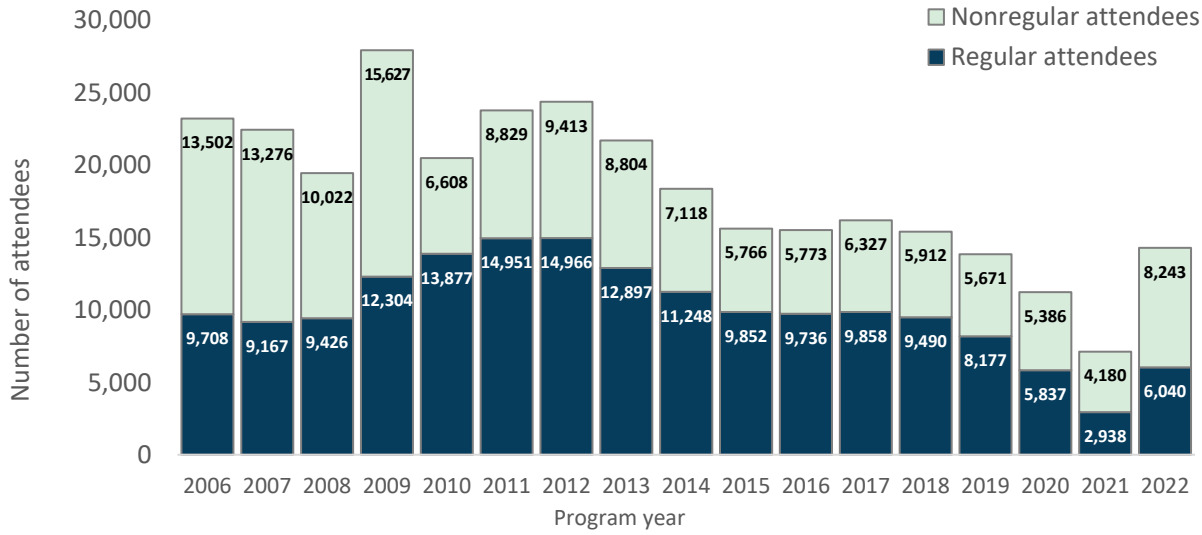
Student Program Attendance

Evaluation Question 2: What did program attendance look like?

The saying "youth vote with their feet" became apparent when examining attendance levels for the Washington 21st CCLC program. Program attendance as an intermediate outcome indicator 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 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 17 shows the number of attendees across program years. The percentage of regular attendees (students who attended a total of 30 days or more during the reporting period) was consistent across the 2011–19 program periods (59% to 63%). In 2019–20, this percentage

decreased slightly to 52%, before falling in 2020–21 to 41%. In 2021–22, the total number of students attending programming increased to 14,283, and the percentage of regular attendees increased slightly to 42%.

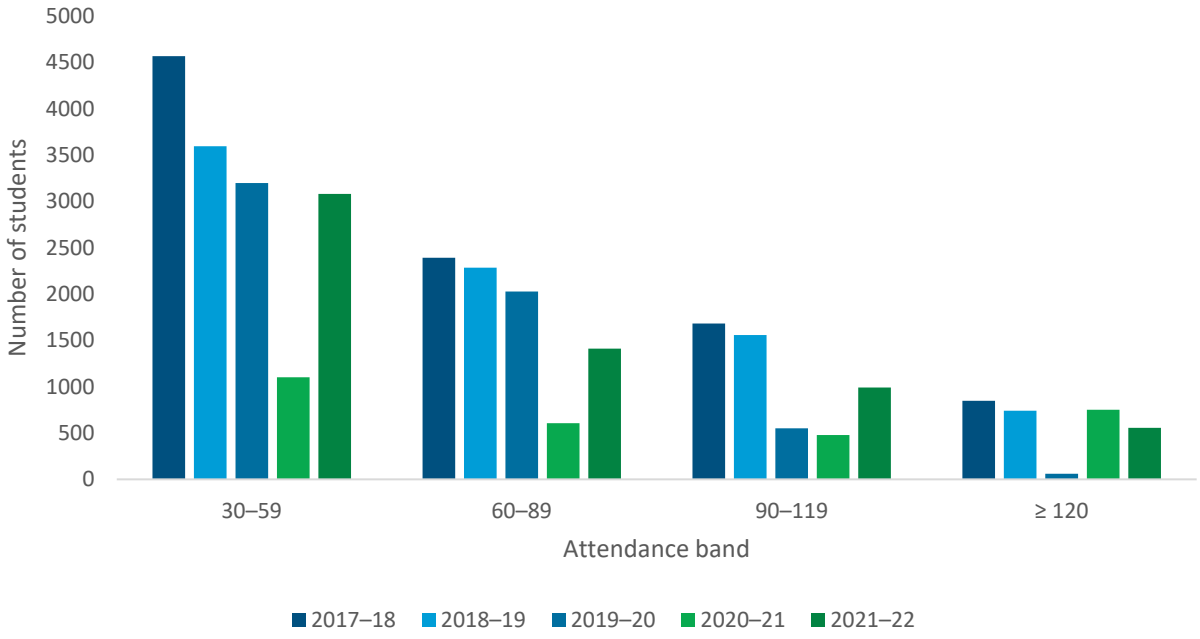
Exhibit 17. Student attendance levels increased in the 2021–22 program year. The percentage of regular attendees increased slightly compared with 2020–21.



Note. The decline in attendance levels between 2009 and 2010 represents 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 relate perhaps to the decline in the number of grantees and centers awarded, as well as to the COVID-19 pandemic. 2006–20 data: From the Washington Attendee Module. 2021–22 data: From the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

We also examined attendance across 30-day attendance bands (e.g., 30–59 days and 60–89 days). In previous program years before the onset of the pandemic, as well as in the most recent program year, the number of students attending 21st CCLC programming declined steadily with each increasing 30-day attendance band (Exhibit 18). 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, 22% in 2019–20, and 16% in 2020–21. In 2021–22, approximately 26% of regular attendees participated for 30 to 39 days.

Exhibit 18. During the 2021–22 program year, attendance was higher than the previous year across all 10-day attendance bands, except for the 120 or more days attendance band. Overall, attendance was closer to prepandemic levels.

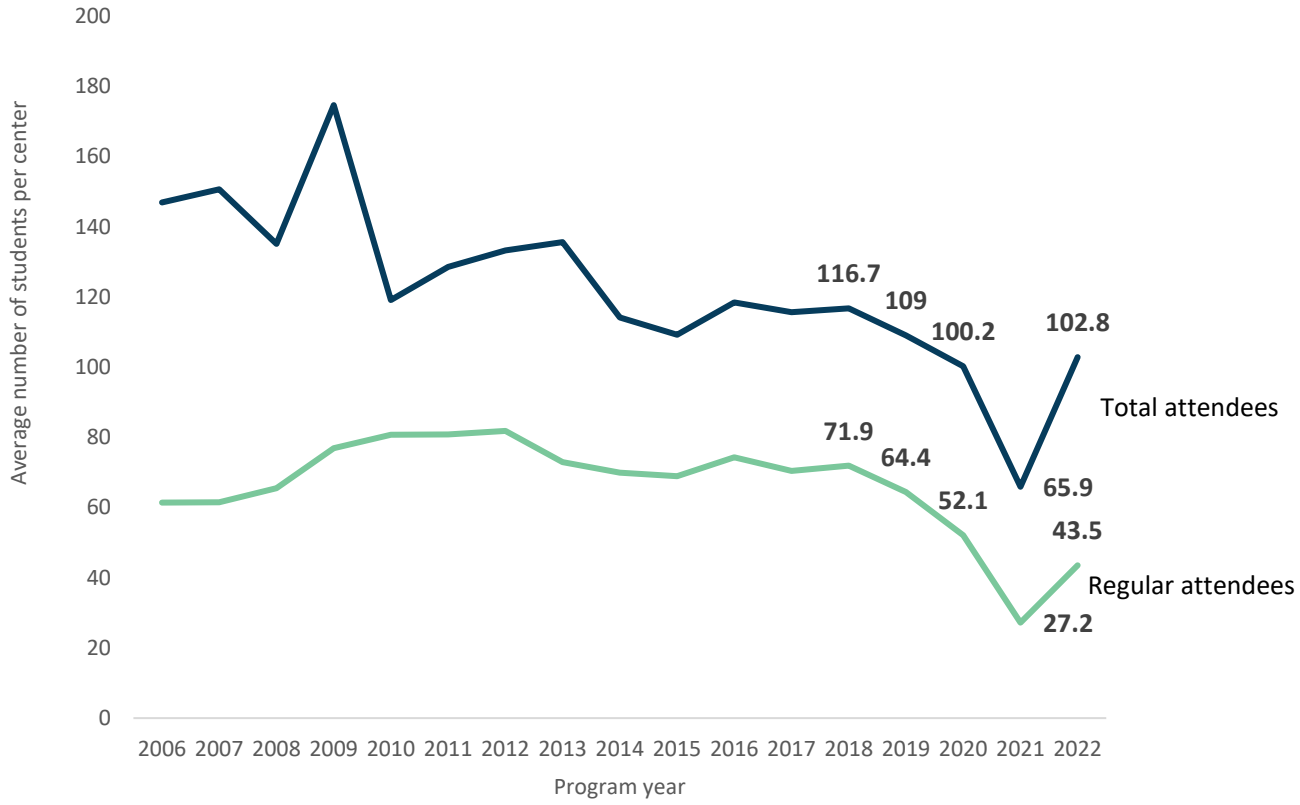


Note. Data from the Washington Attendee Module and the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Overall, the mean school year attendance for regular attendees (*n* = 5,034) was 74 days in 2021–22, with a median of 67 days. For the summer, the average number of days of attendance for regular attendees (*n* = 686) was 49 days, with a median of 31 days.

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 19). In 2021–22, each 21st CCLC center in Washington had approximately 103 total attendees and 43 regular attendees on average, with centers serving a range of 1 to 514 students.

Exhibit 19. Centers have seen average total attendance and regular attendance levels decline in the past several years, especially during the pandemic school years of 2019–20 and 2020–21. Attendance and regular attendance levels rebounded somewhat during 2021–22.



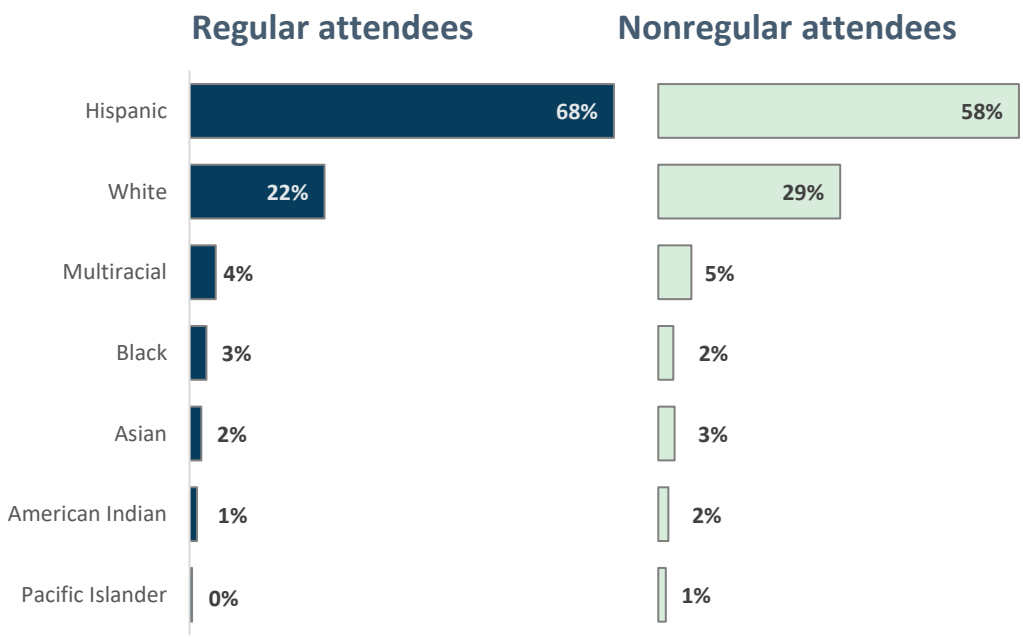
Note. 2006–20 data: From the Washington Attendee Module. 2021–22 data: From the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

Student Program Attendance and Student Characteristics

> *Evaluation Question 3: How did student characteristics relate to students' level of program attendance?*

During the 2021–22 school year, approximately 68% of all regular attendees were identified as Hispanic and 22% of regular attendees were identified as White. Exhibit 20 outlines the racial/ethnic backgrounds of 21st CCLC attendees in Washington.[1]

Exhibit 20. Most regular and nonregular attendees identified as Hispanic.

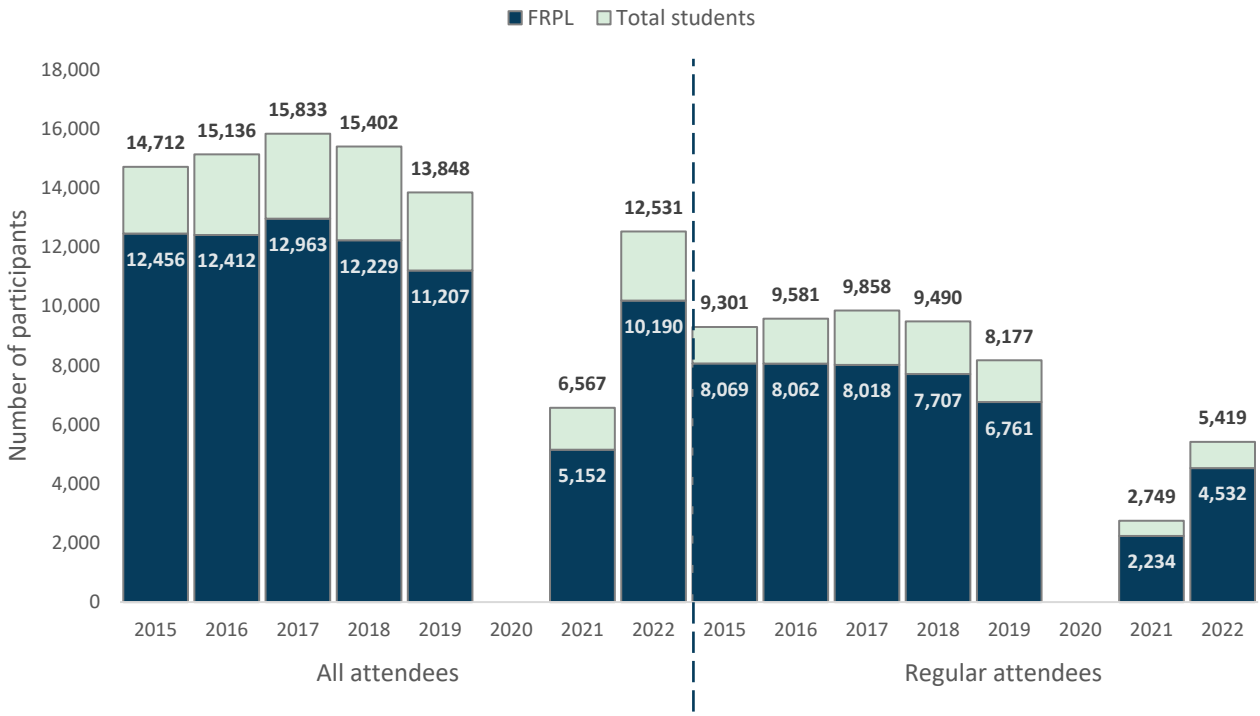


Note. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal and CEDARS.

[1] Please note that the data represented in Exhibits 20 through 23 include only students we could match in the CEDARS data system (*n* = 12,588; 88%).

The 21st CCLC program specifically provides afterschool activities and services to students living in high-poverty communities attending 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 reach this target population. The number of attendees eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is shown in Exhibit 21. An estimated 81% of all attendees and 84% of regular attendees were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch during the 2021–22 programming period.

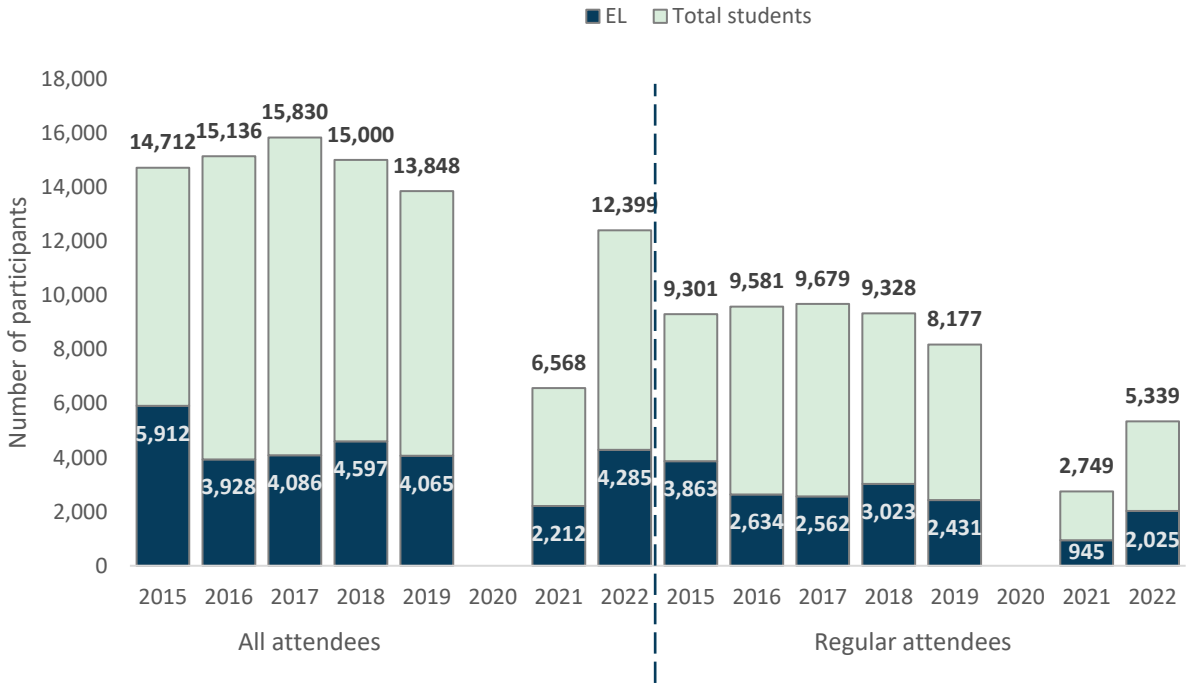
Exhibit 21. 21st CCLC programming in Washington has been serving most youth who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.



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 2006–14 from this figure to maximize readability. We did not receive 2019–20 demographic data from OSPI. Data from the 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 English learners (ELs) or as having special needs. As shown in Exhibit 22, during 2021–22, 35% of all participants and 38% of regular attendees were ELs, which is like the 2020–21 program year.

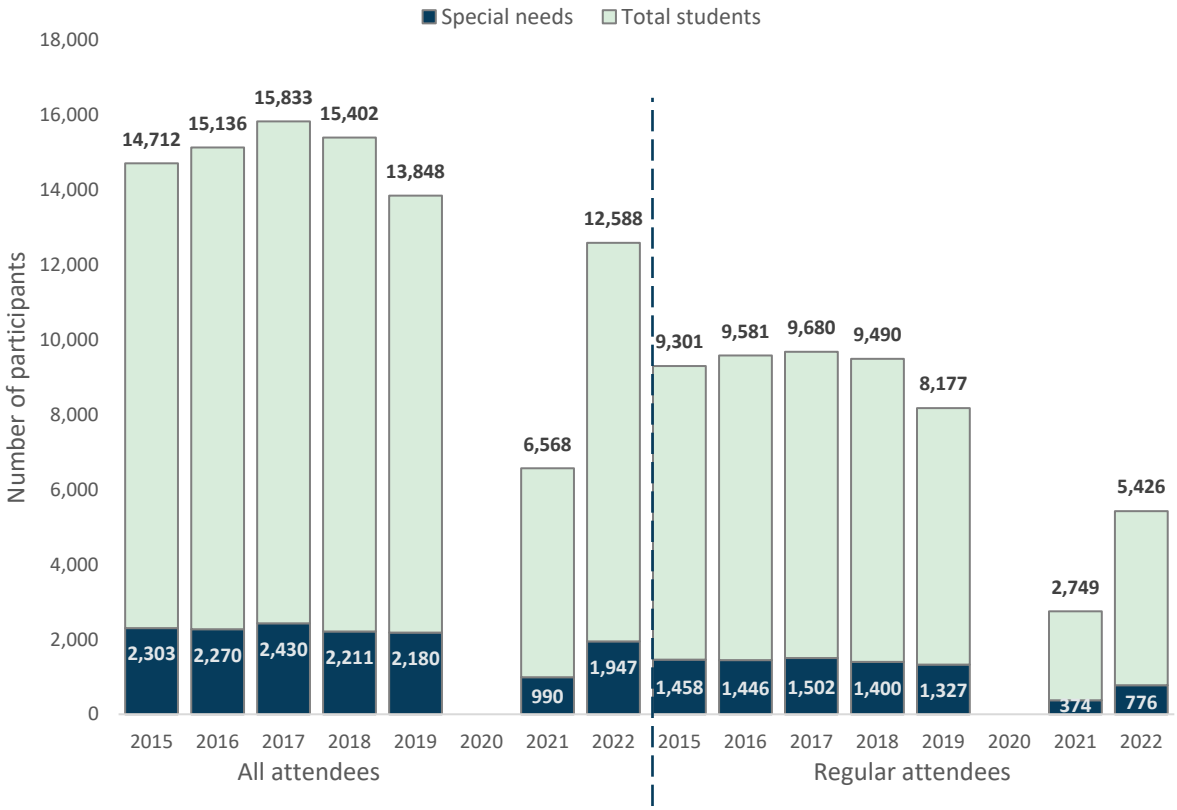
Exhibit 22. Approximately 20% of youth who participated in 21st CCLC programming in 2021–22 were ELs.



Note. EL = English learners. We do not show the number of students whose EL status was unknown. We removed program year data for 2006–14 from this exhibit to maximize readability. We did not receive 2019–20 demographic data from OSPI. Data from the Washington Attendee Module, Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal, and CEDARS.

Exhibit 23 shows the total number of attendees, the total number of regular attendees, and the number of attendees who have special needs. During 2021–22, 16% of all attendees and 14% of regular attendees had a special need, down slightly from the 2020–21 program year.

Exhibit 23. A few 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 2006–14 from this exhibit to maximize readability. We did not receive 2019–20 demographic data from OSPI. Data from the Washington Attendee Module, Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal, and CEDARS.

Student Program Attendance and Program Characteristics

> *Evaluation Question 4: How did participation in different activity types relate to program participation rates and student academic performance?*

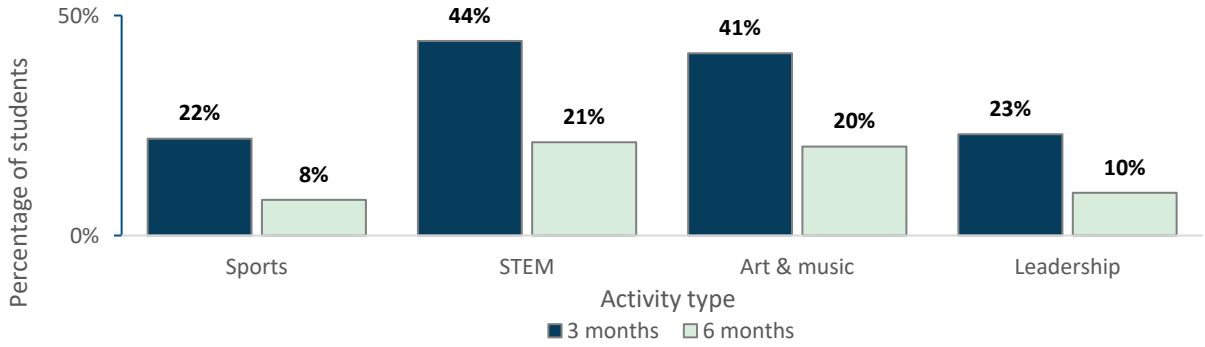
In this section, we examine key differences in center and student characteristics for groups of students who attend more frequently compared with those students who attend less frequently and any differences by school level (elementary, middle, and high school).

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 2021–22 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. We wanted to understand the proportion of students spending most of their time in these activities consistently across the program year. In Exhibit 24, we display the proportion of students in these activities for 3 months or more and for 6 months or more.

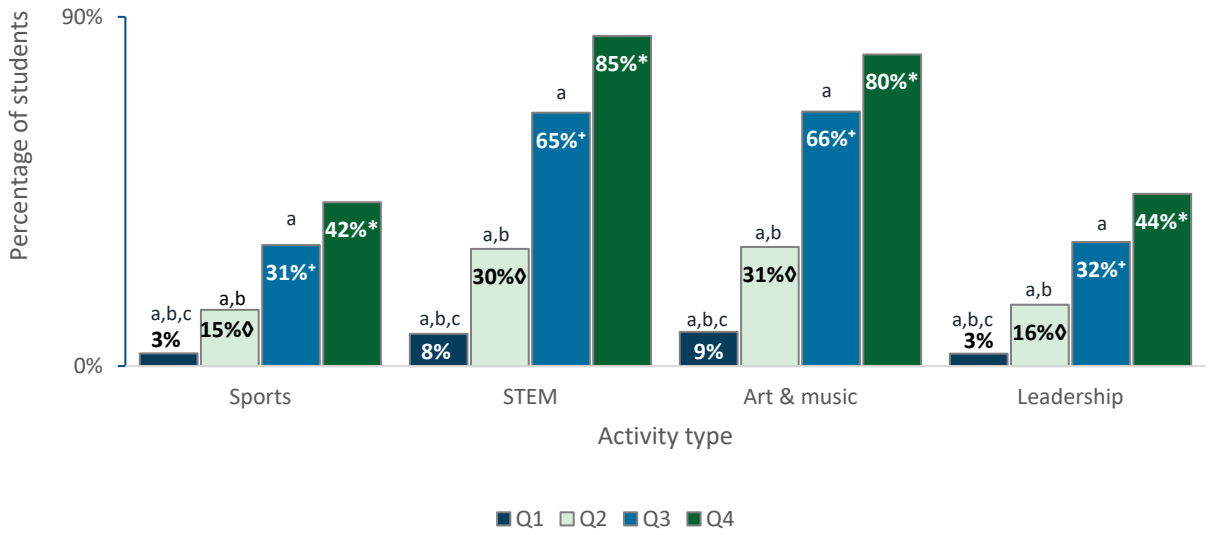
Exhibit 24. A little less than half of the students spent most of their time in STEM or art and music activities for 3 months or more. Percentages were lower across all activity types for students who participated in them 6 months or more.



Note. N = 14,283 students in Grades PK–12. Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data 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 25–27) and for 6 months or more (Exhibits 28–30). Our analyses showed that students with high attendance levels tended to spend more time in specific activities, such as STEM and the arts, across all school levels. For example, in Exhibit 27, at least 80% of elementary school students with the highest attendance levels spent most of their time in STEM or art and music activities.

Exhibit 25. At least 80% of elementary school students with the highest attendance levels spent most of their time in STEM or art and music activities across 3 or more months.



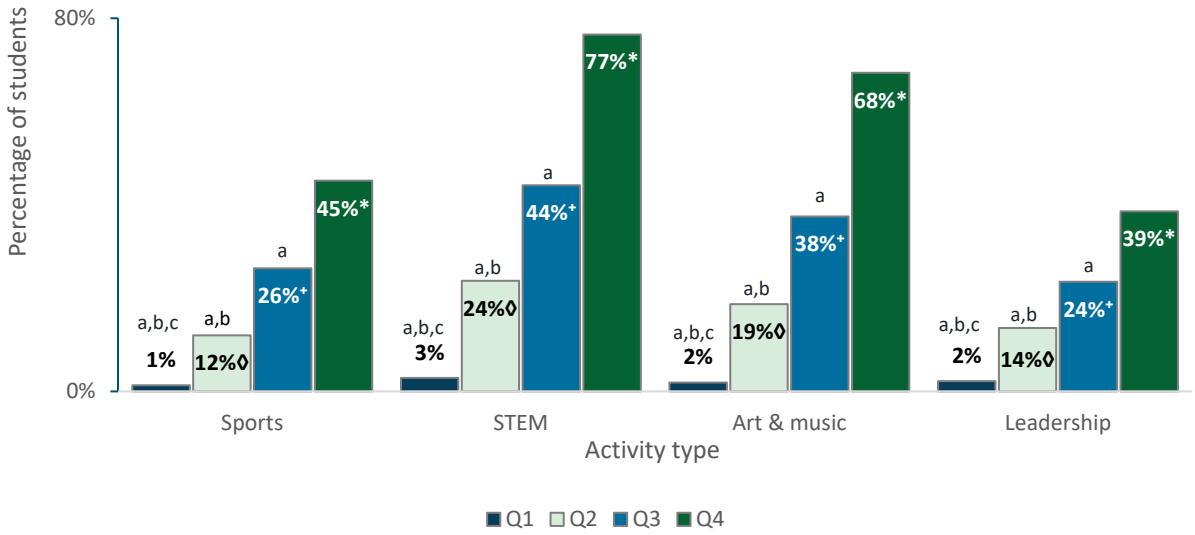
Note. N = 8,446 elementary school students (Grades PK–5). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for elementary school students: 7.1 days (Q1), 20.1 days (Q2), 42.6 days (Q3), 100.2 days (Q4).

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

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

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

Exhibit 26. Approximately 75% of middle school students with the highest attendance levels spent most of their time in STEM or art and music activities across 3 or more months.



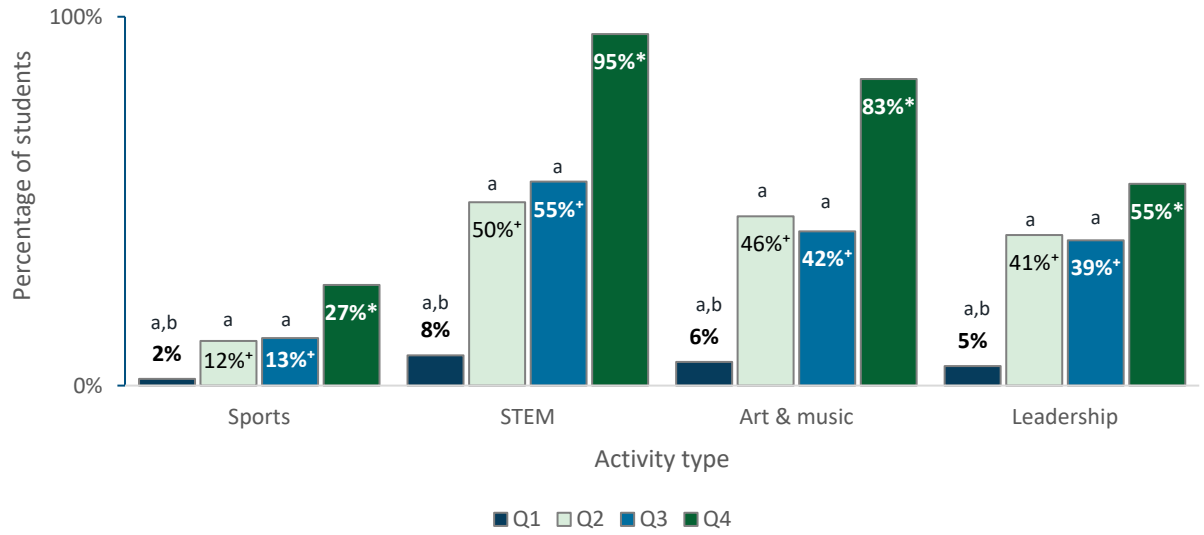
Note. N = 5,167 middle school students (Grades 6–8). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for middle school students: 2.2 days (Q1), 9.3 days (Q2), 22.7 days (Q3), 67.0 days (Q4).

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

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

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

Exhibit 27. More than 80% of high school students with the highest attendance levels spent most of their time in STEM or art and music activities across 3 or more months.



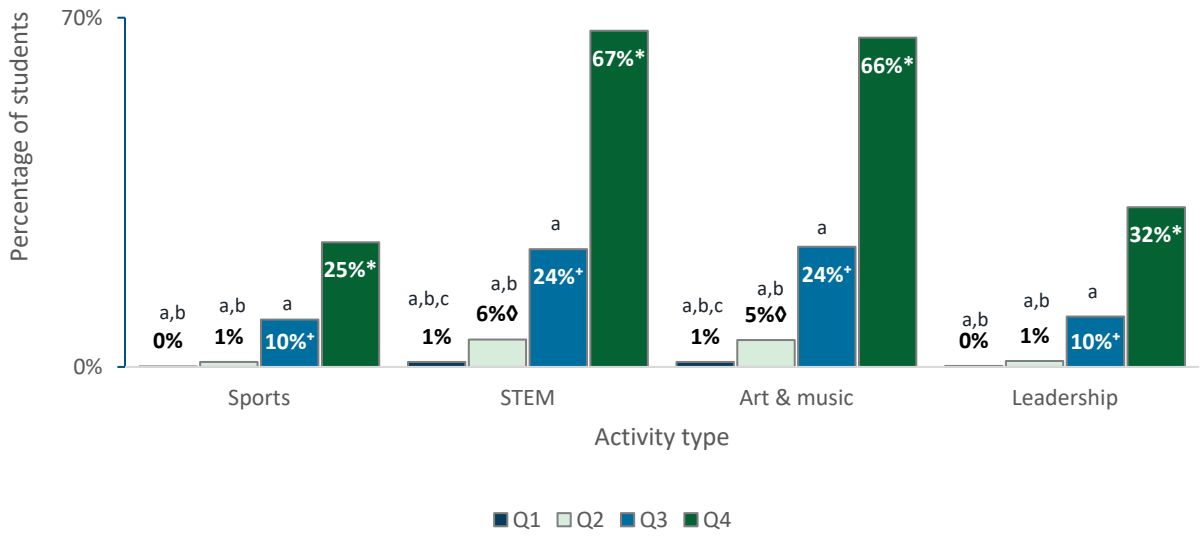
Note. N = 670 high school students (Grades 9–12). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for high school students: 2.4 days (Q1), 10.6 days (Q2), 23.2 days (Q3), 56.8 days (Q4).

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

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

For students who attended 3 months across all school levels (elementary, middle, and high), a statistically significant difference was found between attendance quartile groups for STEM, the arts, leadership activities, and sports. We also explored the same analyses for students who spent 6 months or more in these types of activities (Exhibits 28–30) and found similar distributions for each school level. These results also were statistically significant as well. Overall, students with high attendance levels tended to spend more time in specific activities, especially STEM and the arts. This finding likely shows a strong connection between youth interest in specific content areas and attendance.

Exhibit 28. Approximately 66% of elementary school students with the highest attendance levels spent most of their time in STEM or art and music activities across 6 or more months.



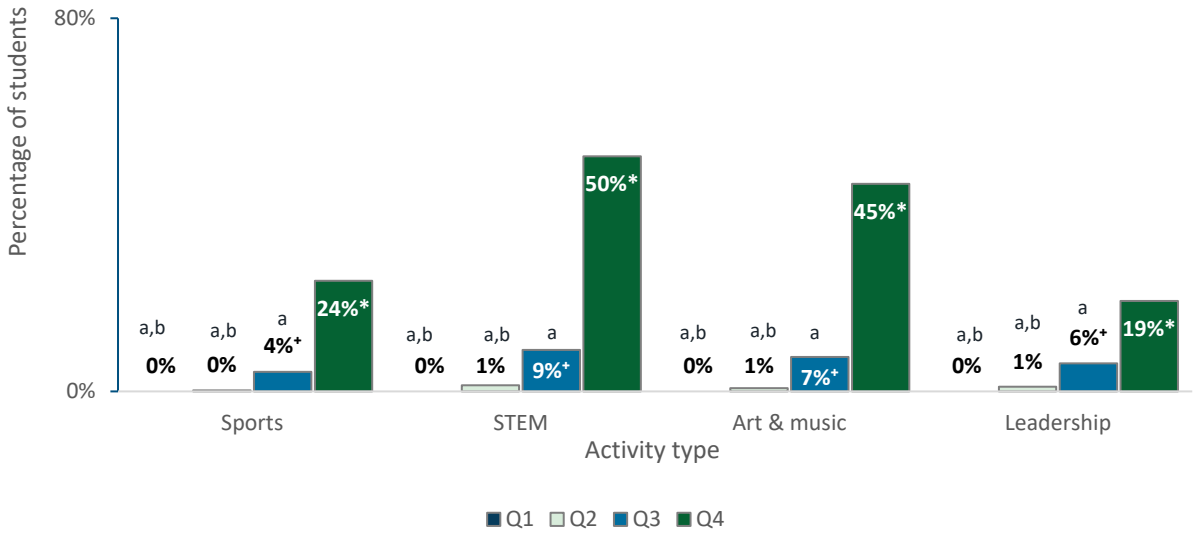
Note. N = 8,446 elementary school students (Grades PK–5). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for elementary school students: 7.1 days (Q1), 20.1 days (Q2), 42.6 days (Q3), 100.2 days (Q4).

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

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

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

Exhibit 29. Approximately 50% of middle school students with the highest attendance levels spent most of their time in STEM or art and music activities across 6 or more months.

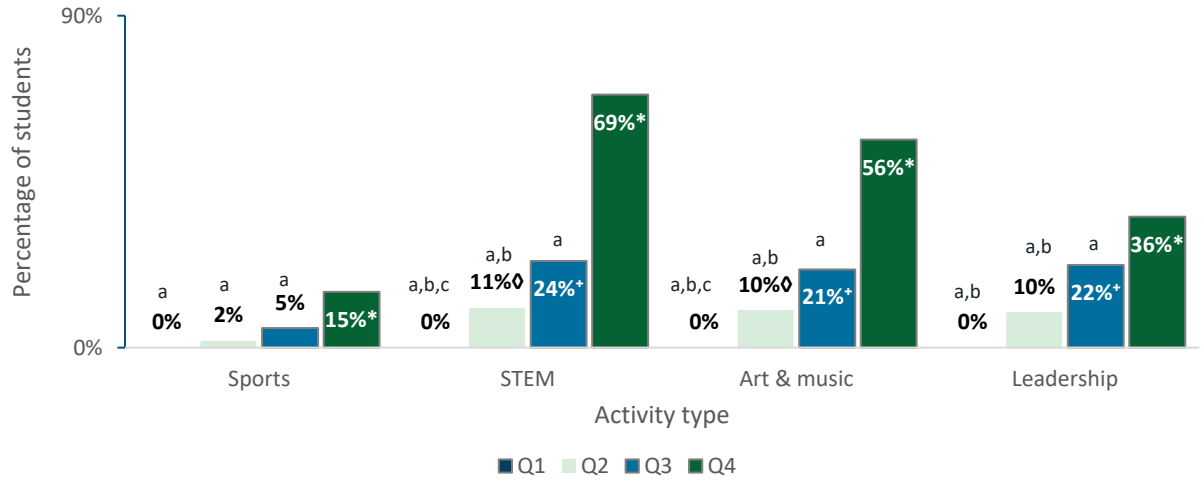


Note. N = 5,167 middle school students (Grades 6–8). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for middle school students: 2.2 days (Q1), 9.3 days (Q2), 22.7 days (Q3), 67.0 days (Q4).

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

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

Exhibit 30. More than 50% of high school students with the highest attendance levels spent most of their time in STEM or art and music activities across 6 or more months.



Note. *N* = 670 high school students (Grades 9–12). Activity categories are not mutually exclusive. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for high school students: 2.4 days (Q1), 10.6 days (Q2), 23.2 days (Q3), 56.8 days (Q4).

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

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

$\Diamond p < .05$, indicating that the percentage of students for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with a "c" 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 2021–22 GPA (2.0 or less) or percentage of attempted credits earned (less than 100%) for students in Grades 7–12. We found that all attendance levels had similar proportions of students earning less than 100% of credits attempted or less than a 2.0.

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 task. This support is most commonly offered for homework help, when youth need assistance in completing a given assignment. These activities react 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 in which 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 and reading circles). Youth may have been recruited to participate in these activities given their need to further develop skills or may have self-selected into the activity given their 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 cultivates 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.

Program staff reported what level of mathematics and reading supports they anticipated each student needing upon enrollment into the program. Each month, staff reported what level of reading and mathematics supports the students received. Exhibit 31 outlines the number of students anticipated to need Level 3 reading or mathematics supports versus the actual. Actual numbers reflect whether a student received Level 3 supports within any month of the program year.

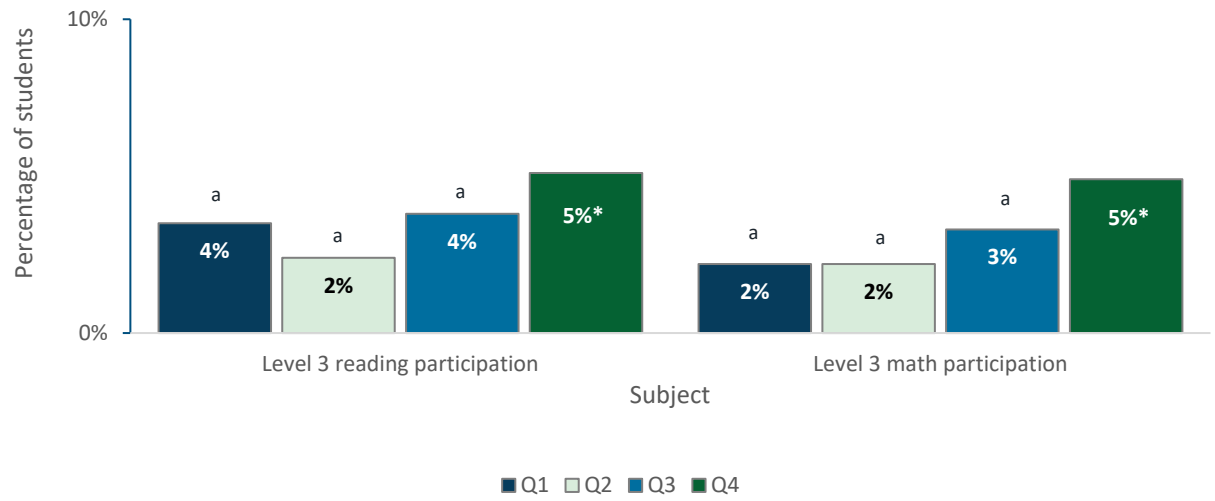
Exhibit 31. Anticipated versus actual Level 3 supports in reading and math.

Level 3 supports	Anticipated	Actual
Level 3 reading supports	500	699
Level 3 mathematics supports	420	755

Note. Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal.

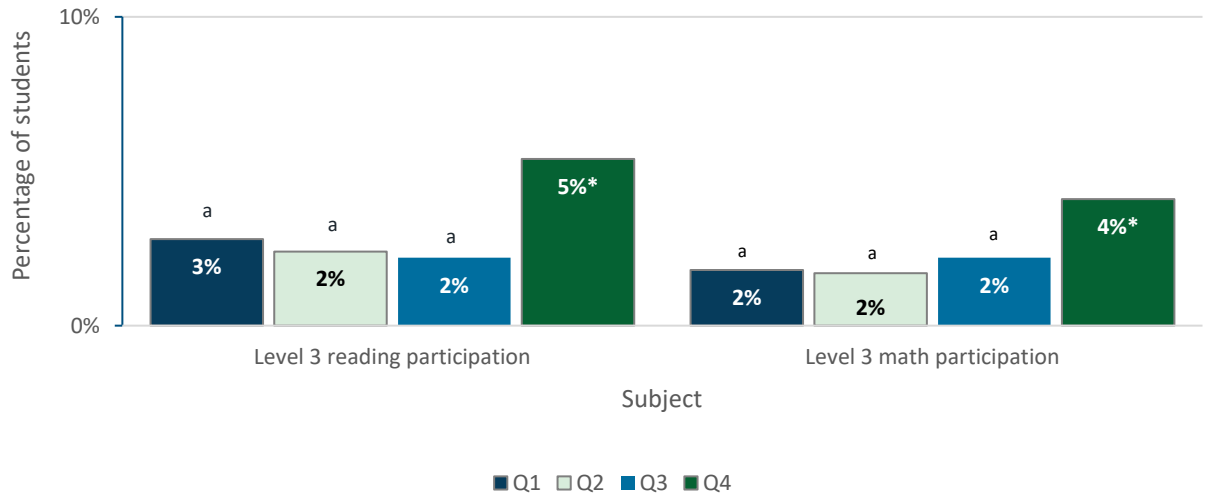
We examined the relationship between program attendance levels and students anticipated to need the most intensive supports (Level 3) in reading or mathematics. Students with the highest attendance levels had a higher proportion of students anticipated as needing Level 3 mathematics or reading supports for elementary and middle school students but not high school students (Exhibits 32 and 33).

Exhibit 32. Elementary school students anticipated to need intensive reading and mathematics support also tend to have the highest program attendance.



Note. N = 8,446 elementary school students (Grades PK–5). Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for elementary school students: 7.1 days (Q1), 20.1 days (Q2), 42.6 days (Q3), 100.2 days (Q4).
*$p < .05$, indicating that the mean percentage for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

Exhibit 33. Middle school students anticipated to need intensive reading and mathematics support also tend to have the highest program attendance.

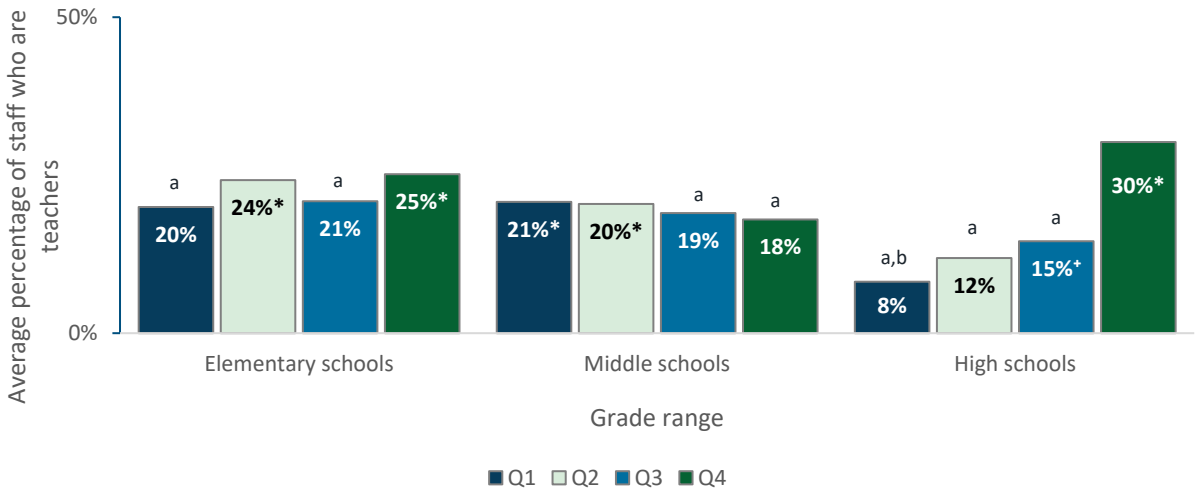


Note. *N* = 5,167 middle school students (Grades 6–8). Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for middle school students: 2.2 days (Q1), 9.3 days (Q2), 22.7 days (Q3), 67.0 days (Q4).
*$p < .05$, indicating that the mean percentage for the quartile was significantly higher than quartile labels with an "a" value.

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 student overall program attendance. For elementary school students, a clear association was not found between attendance levels and the proportion of teachers involved in programming; however, for middle school students, a higher proportion of teacher involvement was associated with lower attendance levels, whereas for high school students, the inverse was true, with a higher proportion of teacher involvement associated with higher attendance levels (Exhibit 34). Interestingly, this finding differs from that found for the 2020–21 program year, when a higher proportion of teachers involved in programming was associated with higher attendance levels for elementary school students but was associated with lower attendance for high school students.

Exhibit 34. High school students in programs with higher percentages of teachers involved in programming had higher attendance levels, whereas middle school students in programs with higher percentages of teachers involved in programming tended to have lower attendance levels.



Note. N = 8,446 elementary school students (Grades PK–5); 5,167 middle school students (Grades 6–8); and 670 high school students (Grades 9–12). Data from the Washington 21st CCLC Data Portal. Average number of days attended by quartile for elementary school students: 7.1 days (Q1), 20.1 days (Q2), 42.6 days (Q3), 100.2 days (Q4); for middle school students: 2.2 days (Q1), 9.3 days (Q2), 22.7 days (Q3), 67.0 days (Q4); for high school students: 2.4 days (Q1), 10.6 days (Q2), 23.2 days (Q3), 56.8 days (Q4).

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

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

Summary

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 and the arts. We also found that a higher proportion of students who needed to improve on their mathematics or reading skills, despite the small number receiving these supports, were associated with higher youth attendance levels and that centers with a higher proportion of school-day teachers as staff were associated with higher youth attendance levels for high schools.

These findings, however, are not causal and do not indicate that offering more STEM or art and music 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 most 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.

Chapter 3. Youth Program Experiences and Learning Engagement in the Classroom

Consistent with our conceptual framework, youth program attendance, as highlighted in the previous section, may indicate some measure of youth engagement in 21st CCLC programming. Program attendance data alone, however, do not provide information concerning other factors that may play a role in how frequently youth attend programming. AIR collected data from student attendees and the school-day teachers of student attendees in spring 2022 to learn about the experiences of students and teacher perceptions of student learning engagement in the school-day classroom. The target sample for the student survey consisted of regular program attendees (students attending 30 days or more) in Grades 6–12, whereas the target sample for the teacher survey was school-day teachers of students in Grades K–5. In analyzing students' and teachers' survey responses, we have addressed the following questions:

- What were the experiences of students attending 21st CCLC programming during the 2021–22 program year?
- How did students' expectations for programming compare with their actual experiences?
- Did student experiences in programming differ between students in middle and high school settings?
- To what extent did teacher-reported student engagement in learning change during the 2021–22 program year?

Below we provide a summary of findings we presented in a separate report, based on the data obtained from the student and teacher surveys. For a more thorough review of the data, please see the full report located in the Appendix.

Findings

In spring 2022, 753 students (693 students in Grades 6–8 and 60 students in Grades 9–12) responded to a student survey, and school-day teachers completed 1,421 surveys about their students in Grades K–5.

STUDENT PROGRAM EXPERIENCES

- Most (92%) students said they attended 21st CCLC mostly or completely in person, and more than 80% of students said they participated in 21st CCLC at least once a week.
- More than 33% of students thought their afterschool program helped them make new friends, find out what they like to do, or feel good about themselves.
- Approximately 75% of students felt their afterschool program provided them with things to do that they enjoyed, helped them get better at something they were interested in, or helped them feel connected to caring adults most days or every day.
- Most students got to choose how they spent their time (84%) or which activities to participate in (77%).
- Students were asked to describe a positive program experience. Common themes included the following:
  - Making new friends/socializing with other students
  - Spending time with friends
  - Playing games or sports
  - Participating in fun activities and projects
  - Participating in hands-on activities/creating something
  - Cooking/participating in activities with food
  - Going on field trips
  - Receiving academic support
  - Spending time with a supportive/caring adult
  - Self-improvement/getting better at something
  - Being in a happy/safe environment
  - Experiencing something new
  - Helping someone
- Students described what they gained or learned from this positive experience. Common themes included the following:
  - Learning something new
  - Improving academic skills
  - Forming new friendships
  - Improving self-confidence
  - Improving social skills
  - Making connections with other students or staff
  - Feeling happy and having fun

  - Showing empathy and kindness for others
  - Having new experiences
- Students described how they applied what they gained or learned to the challenges of this year. Common themes included the following:
  - Using new skills outside the program (e.g., at home or with friends)
  - Self-improving
  - Talking to new people
  - Using skills during the school day
  - Improving on schoolwork/grades
  - Persevering/overcoming challenges or fears
  - Using skills to cope with stress/feel happy
  - Pursuing interests further/trying new things

STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING EXPERIENCES

- For many experiences, such as getting help with homework, working on projects, playing games or sports, or making new friends, a larger percentage of students reported that they did this in their afterschool program than the proportion that hoped to do so.
- Approximately 66% of students had their expectations met for numerous experiences (e.g., try new things, play games or sports, make new friends, become better at doing things I'm interested in, and have lots of fun).

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMMING EXPERIENCES

- Middle school and high school students' reports of 21st CCLC program attendance frequency were similar, with nearly 65% of students in both age groups reporting they attended program several times a week.
- In-person 21st CCLC participation was common for middle school students (93%) and high school students (87%).
- Almost 50% of middle school students and more than 33% of high school students thought their programs helped them make new friends.
- A large percentage (70% or more) of middle school students felt their afterschool programs provided them with things that they enjoyed and helped them get better at something that they were interested in. A large percentage of high school students indicated a broader range of experiences were offered.
- For many experiences, such as having lots of fun, becoming better at doing things they're interested in, and making new friends, approximately 66% of middle and high school students had their expectations for programming met. Almost 50% of middle and high school students hoped to go to a new place but did not.

CHANGES IN STUDENT LEARNING ENGAGEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

- According to school-day teachers, approximately 50% of all students made improvements in their learning engagement, whereas an estimated 20% of students saw no change.

Chapter 4. Differences in Program Quality Assessments (PQAs)

State education agencies across the country have increasingly recognized that creating environments where young people can thrive requires intentionality in the adoption of program and staff practices. Continuous quality improvement systems that assess youth development best practices have therefore become important to understand the state of quality within programs and knowing where programs can make changes to enhance quality. Recent studies have indicated that approximately 71% of state education agencies have adopted these types of quality improvement systems as part of their 21st CCLC programs (Naftzger et al., 2015). Engaging in a continuous quality improvement system can bolster the quality of programming, which in turn can positively affect youth outcomes in achievement, behavior, and skills and beliefs (Naftzger et al., 2014; Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018; Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2012; Tracy et al., 2016).

Specifically, a primary development in 21st CCLC and out-of-school-time programming more broadly in the past decade is that state education agencies have increasingly made investments to develop and implement quality improvement systems that provide the following:

- A definition of what constitutes quality practice in the design and delivery of afterschool programming
- Tools and processes that allow subgrantees to assess how well they meet these quality criteria and craft action plans to intentionally improve their quality of programming across time

These two aspects provide a common language for programs to talk about quality and understand best practices related to youth development.

Other studies noted that attending high-quality programs can have a positive impact on school outcomes, such as increased mathematics and reading scores and reductions in school-day absences and disciplinary incidents, along with more direct youth outcomes, such as having positive experiences within the program activities and youth attitudes and beliefs (Naftzger et al., 2014; Naftzger & Sniegowski, 2018; Pierce et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2018; Tracy et al., 2016).

Formal continuous quality improvement efforts for 21st CCLC programs in Washington have been in place for more than a decade. Each year, centers participate in the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI). The YPQI is typically characterized by a point-of-service program quality assessment tool (both external assessment and program self-assessment), an

organizational quality assessment, participation in planning with data activities, the creation of and submission of a program improvement plan, and participation in targeted professional development activities aligned with the assessment tool.

During the 2021–22 program year, centers selected one of three types of program quality assessments (PQAs) to use when assessing their programs: the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), the School Age Program Quality Assessment (SA-PQA), or the Social-Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL-PQA). Each version of the PQA assessed a center on four domains, including whether a safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, and engagement were present in the center's program. Each center conducted program self-assessments that were externally assessed by a cadre of local evaluators. For the purposes of this report, AIR explored external assessment data and the characteristics of centers and student populations of centers using each of these versions of the PQA, with the goal of answering the following questions:

1. What differences exist between programs that select the traditional YPQA, the SA-PQA, and the SEL-PQA in terms of center and student characteristics?
2. What differences exist between programs identified as high scoring or low scoring on the PQA in terms of center and student characteristics?

Finding	Aligned recommendation
• Most PQA external assessments aligned with the age group being served at the center; more than 80% of the students at centers that used the YPQA were in middle school, whereas most students at centers using the SA-PQA and SEL-PQA were in elementary school. • More centers selected to use the SEL-PQA, whereas centers using the YPQA served the largest number of students on average. • Elementary students at centers using the SA-PQA and SEL-PQA attended programming for the highest total days on average. For middle school students and high school students, average total attendance was slightly higher if the center used the SEL-PQA and YPQA, respectively. • For centers that served primarily elementary and middle school students, those that used the SEL-PQA had more students who attended regularly.	• Work with programs and other stakeholders to make sure they select the PQA version most appropriate for the grade levels they serve. • Further explore connections between the race and ethnic groups of students served at a center, the version of the PQA selected, and the activities offered alongside other key data points. Consider if and what other data collections might be necessary. • Further explore the use of the SEL-PQA in programs serving all grade levels, including an assessment of item difficulty, as compared with the SA-PQA and YPQA.

Finding	Aligned recommendation
• For centers serving elementary school students, more than 50% of students at centers using the SA-PQA and 66% of students at centers using the SEL-PQA were identified as Hispanic, compared with 28% of students at centers using the YPQA. • For centers serving middle school students, more than 60% of students at centers using the SA-PQA and the SEL-PQA were identified as Hispanic, compared with 28% of students at centers using the YPQA. • For centers serving elementary school and middle school students, those using the SEL-PQA tended to offer EL supports, cultural activities, and service learning opportunities. Centers using the SA-PQA tended to offer tutoring and homework help activities. • A higher percentage of middle and high school students at high-scoring centers were regular attendees compared with students at low-scoring centers, regardless of PQA version.	

More than 200 external assessments across 128 centers were conducted during the 2021–22 program year. In the analyses that follow, we examine key data points by centers that serve primarily elementary, middle, and high school students because the YPQA and the SA-PQA are intended for use with students in certain grade levels (Grades 4–12 and Grades K–6, respectively). In some cases, centers served multiple age groups, and therefore, those centers are represented in multiple age group categories. Exhibit 35 highlights the distribution of assessments and centers with age group and PQA version.

Exhibit 35. Most PQA external assessments aligned with the age group being served at the center.

Grade level	SA-PQA	YPQA	SEL-PQA
Elementary school (*n* = 104 assessments)	51 assessments at 39 centers	6 assessments at 4 centers	47 assessments at 40 centers
Middle school (*n* = 80 assessments)	11 assessments at 10 centers	40 assessments at 28 centers	29 assessments at 26 centers
High school (*n* = 22 assessments)	2 assessments at 2 centers	13 assessments at 9 centers	7 assessments at 7 centers

Note. External assessments only.

Centers used the SEL-PQA more commonly than the other two versions of the PQA. Although centers using the SEL-PQA served the largest number of students on average during the summer, centers using the YPQA served the largest number of students on average during the 2021–22 school year (Exhibit 36).

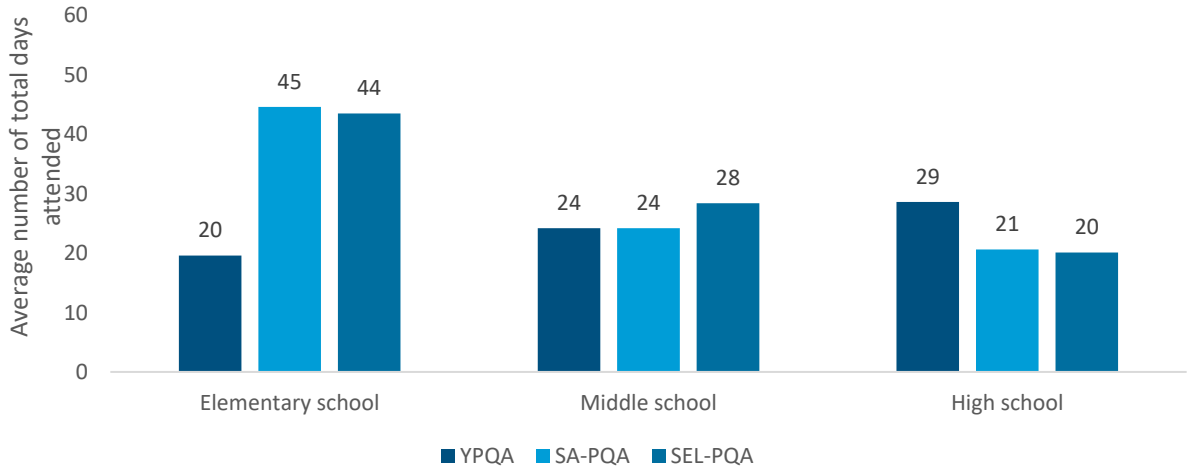
Exhibit 36. More centers selected to use the SEL-PQA, whereas centers using the YPQA served the largest number of students on average.

PQA version	Summer			School year		
	Number of centers	Total # of students	Average # of students per center	Number of centers	Total # of students	Average # of students per center
YPQA	26	762	29	30	3,142	105
SA-PQA	41	1,869	46	41	2,625	64
SEL-PQA	55	3.413	62	56	5,048	90

Note. Not all centers had external PQA data; *N* = 128 centers.

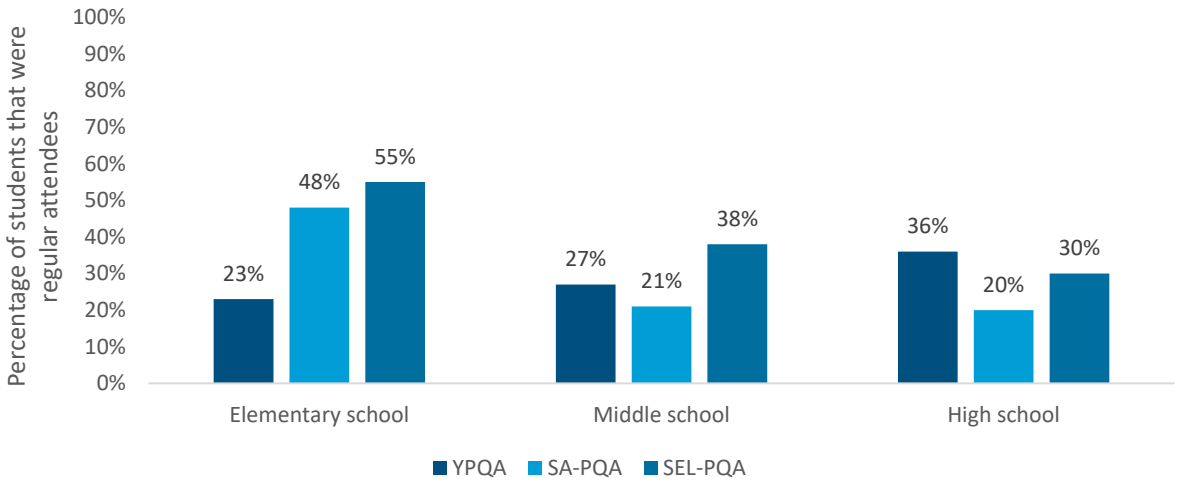
When looking at the number of total days that students attended on average, elementary school students at centers using the YPQA had the lowest average attendance, attending just 20 days of programming on average during the 2021–22 program year. By comparison, elementary school students at centers using the SA-PQA and SEL-PQA averaged 44 and 45 days of attendance, respectively. Centers serving primarily elementary school students that used the YPQA also had the lowest percentage of regular attendees; approximately one fourth (23%) of students at these centers attended programming regularly, whereas approximately half of students at centers serving elementary school students and using the SA-PQA (48%) or SEL-PQA (55%) attended regularly. See Exhibits 37 and 38.

Exhibit 37. Elementary school students at centers using the SA-PQA and SEL-PQA attended programming for the highest total days on average. For middle school students and high school students, average total attendance was slightly higher if the center used the SEL-PQA and YPQA, respectively.



Note. Elementary school: *N* = 8,018 students; middle school: *N* = 5,149 students; high school: *N* = 664.

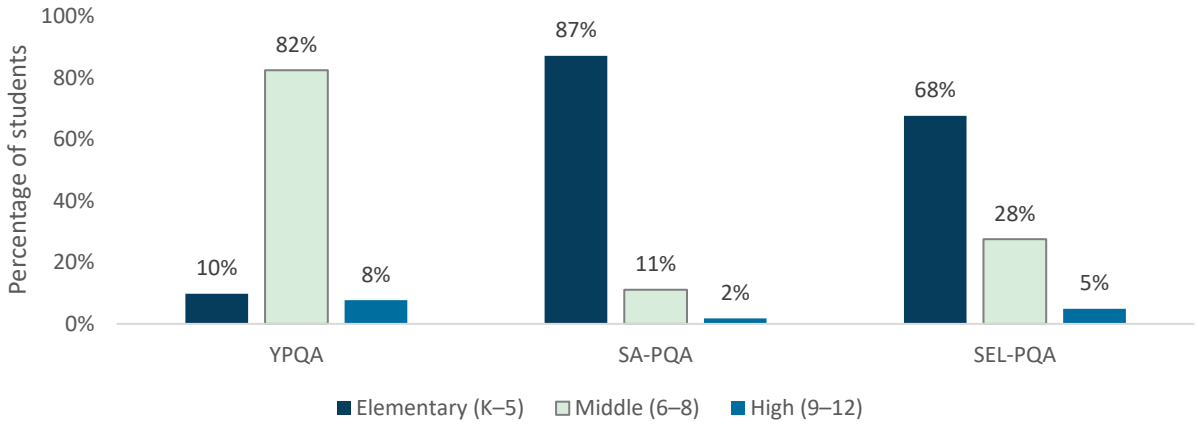
Exhibit 38. For centers that served primarily elementary and middle school students, those that used the SEL-PQA had more students who attended regularly.



Note. Elementary school: *N* = 8,018 students; middle school: *N* = 5,149 students; high school: *N* = 664.

Next, we examined the characteristics of students at centers using each PQA version. The YPQA was more commonly used at centers serving students in middle school (Grades 6–8), and centers serving students in elementary schools (Grades K–5) were more likely to use the SA-PQA. This finding is not unexpected given the target grade levels of each of these tools. The SEL-PQA appeared to be used predominantly in centers serving primarily elementary school students (Exhibit 39).

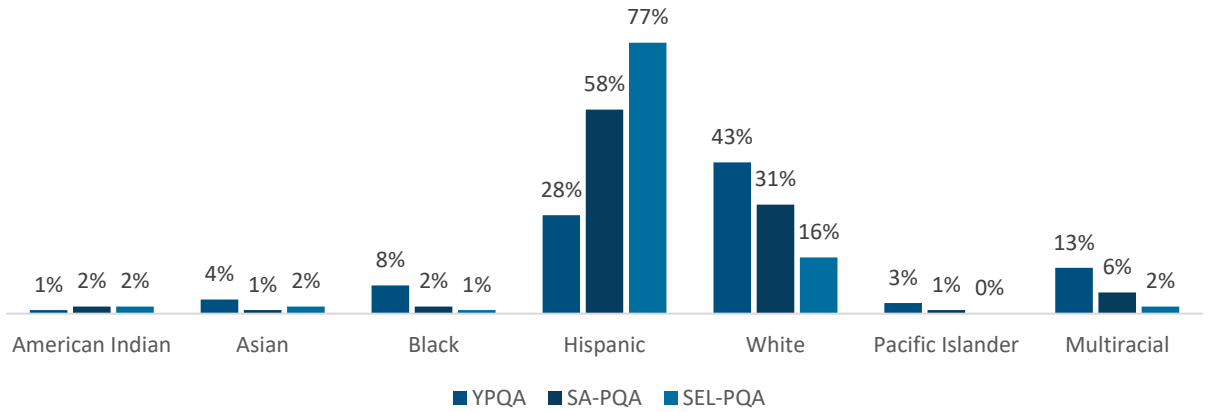
Exhibit 39. More than 80% of the students at centers that used the YPQA were in middle school, whereas most students at centers using the SA-PQA and SEL-PQA were elementary school students.



Note. YPQA: *N* = 3,533 students; SA-PQA: *N* = 3,647 students; SEL-PQA: *N* = 6,651 students.

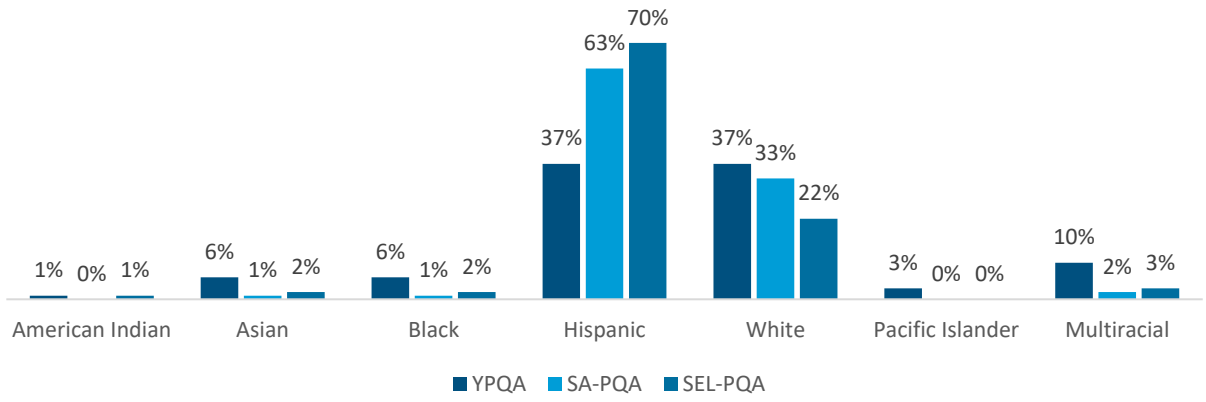
For centers serving elementary and middle school students, most (at least 60%) students at centers using the SEL-PQA were identified as Hispanic, compared with approximately 33% of students at centers using the YPQA (Exhibits 40 and 41). For centers serving high school students, nearly 75% of students using the SA-PQA were Hispanic (Exhibit 42).

Exhibit 40. For centers serving elementary school students, more than 50% of students at centers using the SA-PQA and 66% of students at centers using the SEL-PQA were identified as Hispanic, compared with 28% of students at centers using the YPQA.



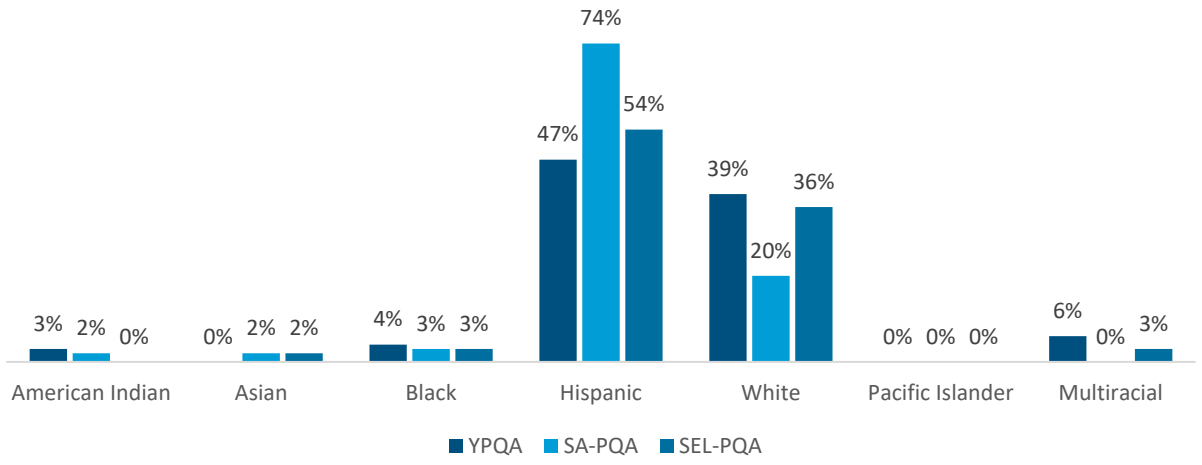
Note. Sample includes students with race/ethnicity data available; YPQA: *N* = 342 students; SA-PQA: *N* = 3,029 students; SEL-PQA: *N* = 4,015 students.

Exhibit 41. For centers serving middle school students, more than 60% of students at centers using the SA-PQA and the SEL-PQA were identified as Hispanic, compared with 28% of students at centers using the YPQA.



Note. Sample includes students with race/ethnicity data available; YPQA: *N* = 2,178 students; SA-PQA: *N* = 398 students; SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,596 students.

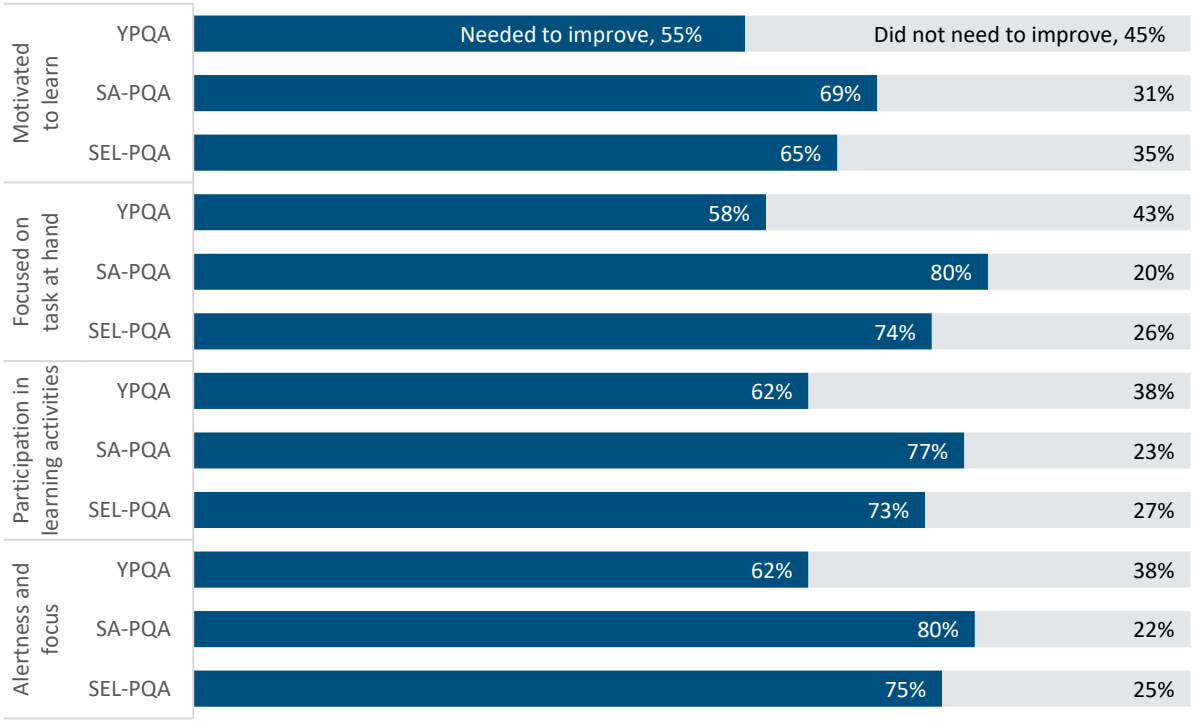
Exhibit 42. For centers serving high school students, nearly 75% of students at centers using the SA-PQA were identified as Hispanic, compared with 44% of students at centers using the YPQA and 48% of students at centers using the SEL-PQA.



Note. Sample includes students with race/ethnicity data available; YPQA: *N* = 253 students; SA-PQA: *N* = 66 students; SEL-PQA: *N* = 290 students.

Notable differences can be seen when comparing teachers' perceptions of elementary school students' engagement in learning in the classroom, and measured by the teacher survey, at centers using different versions of the PQA. In general, a larger percentage of students at centers using the YPQA did not need to improve compared with centers using the other PQA versions (Exhibit 43).

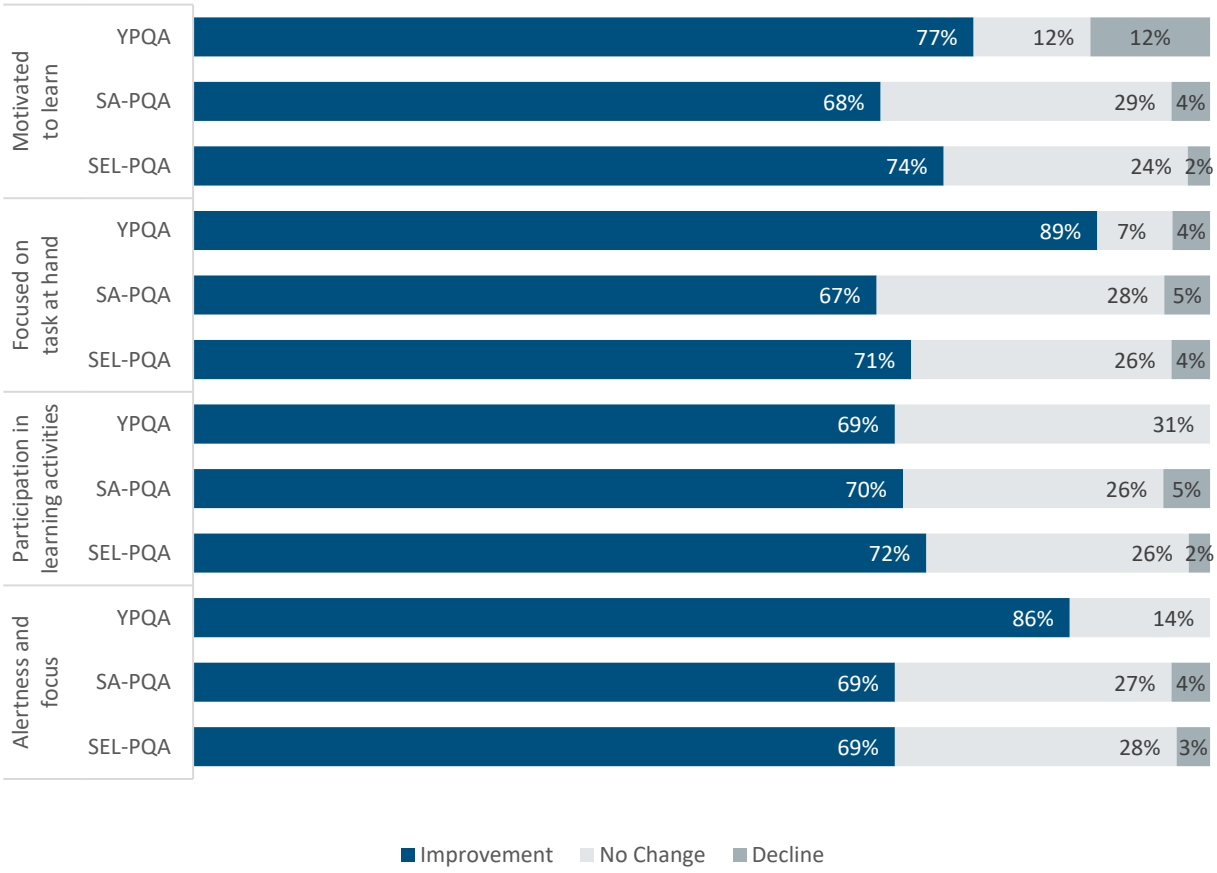
Exhibit 43. When comparing centers using the three versions of the PQA, notable differences can be seen in terms of the percentage of students who did not need to improve.



Note. YPQA: *N* = 47 teacher surveys; SA-PQA: *N* = 728 teacher surveys; SEL-PQA: *N* = 639 teacher surveys.

In terms of students who needed to improve on indicators of engagement in learning, more than 65% of students improved regardless of which PQA version the center used for program external assessment. When comparing differences among PQA selection, notable differences can be seen in terms of the percentage of student's improvements in engagement in learning, specifically on being motivated to learn and alertness and focus, where students attending centers that used the YPQA had the highest percentages (Exhibit 44).

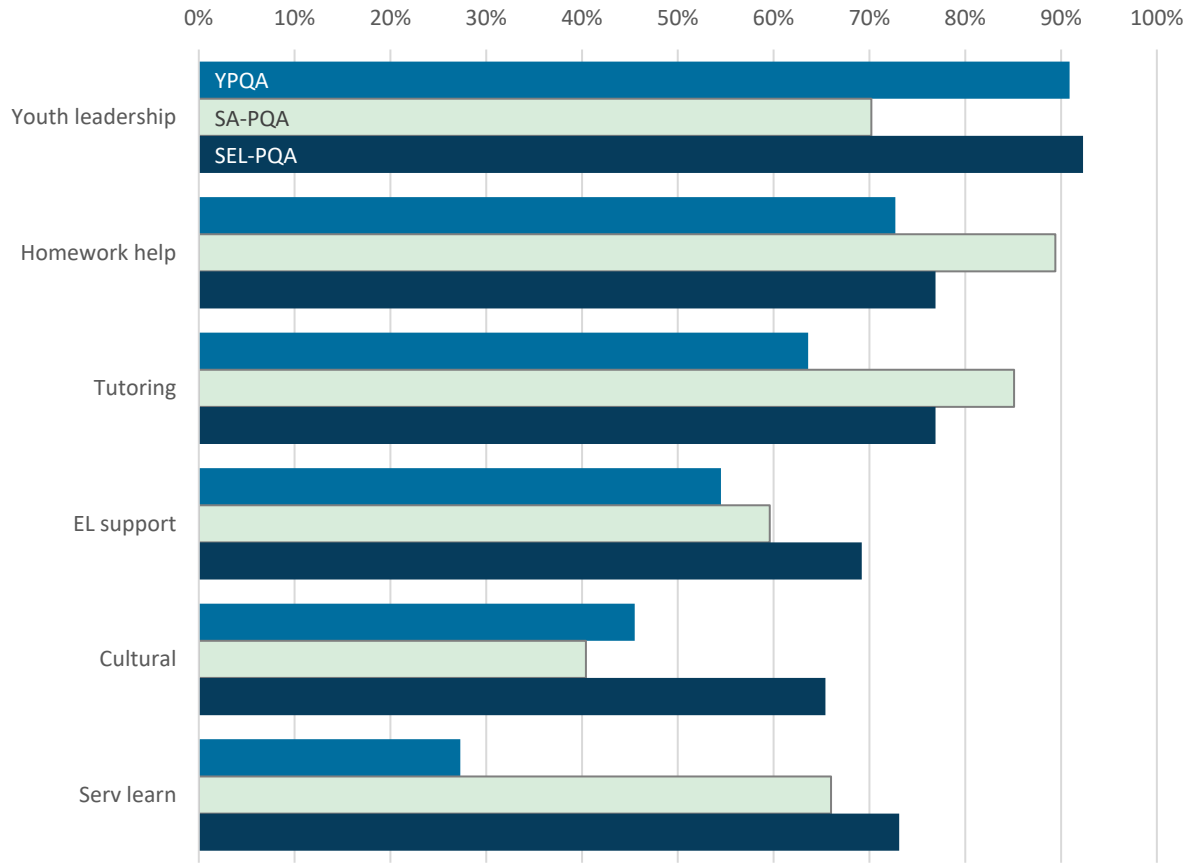
Exhibit 44. A higher percentage of students attending centers that used the YPQA were reported to have made improvements in their focus on task at hand and alertness compared with students attending centers that used the SA-PQA or the SEL-PQA.



Note. YPQA: *N* = 29 teacher surveys; SA-PQA: *N* = 728 teacher surveys; SEL-PQA: *N* = 639 teacher surveys.

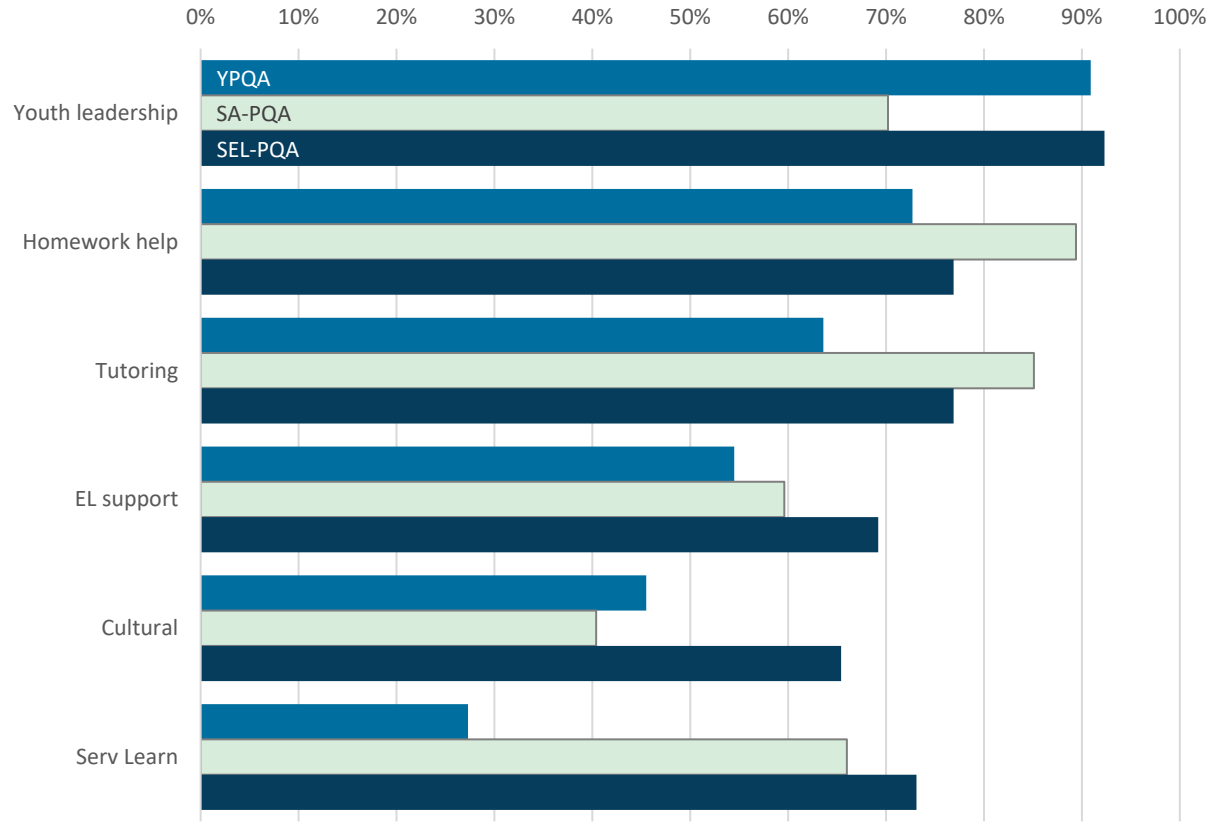
Next, we examined the program offerings at centers using the three versions of the PQA. Across all three age groups, at least 90% of centers offered STEM, art and music, physical activity, and literacy programming, regardless of the PQA version used. Across all three age groups, centers using the SEL-PQA tended to offer service learning, EL support, or cultural programming, whereas centers using the SA-PQA tended to offer tutoring or homework help. Exhibits 45–47 highlight activity types with the most spread between PQA type.

Exhibit 45. For centers serving elementary school students, those using the SEL-PQA tended to offer EL supports, cultural activities, and service learning opportunities. Centers using the SA-PQA tended to offer tutoring and homework help activities.



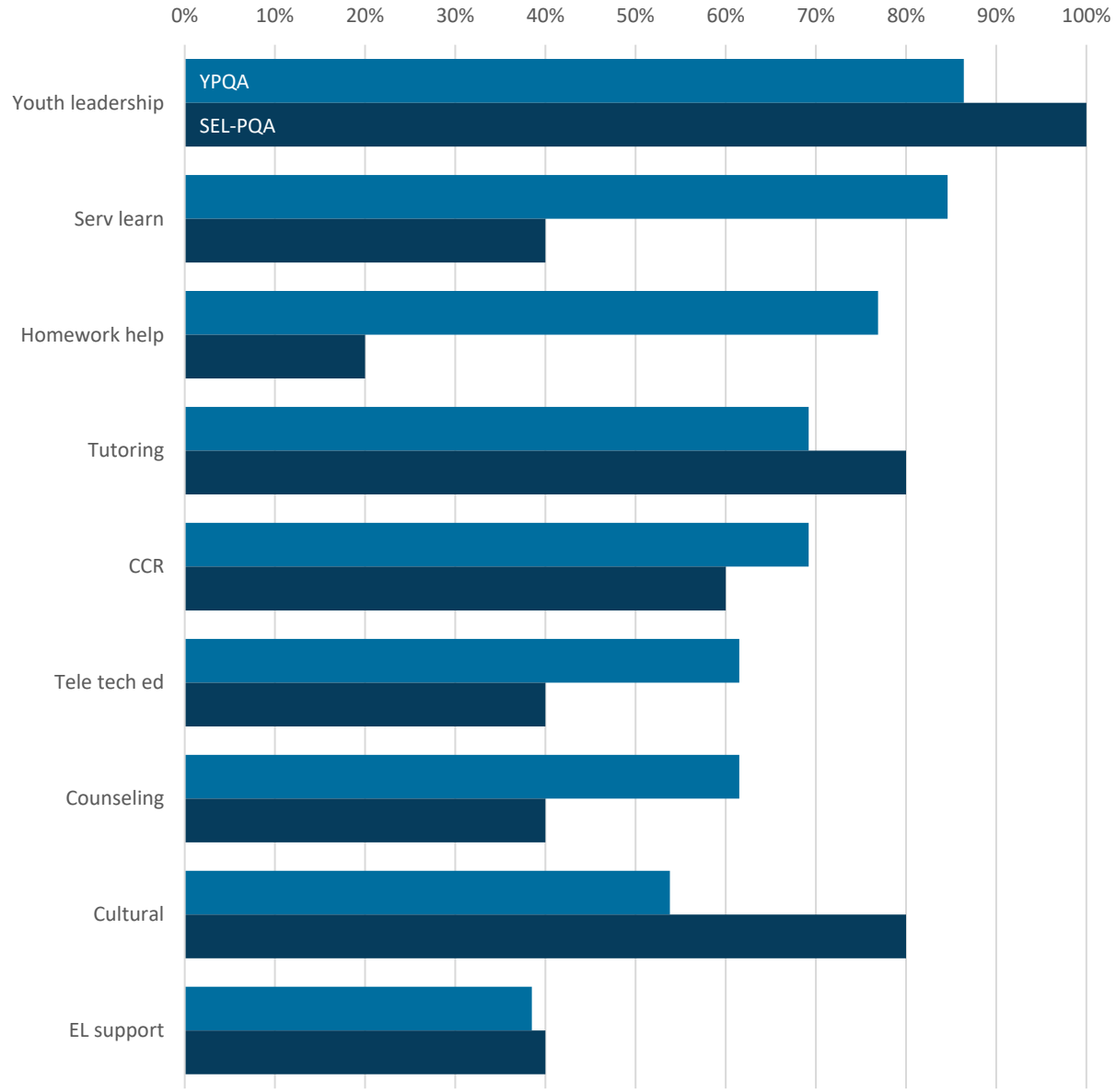
Note. Not all centers had external PQA data; YPQA *N* = 11 centers; SA-PQA *N* = 47 centers; SEL-PQA *N* = 26 centers. Serv Learn = service learning.

Exhibit 46. For centers serving middle school students, those using the SEL-PQA tended to offer EL supports, cultural activities, and service learning opportunities. Centers using the SA-PQA tended to offer tutoring and homework help activities.



Note. Not all centers had external PQA data; YPQA *N* = 38 centers; SA-PQA *N* = 10 centers; SEL-PQA *N* = 16 centers. Serv Learn = service learning.

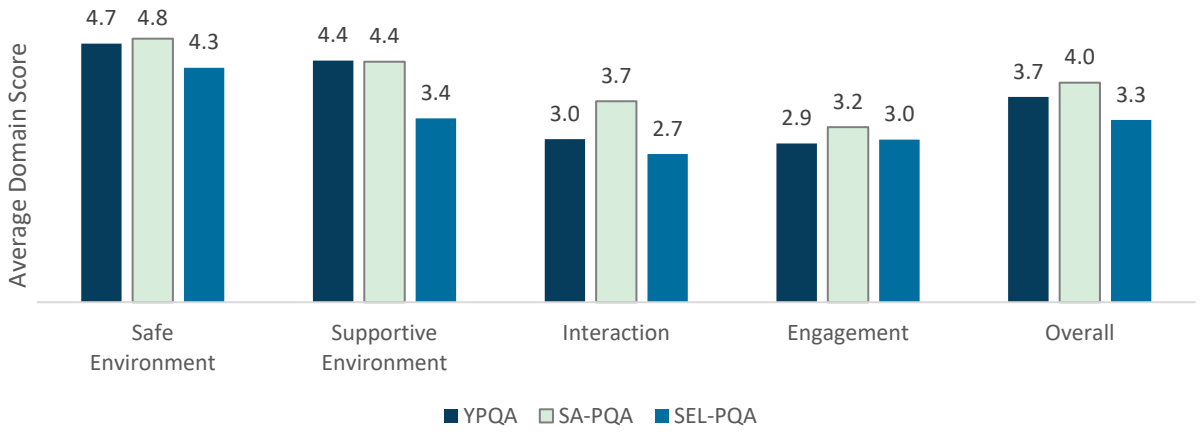
Exhibit 47. For centers serving high school students, those using the SEL-PQA tended to offer youth leadership, tutoring, and cultural activities. Centers using the YPQA tended to offer service learning, homework help, and technical education activities.



Note. Not all centers had external PQA data; YPQA *N* = 13 centers; SA-PQA *N* = 1 center; SEL-PQA *N* = 5 centers. Because only one center used the SA-PQA, we omitted that center from this graph; however, this center offered programming in each category listed above. CCR = college and career readiness. Serv Learn = service learning. Tele Tech Ed = telecommunications and technology education.

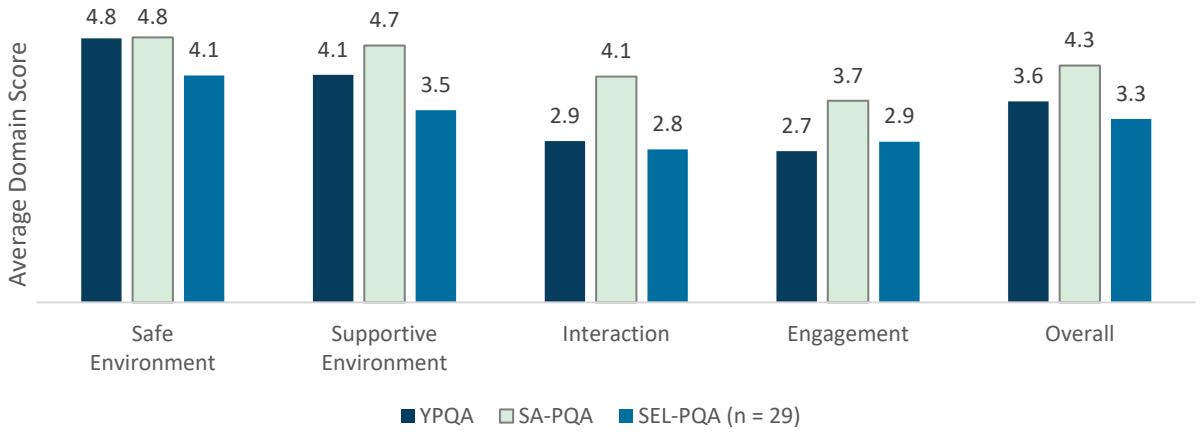
Next, we examined the level of program quality for each domain and total score on each PQA version. As shown in Exhibits 48–50, centers using the SA-PQA for program external assessments tended to score the highest on average across all four domains, regardless of grade level served. Centers using the SEL-PQA tended to score the lowest on average, regardless of grade level served. This finding could speak to the difficulty of items contained within each version of the PQA.

Exhibit 48. Centers serving primarily elementary school students tended to score higher on the SA-PQA on all four domains.



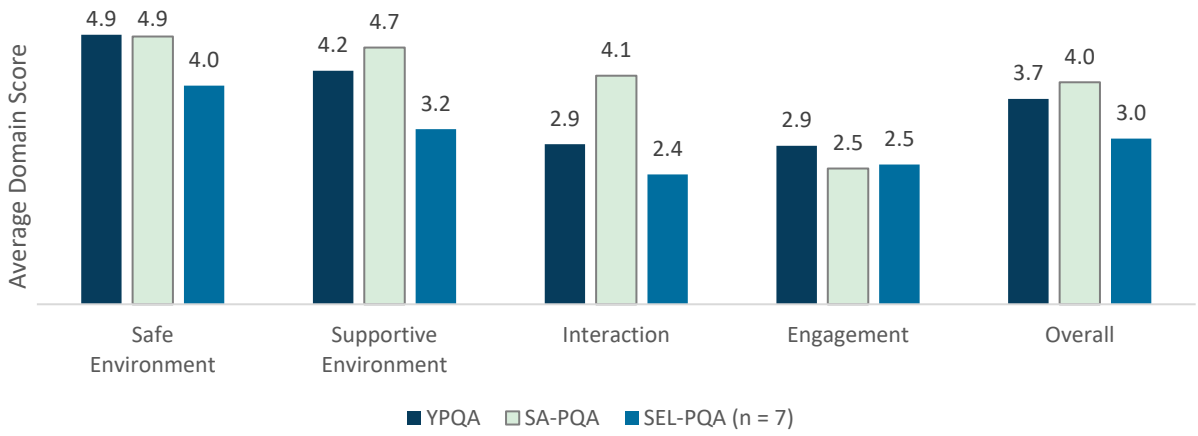
Note. External assessments only. YPQA: *N* = 47 assessments; SA-PQA: *N* = 50 assessments; SEL-PQA: *N* = 6 assessments.

Exhibit 49. Centers serving primarily middle school students tended to score higher on the SA-PQA on all four domains.



Note. External assessments only. YPQA: *N* = 39 assessments; SA-PQA: *N* = 11 assessments; SEL-PQA: *N* = 29 assessments.

Exhibit 50. Centers serving primarily high school students tended to score higher on the SA-PQA on all four domains.



Note. External assessments only. YPQA: *N* = 13 assessments; SA-PQA: *N* = 2 assessments; SEL-PQA: *N* = 7 assessments.

High- versus low-scoring centers

Next, we were interested in examining differences in student and center characteristics by the PQA version selected (since item difficulty likely varies across the three versions of the PQA) and by overall PQA quality score. We also looked at this information according to the grade levels centers served, breaking them into either elementary school or middle/high school groups. For both elementary and middle/high school groups, we placed centers into quartiles within each version of the PQA for each school level based on their overall rating on the PQA. Due to the low sample sizes of YPQA data for centers serving primarily elementary school students, and low sample sizes of SA-PQA data for centers serving primarily middle and high school students, we omitted these groups from analyses. In the exhibits that follow, quartile 1 represents the lowest scoring centers and quartile 4 represents the highest scoring centers.

Exhibit 51 shows an even distribution of centers across all quartiles within each grade-level group and across each version of the PQA. For centers serving primarily elementary school students, a higher number of students attended programs that had quality scores in the top two quartiles of the SA-PQA, whereas those centers using the SEL-PQA that had more students attending programs in the bottom two quartiles for quality tended to serve less students on average during both the summer and 2021–22 school year. The opposite is true for centers serving primarily middle and high school students and that used the SEL-PQA. Middle and high school centers using the YPQA had more students attending if they fell within the top two quartiles for program quality compared with those that fell in the bottom two quartiles.

Exhibit 51. Centers selecting the SEL-PQA, regardless of grade levels served, had more student attendees if program quality was in the bottom two quartiles. The opposite was true for elementary school centers using the SA-PQA and middle and high school centers using the YPQA.

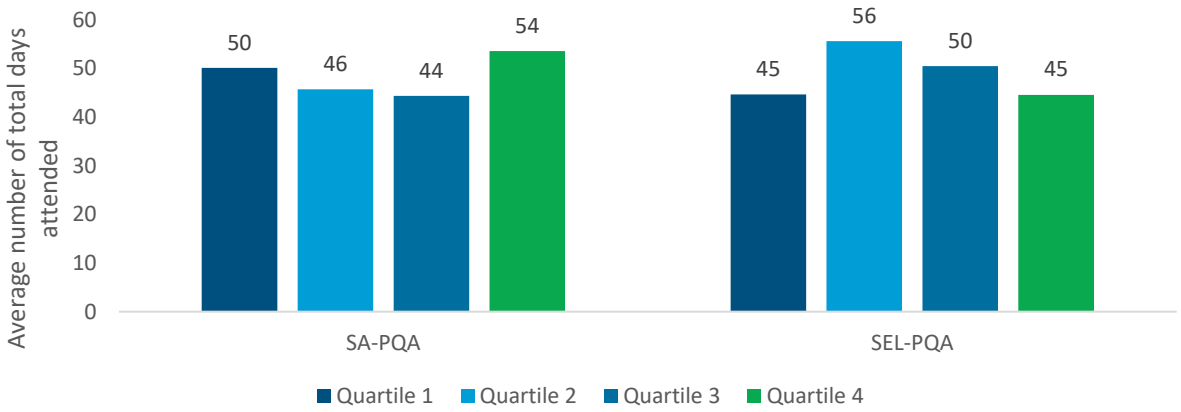
PQA version	PQA total score quartile	Number of centers	Total # of students	Average # of students per center
Elementary school				
SA-PQA	Quartile 1	10	850	85
	Quartile 2	10	873	87
	Quartile 3	10	897	88
	Quartile 4	9	773	86
SEL-PQA	Quartile 1	10	1,252	125
	Quartile 2	10	1,128	113
	Quartile 3	10	1,322	132
	Quartile 4	10	1,090	109
Middle/high school				
SEL-PQA	Quartile 1	7	655	94
	Quartile 2	7	928	133
	Quartile 3	7	502	72
	Quartile 4	7	742	106
YPQA	Quartile 1	7	755	108
	Quartile 2	7	1,041	149
	Quartile 3	7	937	134
	Quartile 4	6	688	115

Note. Not all centers had external PQA data. As some centers served multiple grade levels (e.g., elementary and middle), a center could be represented in more than one quartile.

When examining the total number of days students attended on average, differences were found by grade level between high-scoring and low-scoring centers and by PQA version selected. Please see Exhibits 52 and 53 for more details. When examining the percentage of

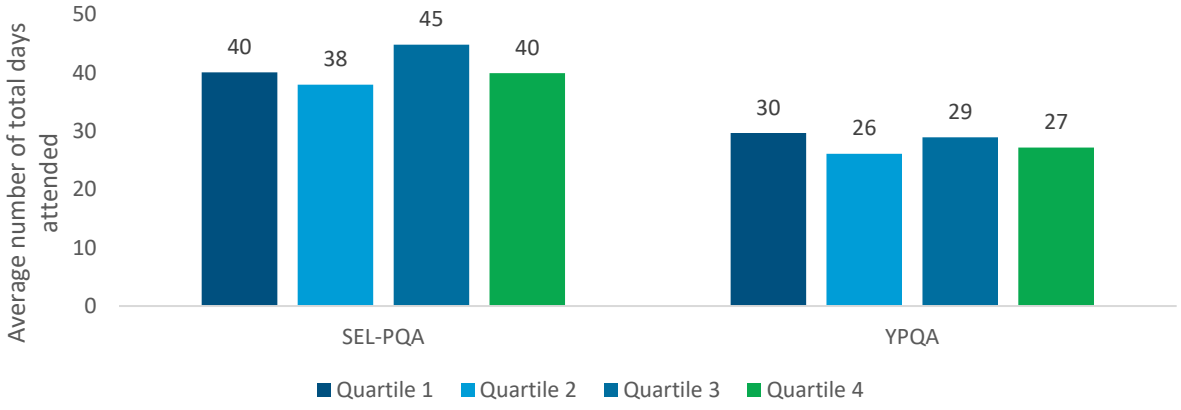
regular attendees, similar variations were found by grade level and PQA version selection (Exhibits 54 and 55).

Exhibit 52. Elementary students at the highest scoring centers attended slightly more days of programming on average than did those at the lowest scoring centers if using the SA-PQA. Those using the SEL-PQA had the highest number of attendees if PQA quality was in the second and third quartiles.



Note. Quartile 1 SA-PQA: *N* = 850 students at 10 centers; Quartile 2 SA-PQA: *N* = 873 students at 10 centers; Quartile 3 SA-PQA: *N* = 897 students at 10 centers; Quartile 4 SA-PQA: *N* = 773 students at 9 centers; Quartile 1 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,252 students at 10 centers; Quartile 2 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,128 students at 10 centers; Quartile 3 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,322 students at 10 centers; Quartile 4 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,090 students at 10 centers.

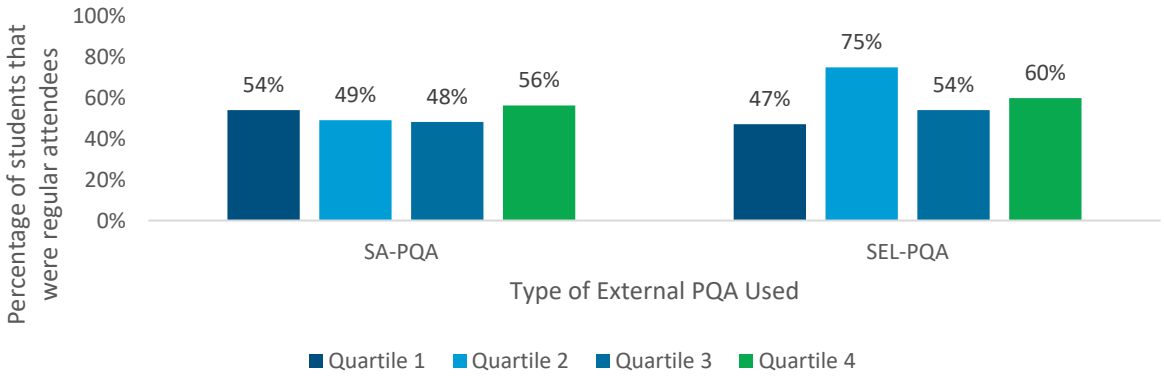
Exhibit 53. Middle and high school students at the highest scoring centers attended slightly less days or the same number of days of programming on average compared with those at the lowest scoring centers, depending on PQA version.



Note. Quartile 1 SEL-PQA: *N* = 655 students at 7 centers; Quartile 2 SEL-PQA: *N* = 928 students at 7 centers; Quartile 3 SEL-PQA: *N* = 502 students at 7 centers; Quartile 4 SEL-PQA: *N* = 742 students at 7 centers; Quartile 1

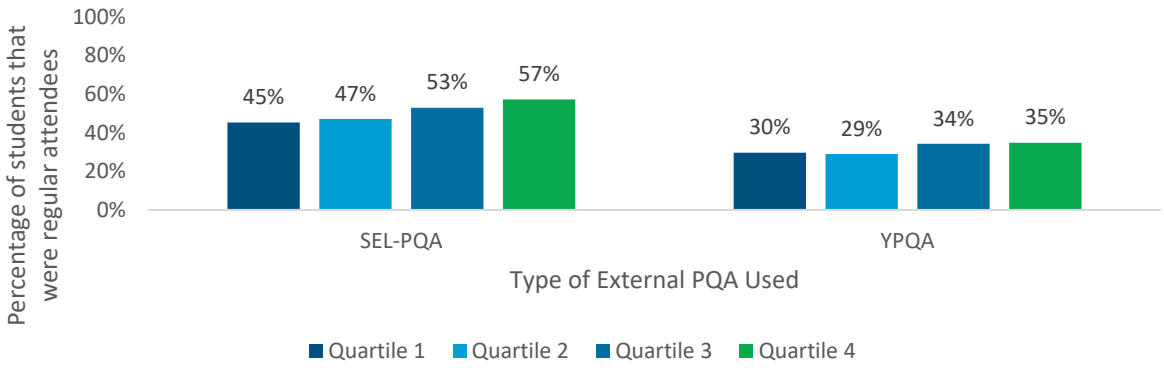
YPQA: *N* = 755 students at 7 centers; Quartile 2 YPQA: *N* = 1,041 students at 7 centers; Quartile 3 YPQA: *N* = 937 students at 7 centers; Quartile 4 YPQA: *N* = 688 students at 6 centers.

Exhibit 54. More than 50% of elementary students at high-scoring centers using the SA-PQA or SEL-PQA were regular attendees. For programs using the SEL-PQA, centers in quartile 2 for program quality had 75% of their students classified as regular attendees.



Note. Quartile 1 SA-PQA: *N* = 850 students at 10 centers; Quartile 2 SA-PQA: *N* = 873 students at 10 centers; Quartile 3 SA-PQA: *N* = 897 students at 10 centers; Quartile 4 SA-PQA: *N* = 773 students at 9 centers; Quartile 1 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,252 students at 10 centers; Quartile 2 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,128 students at 10 centers; Quartile 3 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,322 students at 10 centers; Quartile 4 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,090 students at 10 centers.

Exhibit 55. A higher percentage of middle and high school students at high-scoring centers were regular attendees compared with students at low-scoring centers, regardless of PQA version.

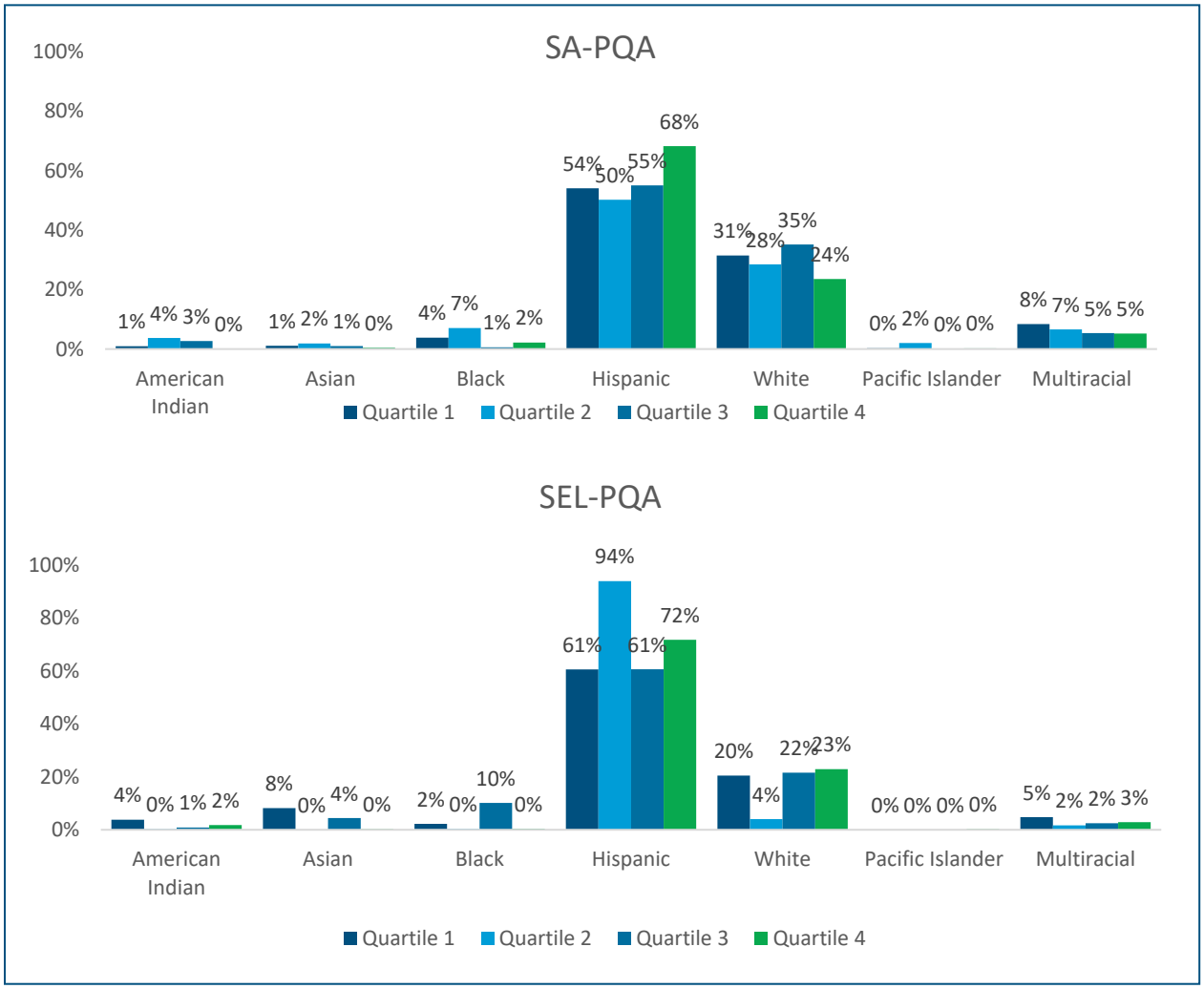


Note. Quartile 1 SEL-PQA: *N* = 655 students at 7 centers; Quartile 2 SEL-PQA: *N* = 928 students at 7 centers; Quartile 3 SEL-PQA: *N* = 502 students at 7 centers; Quartile 4 SEL-PQA: *N* = 742 students at 7 centers; Quartile 1 YPQA: *N* = 755 students at 7 centers; Quartile 2 YPQA: *N* = 1,041 students at 7 centers; Quartile 3 YPQA: *N* = 937 students at 7 centers; Quartile 4 YPQA: *N* = 688 students at 6 centers.

Similar to comparisons by PQA version alone, almost all centers, despite quality quartile, grade-level group, and PQA version, offered physical activity, literacy, and STEM programming regardless of their overall score on the PQA. A larger percentage of high-scoring centers (those in quality quartiles 3 and 4) offer other types of programming compared with low-scoring centers, but those activities differ for elementary school students and middle/high school students. For elementary students, those attending high-scoring centers tended to experience activities related to drug prevention, library service, mentoring, service learning, and tutoring compared with those attending low-scoring centers. For middle and high school students, those attending high-scoring centers tended to experience activities related to EL support, entrepreneurship, and homework help, regardless of PQA version, compared with those attending low-scoring centers. Within each PQA version, students in high-scoring centers were more apt to experience a variety of other activity types.

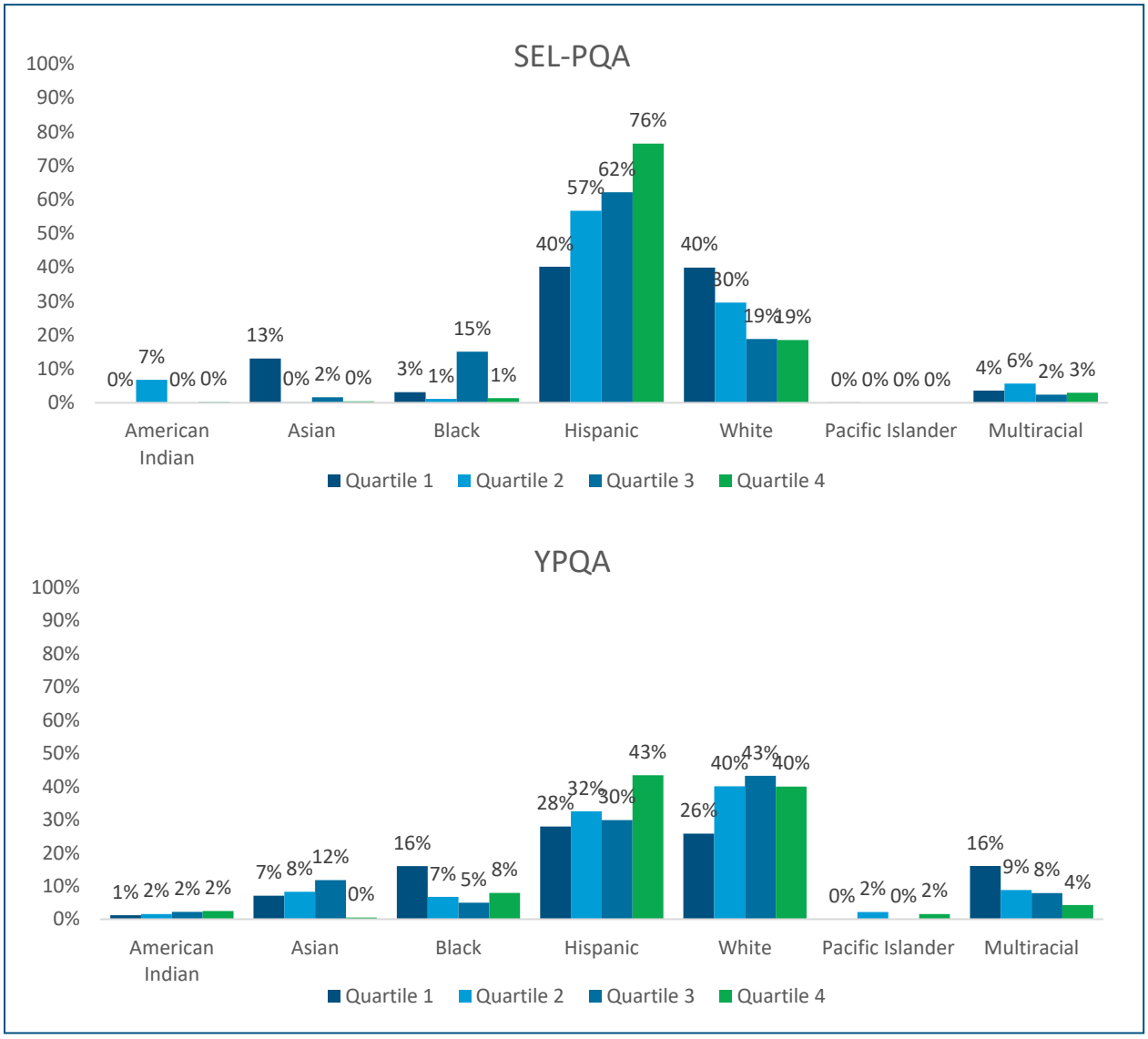
We next examined the distribution of students in race/ethnic categories by grade-level group, PQA version, and low- versus high-scoring quartile. A slightly larger percentage of students at the highest scoring centers compared with those at the lowest scoring centers were identified as Hispanic (68%) if using the SA-PQA. However, for centers using the SEL-PQA, centers in quartile 2 had a much larger proportion of Hispanic students than did centers in other quartiles (Exhibit 56). For middle and high school centers, those using the SEL-PQA had a higher proportion of Hispanic students if they were higher scoring, whereas those using the YPQA had a more even distribution of Hispanic and White students across the quality quartiles (Exhibit 57).

Exhibit 56. Regardless of PQA version, elementary school student centers served primarily Hispanic and White students. On both PQA versions, approximately 70% of students in the high-scoring programs were Hispanic.



Note. Quartile 1 SA-PQA: *N* = 850 students at 10 centers; Quartile 2 SA-PQA: *N* = 873 students at 10 centers; Quartile 3 SA-PQA: *N* = 897 students at 10 centers; Quartile 4 SA-PQA: *N* = 773 students at 9 centers; Quartile 1 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,252 students at 10 centers; Quartile 2 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,128 students at 10 centers; Quartile 3 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,322 students at 10 centers; Quartile 4 SEL-PQA: *N* = 1,090 students at 10 centers.

Exhibit 57. For middle and high school students, more than 75% of students in higher quality programs that used the SEL-PQA were Hispanic. For programs that used the YPQA, a more even distribution was found across race/ethnic groups and quality quartiles.



Note. Quartile 1 SEL-PQA: *N* = 655 students at 7 centers; Quartile 2 SEL-PQA: *N* = 928 students at 7 centers; Quartile 3 SEL-PQA: *N* = 502 students at 7 centers; Quartile 4 SEL-PQA: *N* = 742 students at 7 centers; Quartile 1 YPQA: *N* = 755 students at 7 centers; Quartile 2 YPQA: *N* = 1,041 students at 7 centers; Quartile 3 YPQA: *N* = 937 students at 7 centers; Quartile 4 YPQA: *N* = 688 students at 6 centers.

Summary

In examining student and program characteristics associated with each version of the PQA, we found that, overall, most programs used the version intended for the grade levels of the students they served, although a few exceptions existed. This finding was also reflected in the proportion of students in the anticipated grade levels served for each version of the PQA. Centers that served elementary and middle school students also using the SEL-PQA tended to server a larger Hispanic population, whereas a smaller proportion of Hispanic high school students were served at centers using the YPQA. We also found that centers using the SEL-PQA tended to have both students who participated for a higher number of days and a larger proportion of students who were regular attendees. When reviewing student engagement in learning data from the teacher survey for elementary school students, notable differences were found in the percentage of students who did not need to improve across all three versions of the PQA. For all grade levels, centers using the SEL-PQA tended to offer cultural activities and service learning opportunities. Regardless of grade level served, those centers using the SA-PQA scored higher on all for domains.

Our examination of student and program characteristics associated with each version of the PQA and grouped by high-scoring versus low-scoring centers revealed that the number of students high-scoring centers and low-scoring centers served varied across grade level and the PQA version used. We also found that elementary school students at high-scoring centers attended slightly more days of programming on average compared with those at low-scoring centers, if using the SA-PQA. This finding was not true for middle and high school students, however; a higher percentage of regular attendees were present at centers with the highest quality, regardless of PQA version. For all age groups and all PQA versions, a larger percentage of high-scoring centers offered a broader array of activities versus low-scoring centers. These findings, along with others reported in this chapter, indicate the need for further examination. As the SEL-PQA is not age group specific, the use of this tool should be examined further, especially as more programs select this tool in the future.

Chapter 5. 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 58 outlines the four domains of the KPIs (Program Implementation, Program Quality, Student Program Attendance, and Student Outcomes), associated indicators within each domain, and the 2021–22 results for each indicator. 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, or requirements for particular years might have changed. In addition, state assessments were not administered during spring 2020 or spring 2021, resulting in missing data for some student outcome indicators.

Finding	Aligned recommendation
• Data point to strong performance across centers on some indicators related to program implementation and to weaker performance on others. • Program quality indicator results were lower than the associated targets, which reflects changes in OSPI's expectations.	• Consider revisiting the current KPI language and weighing that against current and anticipated expectations. This finding may require either an update to the KPIs or stronger communication to programs about key performance expectations. • Identify where data are not currently available to report on KPIs and work with partners to retrieve that information.

Exhibit 58. 2021–22 Washington 21st CCLC Key Performance Indicator Results

Indicator name	Indicator	Target	2021–22 results
Program implementation (PI)			***N* = 140 centers**
PI 1	The percentage of centers providing opportunities for academic support.[a]	100%	100%
PI 2	The percentage of centers offering students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities (enrichment).[b]	100%	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%	81%
PI 4	The percentage of centers offering services at least 12 hours per week, on average, during the school year.	100%	68%
PI 5	The percentage of centers offering a summer program for 20 hours per week and lasting at least 4 consecutive weeks.	100%	67%
Program quality (PQ)			***N* = 140 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%	84%
PQ 2	The percentage of centers submitting at least two completed external assessments using the YPQA or the SAPQA.	100%	24% (91% had at least 1)
PQ 3	The percentage of centers submitting one Program Quality Assessment Form B Interview.	100%	16%
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
PQ 5	The percentage of centers submitting at least one program improvement plan annually.	100%	86%

Indicator name	Indicator	Target	2021–22 results
Student program attendance (PA)			***N* = 14,283 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%	42%
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%	21%
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	9%
PA 4	Percentage of youth participating in 21st CCLC programming in both the fall and spring semesters of the school year of interest.	TBD	42%
Student outcomes (SO) *Sample size varies by outcome*			
SO 1	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who needed improvement and increased in their student growth percentile (SGP) for reading. Grades 4–8	Not applicable	Not available
SO 2	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who needed improvement and increased in their SGP for mathematics. Grades 4–8	Not applicable	Not available
SO 3	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program who identified as English learners (ELs) and showed progress toward English language proficiency. Grades K–8	Not applicable	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.[c] Grades 6–12	Not applicable	37% (*N* = 12,191)

Indicator name	Indicator	Target	2021–22 results
SO 5	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program earning less than 100% of credits attempted in the prior school year and demonstrated a higher percentage of credits earned.[d] Grades 9–12	Not applicable	30% (*N* = 1,494)
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.[e] Grades 9–12	Not applicable	22% (*N* = 1,355)
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.[f] Grades 1–12	Not applicable	5% (*N* = 12,276)
SO 8	The percentage of students regularly participating in the program promoted to the next grade. Grades K–3	Not applicable	Not available

[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, the 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 designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.

[c] We did not have access to prior year information due to the scope of the data request. Therefore, we have presented information for the current school year for all students in the applicable grade levels. 37% percent of students had a 10% absence rate (chronically absent) for the 2021–22 program year.

[d] We did not have access to prior year information due to the scope of the data request. Therefore, we have presented information for the current school year for all students in the applicable grade levels. 53% percent of students earned less than 100% of their credits attempted for the 2021–22 program year.

[e] We did not have access to prior year information due to the scope of the data request. Therefore, we have presented information for the current school year for all students in the applicable grade levels. 30% percent of students had a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or lower for the 2021–22 program year.

[f] We did not have access to prior year information due to the scope of the data request. Therefore, we have presented information for the current school year for all students in the applicable grade levels. 5% percent of students had at least one discipline incident in the 2021–22 program year.

Summary

The KPIs represent our best thinking on what would be useful for the state, and they are currently undergoing revisions to ensure they align with changes in state and federal reporting requirements. We must also consider data availability as the pandemic created barriers to accessing the data we originally intended to use for these indicators. For example, SGP has not been calculated since prior to the pandemic, and at this time, no plans exist to return to it. When finalizing revisions to the KPIs, we must revisit the purpose of the KPIs and consider what data points are necessary for determining if programs have been implemented as originally intended, if they have been implemented with quality, if students have attended programs in a way that research tells us will likely improve their outcomes, if we have served the students we intended to serve, and what growth students have made on important outcomes.

Report Conclusion

The findings presented in this report 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 following:

- The primary characteristics of grants, centers, and the student population served by the program
- What program attendance looked like and how that differed based on student characteristics and experiences in the program
- What students experienced in the program and whether those experiences differed by school level
- Differences between programs using the three versions of the PQA in terms of center and student characteristics
- If 21st CCLC programs in Washington state met state and federal performance targets for program implementation and student outcomes

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.

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. Most youth participants in Washington were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in each year under investigation, and most youth who regularly attended programming were similarly eligible. Youth attending programming were the youth intended to be served by the program, the noteworthy proportions considered academically and/or behaviorally in need of additional supports.

Since 2017, the number of all attendees and regular attendees in 21st CCLC programming in Washington had been decreasing, reaching a low point during the 2020–21 program year amidst the pandemic. In 2021–22, however, the number of all attendees rebounded to levels last seen in 2018–19, although the percentage of participants attending regularly (attending 30 days or more) only increased slightly from the prior year to 43%. Overall, this finding may

indicate that programs have moved toward prepandemic functioning. 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, art and music, and sports.
- Centers that had a large proportion of teachers involved had higher attendance levels among older youth but had lower attendance levels among younger youth.
- In examining program target and goal completion, we found that statewide indicators point to strong performance across centers related to program implementation.

These findings are descriptive, however, 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 the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect programming and how that may affect student engagement in programming, as well as staff recruitment and well-being. Work with program staff to stay abreast of and record the challenges they face with these lingering effects.
- 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. Consider how to support programs in asking these questions at the local level.

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Appendix. Brief on the 2021–22 Student and Teacher Surveys

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