Michigan 21st Century Community Learning Centers Evaluation

2019-2020 Annual Report

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative is a federally funded program with goals to provide expanded academic enrichment opportunities for children attending low-performing schools. In addition to providing tutoring and academic enrichment activities, the programs often offer social-emotional learning, art, music, sports, STEM, and other learning opportunities for youth and their families during out-of-school time in the forms of summer camps or afterschool programs[1].

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted in-person programming starting in mid-March 2020. Except for a short period of complete shutdown as mandated by Governor Whitmer, the Michigan 21st CCLC programs remained active and continued serving youth and families in different capacities. During the pandemic, many of the programs utilized their relationships with the communities and became the first to respond to various community needs. The sudden pandemic-related disruptions also inhibited survey data collection, and therefore in this report there is no reporting on the youth and staff survey results.

This report describes the organizations that received grants, the organizations that operated the program sites, and the types of activities that program sites provided. It also describes those who participated in the program, the types of activities they took part in, and some of the program staff and administrator's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic from mid-March till the end of the program year.

Following the same approach used in previous years, the 2019-2020 Annual Report continues the use of the leading indicators (with the symbol ⓘ) to highlight program-level quality characteristics that are known from research and practice to affect student development. Although these quality measures are important to creating a context for overall development, they are not necessarily directly related to academic improvement.

[1] http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6530_6809-39974--,00.html

Who Participates in the Program?

Participation in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program statewide is influenced by both the types of programs that receive grants (grantees) and the characteristics of students that they recruit into their respective programs. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) provides guidelines for entities applying for 21st CCLC grants, specifying: (1) types of organizations that may apply (such as public schools, charter schools, community organizations); (2) program factors that qualify for priority points (such as serving a school eligible for Title I school-wide funding, serving students in 6th-8th grades, or having a faith-based organization as a partner); and (3) status of students and families served by the program (such as eligibility for free/reduced price meals and/or living in poverty). Priority is given to programs serving low-performing schools in high-poverty areas. For details about priority points relevant to grantees who participated in 2019-2020, contact Michigan Department of Education 21st CCLC consultants.

Grantees

Table 1 shows an overview of grantees over the past four years. In the 2019-2020 program year, 86 grants were awarded to 29 grantees who oversaw 284 sites. Among the 284 sites, 250 operated during the school year. The largest number of grants were administered by local school districts (15), followed by nonprofit/community-based organizations (10). This distribution of grantees has remained stable over the past four years. As in past years, the majority of the 21st CCLC grantees served elementary grades (159) or elementary and middle school combined (16). Fifty served high school students only, 49 served middle school students only, 9 served both middle and high school students and 1 served K-12th.

Table 1 Characteristics of Grantees Funded (2016-2020)

Characteristic	*2016-17 Grantees*	*2017-18 Grantees*	*2018-19 Grantees*	*2019-20 Grantees*
Overall				
Number of funded grants	73	73	76	86
Number of grantees	35(40[a])	33(37[a])	30(34[a])	29(31[a])
Number of new grantees	0	7	2	3
Number of sites	278	260	277	284
Number of sites operated during the school year	275	248	259	250
Site counts by cohort				
G	52	21		
H	67	68	27	
I	159	159	158	89[d]
J		25	25	25
K			78	78
L				148
Grantees' fiduciary organizations				
Local school district	15	15	14	15
Intermediate school district	2	2	2	2
Public school academy (charter school)	4	2	1	
Nonprofit/community-based organization	12	12	11	10
University	2	2	2	2
Sites serving students of different grades or grade combinations[b] [c]				
Elementary	132	137	147	159
Elementary and middle school	28	28	24	16
Middle school	63	49	50	49
Middle and high school	10	7	10	9
High school	44	39	46	50
Elementary, middle and high school	1	0	0	1

[a] Numbers in parentheses treat the multiple subcontractors that Detroit Public Schools and Grand Rapids Public Schools used to provide their programs as grantees.

[b] Calculated based on the grades of students served.

[c] Elementary (K-5), Middle school (6-8), High school (9-12).

[d] A total of 1 cohort I site operated during summer 2020 and continued in the fall under cohort K; 55 cohort I sites operated during summer 2020 and continued in the fall under cohort L.

Participating Students

Gender, Grade Level, and Family Income

In the 2019-2020 program year, 19,081 students enrolled in the program. This number represents 558 fewer youth than the previous year. As in past years, students were equally divided between boys (9,391; 49.2%) and girls (9,676; 50.7%). Most participants were in elementary grades (K-5th grades; 10,608; 56%), with about the same number of youth participating in middle school or high school sites (6th-8th grades: N= 4,235; 22%; 9th-12th grades: N=4,238; 22%). Most students participated across multiple semesters: 25% only participated in the summer, 9% only participated in the fall and 11% only participated in the spring semester. Regular attendees, defined as students who attended at least 30 program days, accounted for 74% of the school-year participants and 56% for the whole year; the difference was due to the number of students who participated in the summer only. Participants in the summer alone were unlikely to accumulate regular attendee status because summer offerings tended to be less than the required 30 days.

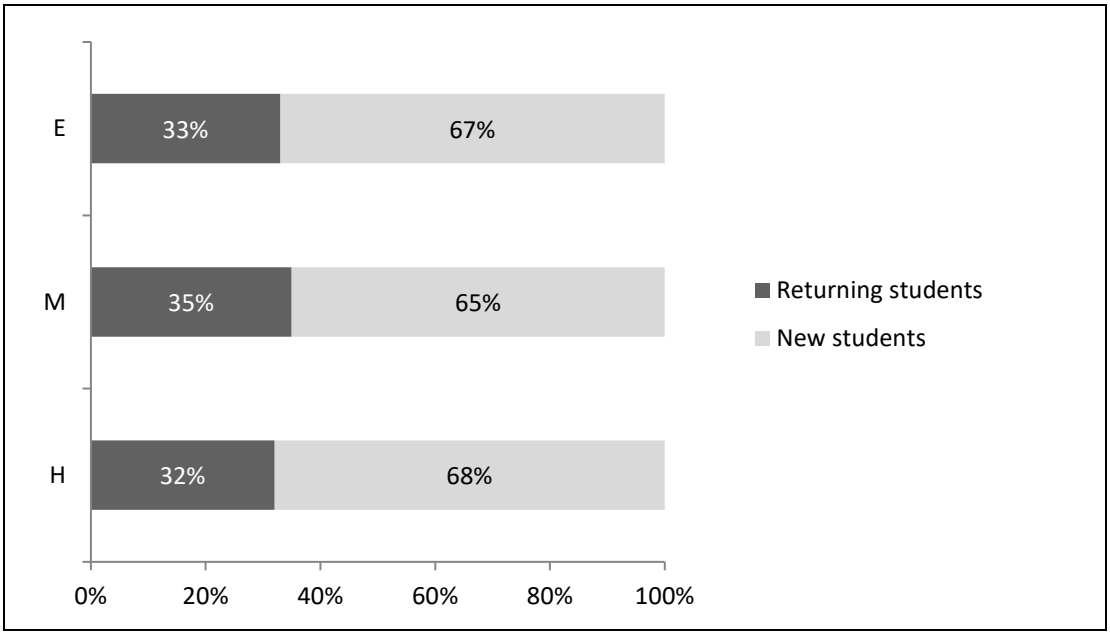
The established partnership with the Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) helped provide student demographics and school attendance data. With the combination of site entries and CEPI's submissions, data on participants' free or reduced-price lunch status were available for almost all program participants (95%). The data showed that the majority (88%) of students received free or reduced-price meals, reflecting that Michigan 21st CCLC programs primarily serve economically disadvantaged students.

New vs. Returning Students

Participants could be either newly enrolled in this program year or returning for a second or third year. Getting students to participate for multiple years is important because sustained participation over time can lead to greater benefits,[2] although the ability to attend across years can be limited as students move away or up to higher grades and different schools. Figure 1 shows the average proportions of students who were new in 2019-2020 or were returning from previous years. The data suggest that about a third of students were returning from the previous year, and about two-thirds were new.

[2] Vandell, D. L. Reisner, E. R. & Pierce, K. M. (2007). *Outcomes linked to high-quality afterschool programs: Longitudinal findings from the study of promising afterschool programs*. Irvine: University of California, Irvine.

Figure 1. Percent of New and Returning Students

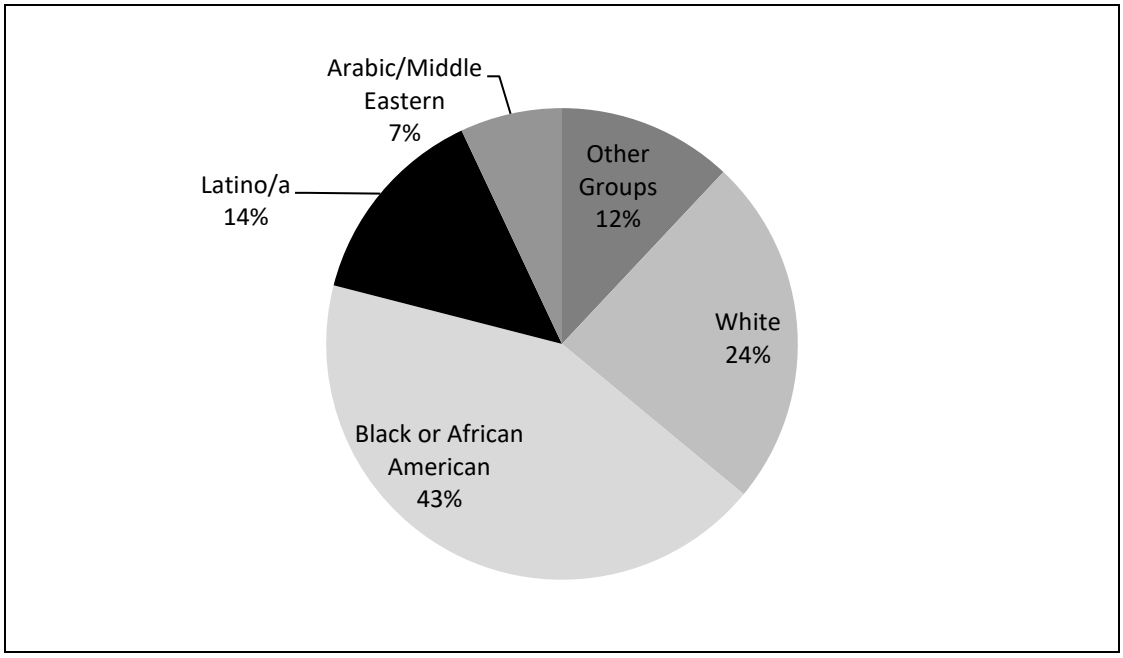


NOTE. E = Elementary school (N=10,608); M = Middle school (N=4,235); H = High school (N=4,238).

Race/Ethnicity

Figure 2 shows the distribution of participants according to race/ethnicity. Almost half (43%) of students were identified as Black or African American; 24% as White, 14% as Hispanic/Latino-a, and 7% Arab/Middle Eastern. Twelve percent were identified as "some other group." Michigan 21st CCLC programs served predominantly minority students, and the population has remained stable over the past few years.

Figure 2. Race of Student Participants



NOTE. N=19,081.

Sustaining Participation of Students with Low Academic Performance

Students with lower academic performance at the beginning of the school year were likely to benefit more from the additional academic support offered by 21st CCLC programs because they had greater room for improvement. This group may benefit from the additional instruction to catch up with their peers. For this report, low academic performance was defined as having a GPA of 2.5 (4-pt scale) or below either at the beginning of the school year or on average over the year.[3]

Academically low-performing students accounted for 74% of the total population whose school outcomes data were available in the 2019-2020 school year. Table 2 shows the percent of low-performing students and other students who attended for 30, 60, and 90 days. Programs were successful in sustaining participation for 30 days, with about three-quarters of students

[3] There were two exceptions to this definition: (1) Students attending alternative high schools were considered to be academically low-performing regardless of GPA; (2) Students attending schools that did not give letter grades were considered to be low-performing if they received a report of "no credit" as their grade.

attending for at least 30 days. Close to half sustained participation over 60 days, and about a quarter attended at least 90 days. Overall, the participation pattern between low-performing and other students was similar.

Table 2. Percent of Students with Sustained Participation

Days of Attendance	*Low-Performing Students*	*Other Students*
30 days	74% ⓘ	75%
60 days	49% ⓘ	49%
90 days	25% ⓘ	22%

NOTE. Students with academic performance data = 11,149; Low-performing students = 8,285; Other students = 2,864.

What Activities Do Students Engaged In?

The primary purpose of the 21st CCLC program is to provide opportunities for academic enrichment to students attending low-performing schools. To enhance the academic component of the program, grantees must also offer other enrichment activities in various areas such as STEM enrichment, social-emotional learning opportunities, arts education, and recreation.

Academics

Participation in Academics

All 21st CCLC programs were required to offer academics, and Table 3 presents the percentage of students who participated in each specific type of academic activity for at least 10 days[4]. The data suggest that a wide variety of academic activities were offered, and that almost every student (99%) participated in at least one academic activity for more than 10 days. Notably, almost half of the students in the high school sites (45%) participated in credit recovery sessions, suggesting the need for such services for older students, who were sometimes in alternative high school programs. Also, STEM activities were frequent, with heavier participation from younger students.

[4]Only calculated for activity types offered for at least 10 days for that site.

Table 3. Percent of Students who Participated in Each Type of Academic Activity

Type of Academic Activity	*GRADE LEVEL* *E*	*M*	*H*	*All*
Academic (Traditional)				
Homework help ⓘ	72%	59%	38%	63%
Credit recovery	N/A	14%	45%	37%
Academic (Enrichment)				
Project-based enrichment + Lessons ⓘ	84%	74%	78%	80%
- Science	36%	27%	17%	30%
- Technology (learning computer programs, video and media)	13%	16%	5%	11%
- Engineering	25%	19%	13%	21%
- Math	46%	40%	14%	39%
Did not participate in any academic activities	1%	2%	1%	1%

NOTE. E = Elementary school students (N=9,266); M = Middle school students (N=3,474); H = High school students (N=3,447). Students are counted as having participated in an activity type if they attended sessions for at least 10 days.

Other Enrichment Activities Offered

Program sites varied in the types of activities they offered to students in addition to academic activities. Table 4 shows the different types of non-academic activities offered by grade level. The data suggested that recreation, sports, art, youth development, special events and field trips were very prevalent among all programs, with the exception being fewer sport offerings in high school sites. The youth development category was most common; almost all sites offered youth development sessions to students. These activities included social-emotional learning, life skills training, financial literacy, and risk prevention interventions. Studies have found that these experiences can be important mediators of positive youth outcomes, especially for lower-resourced students.[5] Although sports were less likely to be offered in high school sites, activities with a focus on health and nutrition were much more available than in sites serving younger students.

[5] Gottfredson, D. C., Gerstenblith, S., Soulé, D. A., Womer, S., & Lu, S. (2004). Do after school programs reduce delinquency? *Prevention Science, 5,* 253–266.

Table 4. Types of Non-Academic Activities Offered by Sites

	GRADE LEVEL			
	E	*M*	*H*	*All*
Recreation (social events, games, free play, etc.)	94%	100%	94%	95%
Sports	84%	96%	56%	81%
Art	98%	94%	82%	94%
Youth development (social-emotional learning, life skills, conflict resolution, resistance skills, etc.)	98%	98%	98%	97%
Health/nutrition	42%	27%	66%	43%
Special events	84%	84%	80%	82%
Field trips	88%	90%	92%	89%

NOTE. E = Elementary school sites (N=159 sites); M = Middle school sites (N=49 sites); H = High school sites (N=50 sites); All (N=284 sites). Sites crossing elementary, middle, and/or high school boundaries, such as a K-8 school, were omitted from individual categories (i.e., E, M) but do appear in the All category.

Participation in Other Enrichment Activities

Table 5 shows the percent of students at each grade level who participated in different types of enrichment activities. Recreation and youth development were the two major types of activities in which students were most likely to participate. Fewer high school students than elementary or middle school students participated in most activities. Participation in health/nutrition activities remained low across all groups.

Table 5. Percent of Students who Participated in Each Type of Enrichment Activity

	GRADE LEVEL			
Type of Activity	*E*	*M*	*H*	*All*
Recreation (social events, games, free play, etc.)	74%	60%	21%	59%
Sports ⓘ	49%	37%	10%	41%
Art ⓘ	49%	42%	13%	41%
Youth development ⓘ (social-emotional learning, life skills, conflict resolution, resistance skills, etc.)	62%	68%	53%	61%
Health/nutrition	8%	3%	3%	6%
Special events ⓘ	15%	6%	14%	13%
Field Trip ⓘ	23%	16%	4%	17%

NOTE. E = Elementary school students (N=9,266); M = Middle school students (N=3,474); H = High school students (N=3,447). Students are counted as having participated in an activity if they attended that type of activity for at least 10 days.

Staff Priorities for Programming

Staff's priorities for the program are important because they show where staff are likely to focus their efforts. When compiling staff's top two priorities, two statements stood out: "Allow youth to relax, play and socialize" (60%) and "Improve the academic achievement of youth" (46%). About one third of the staff chose "Improve the social and emotional development of youth" (41%) as one of their top two priorities, followed by "Enable the lowest-performing students to achieve grade-level proficiency" (19%). Overall, staff recognized programs as a space for both learning and relaxation for students (See Table 6 for details).

Table 6. Percent of Staff Reporting that Each Area is a Top Program Priority (First or Second Priority)

Program Area	*Percent of Staff*
Allow youth to relax, play, and socialize	60%
Improve the academic achievement of youth ⓘ	46%
Improve the social and emotional development of youth	41%
Enable the lowest-performing students to achieve grade-level proficiency ⓘ	19%
Engage youth in fun leisure activities otherwise unavailable to them (i.e., arts, music, fitness, sports, etc.)	12%
Provide opportunities for youth to learn STEM or other academic subjects in a fun way	12%
Help youth keep up with homework ⓘ	11%
NOTE. Staff N=793.	

Did Students' Academic Performance Change?

The Michigan Department of Education did not require the collection of student grades once schools began to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, while the school outcome data collection was still implemented as planned, this was done with knowledge that school districts were operating using vastly different systems. For example, some districts were about to collect grades right before the pandemic hit, and therefore the latest grade reported for the school year was in December 2019. Others resumed schooling in some capacity in mid-to-late April and collected grades along the way as planned until the end of the school year. Additionally, the state suspended the administration and collection of standardized testing, including the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (MSTEP). As a result, state assessment data is not available for this report.

Grades

Math Grades

During the 2019-20 school year, about 23% of the regular attendees whose math grade information was available (N=7,222) showed at least a half grade improvement (e.g., 2.5 to 3.0) from fall to spring. This number was significantly lower than the previous years' scores, which averaged around 35%. The percent of improvement increased slightly to 28% when only students with room for grade improvement were selected. This number is also significantly lower compared to the previous years' averages, which are around 50%.

Reading Grades

The pattern of decline was also found in students' reading grade changes. About 31% of the regular attendees whose grade information was available (N=7,283) showed at least a half grade improvement (e.g., 2.5 to 3.0) from fall to spring. This number was slightly lower than the previous years' scores, which averaged around 34%. The percent of improvement increased to 45% when only students with room for grade improvement were selected. This number is also slightly lower compared to the previous years' averages, which were around 50%.

There are several limitations in interpreting these declines. Although learning loss due to the pandemic was largely anticipated, the data we have collected from programs for the spring semester varied greatly across sites. It is difficult to conclude the reason for these declines, as they may be a reflection of COVID-19-inflicted learning loss or may result from different grade collection periods.

How Did Programs React to the COVID-19 Pandemic?

The early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic forced almost all schools in the United States to close their doors and transition to alternative forms of learning. This decision, made by state governors to combat the increasing number of cases, unfortunately left students, parents, and educators to navigate the unknown terrain associated with distance learning. In the state of Michigan, Governor Whitmer signed an Executive Order that mandated the closure of all K-12 buildings for three weeks starting March 16 (Lawler, 2020). However, because of the rising cases across Michigan, all K-12 schools were closed for in-person learning for the remainder of the school year (Barrett, 2020). The continuous progression of the virus made it especially difficult both to develop a cohesive plan for educators, administrators, and staff, and to ensure that all students were receiving a quality education.

Typically, Michigan 21st CLCC provide year-round afterschool programs and summer camps to approximately 25,000 youth. The funded programs were located in predominantly poor communities bearing varying levels and kinds of risk factors. Almost all programs served mostly low-income minoritized students attending low-performing schools. Some programs were located in urban poor neighborhoods, served a large portion of immigrant families with Arabic or Spanish being the primary language spoken at home, operated in conjunction with alternative high schools, or were rooted in rural communities where Internet services were sporadic at best. While providing steady and high-quality academic enrichment content is always one of the most important requirements for 21st CCLC programs, the closure of the schools and school buildings during the pandemic forced programs to reposition themselves and quickly alter their offerings.

During the early stage of the pandemic, many of the Michigan 21st CCLC programs struggled to retain participation. Four programs remained closed for the rest of the program year. About 31.2% of youth completely dropped out of the program, although many programs successfully registered some new students to join when programming was resumed (about 2.5% of the program participants were newly enrolled during the pandemic). Access to high-speed Internet and computer devices varied widely and was a significant challenge for many families. About 15.9% of the remaining 246 programs were not able to offer virtual programming because of the lack of connectivity and devices among participants, especially those who resided in rural

communities. About 68% of youth enrolled at the beginning of the pandemic did not participate in virtual programming despite it being offered to them.

Because of 21st CCLC's close ties to youth and families who were disadvantaged socio-economically and vulnerable to the pandemic, we conducted a series of interviews with program administrators and staff to better understand what happened during the earliest stage (first five months) of the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs were located across urban and rural settings. Our goal was to better understand in what ways the 21st CCLC programs dealt with the challenges, lessons learned, and best practices developed during this experience.

A diverse set of voices was intentionally selected for the study sample, distributed across geographic locations, populations, and age groups served. The initial invitation email was sent to 27 program administrators, with follow-up invitations sent to an additional 4 staff members whose administrators recommended them for participation in the interview. In the end, 23 respondents agreed to participate in the interviews. After two dropped out, 21 participants completed the interview process. All interviews were conducted over Zoom and were recorded through the platform with the consent of the participant. Interviews lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. One study participant, one lead interviewer, and one assistant interviewer were present during the entire course of the Zoom meeting. After each session, the interviewers took time to compare notes, highlighting key themes and documenting anecdotal evidence on a pre-developed spreadsheet shared between the interview team.

The interview protocol, as listed below, was approved by MSU's Human Research Protection Program. Each interview began with the interviewers introducing themselves to the participant, reading the full consent language, reassuring confidentiality, and notifying participants that they could stop the interview at any time. The questions centered around the challenges programs were facing and how the programs responded to those challenges in different time periods (early closure of schools in March, April when programs were given specific guidelines by the Michigan Department of Education, and continued implementation of remote delivery in the summer). The interview questions include:

1. **[EARLY STAGE]** The governor announced the closure of school for three weeks in mid-March. What happened to you and your program right after the announcement was made?
    a. What was your greatest concern? (e.g., Staff retention, paycheck, managing your own family, program plans, supports for program youth and families, etc.)

    b. What did you do during the first week or two of the closure time and what made you give priorities to those activities?
2. **[EARLY STAGE]** After the first two weeks of the transition period, on April 2nd, the Governor announced the closure for the remainder of the school year. What happened to you and your program since you learned about the decision in April?
    a. In what ways had you connected with youth during this period?
    b. In what ways had you connected with families during this period?
    c. In what ways had you connected with the district during this period?
    d. Did you encounter any challenges? Or things that were meant to be helpful but not?
    e. What have you learned/found helpful?
    f. What would you have done differently, if you had the opportunity?
3. **[PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION]** Have you been able to operate your programs in May?
    a. What kinds of activities are you providing with youth and families? How do you make it work/engaging/independent?
    b. What were the challenges you faced to "stay open" during this time?
    c. How did you approach them? (Staffing, family engagement, schools, feasibility, etc.)
4. **[POST IMPLEMENTATION]** Now that we're moving onto the summer programming…
    a. How do you think COVID-19 has impacted you and your program this summer? (e.g., staffing, recruitment, contents, licensing, youth, families, district)
    b. How have you worked with the district regarding summer programming?
    c. What elements of your programming/staff management practices that you have implemented during this time would you want to continue in the future when in-person is allowed again?
    d. What resources do you need?
    e. How is your program uniquely positioned to meet the needs of your community?

The Characteristics of the Study Participants and Their Programs

A total of 21 individuals took part in this study. Individual interviews were done with 9 project directors or assistant directors, 8 site coordinators or assistant coordinators, and 4 staff. The

majority of the participants identified themselves as female (N=18), white (N=12), located in the urban areas (N=16), and serving predominantly Black, Arab, or Latinx (N=16), elementary-level students (N=13). A detailed description is listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Interview Participant and Program Characteristics

	N	*%*
Gender Identity		
Female	18	86%
Male	3	14%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	12	57%
Black	6	29%
Arab Descent	3	14%
Age group		
25-34	5	23.8%
35-44	6	28.6%
45-54	10	47.6%
Role		
Project director (PD)	9	43%
Site coordinator (SC)	8	38%
Staff (ST)	4	19%
Region		
Urban	16	76%
Rural	5	24%
Age group served		
Elementary	13	62%
Elementary-Middle School Combined	1	5%
Middle	4	19%
High school	3	14%
Racial/Ethnic group served		
Predominantly White	5	24%
Predominantly Black	10	48%
Predominantly Arabic	2	10%
Predominantly Hispanic/Latinx	1	5%
Very diverse	3	14%

Analysis

The two lead authors – both with extensive years of experience in the field of out-of-school time programming – analyzed the data collected through the following phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the authors reviewed interview notes and recordings to familiarize themselves with the responses, highlighting key quotes and commonalities from the participants. Next, initial themes were generated with the aim of holistically describing the response of programs to being on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the data was organized by each theme, the authors independently searched within themes in interview notes and recorded footage and selected quotes to describe the experiences of CCLC programs. Once the initial phases of coding were completed, the authors reconvened to review the key themes and selected quotes that had

emerged during their individual reviews of the data together. Analysis continued as data was organized into themes and sub-themes, which were refined throughout the writing process. After the analysis was completed, a final report of findings was produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding scheme was closely aligned with the interview questions, and the codes and overarching themes were grouped into four topics as described in the Findings section below.

Findings

Four themes were generated from the qualitative analysis of the interview data: challenges, personnel management, how Michigan 21st CLCC programs responded to the needs of the community during the early period of the pandemic, and what opportunities emerged that can be adopted for the future.

Theme One: The Challenges

The Need for Safe Care

One of the key needs of communities in Michigan is free or low-cost safe care for their children, which was largely provided by afterschool programs during out-of-school time and through summer break. The closure of schools negatively impacted families, especially those of essential workers. Program administrators did not want to risk the health and safety of their staff, but they also had to develop a program to provide families with safe spaces and learning supports for their children so essential workers were able to return to work.

> *"Parents were frustrated. A lot of kids wanted to participate but were unable to, and parents had to give up – both with programming and with school. Shifting to working from home while also transitioning their students was stressful, so some completely checked out. Parents didn't have time to sit with their kids for two and a half hours during work to help their child with programming" (18, Asst. PD).*

Youth Experiences of Stress

When 21st CLCC program staff and administrators were asked about their greatest concerns when schools initially closed, everyone responded that they were concerned about their students. They worried that the school shutdowns and stay-at-home orders could traumatize some students, and the virus was something "kind of like the boogeyman" (1, PD) –unknown and scary. Almost all staff and administrators were most concerned about how the basic needs

of their students would be met, such as food and safe care. For students that live in unsafe or unstable homes, the program provides a safe haven.

> *"To many kids, school is the only safe place in their life. My biggest concern was how are kids going to get fed?... While schools are closed, kids at home could be experiencing mental and physical abuse, they could be in unsafe environments, or not have a sufficient food supply" (18, Asst. PD).*

Attendance, Recruitment, and Retention

Staff and administrators generally reported low attendance after their program transitioned to a virtual format. During the initial months of the pandemic, programs reported difficulty in getting students online and engaged since they were not required to do assignments for school, and they were disappointed that field trips and in-person activities they had looked forward to were cancelled. Attendance consistently declined through the spring, and virtual summer programming was not appealing to many students because of burn-out and virtual fatigue. Additionally, because programs were remote, they faced difficulties when recruiting students for their summer programs. Attendance, recruitment, and retention were crucial for these programs because of the program hours requirement by the Michigan Department of Education. These requirements made programs rush to transition to their virtual, hybrid, or online formats, exacerbating their stress and eventual burn-out.

> *"Recruitment for summer programming was really challenging. Students that were actively engaged in the program during the school year didn't want to participate, and the older students didn't want to participate because they couldn't engage with the staff and their peers."* (17, PD)

> *"Students and staff were burnt out, but we had to keep things fresh. We had to keep going because of the programming requirements. We weren't sure if our hours would be met. If we didn't have to meet these requirements, we could've had a lot more flexibility and given everyone a break."* (22, SC)

Challenges Faced by African American Families

The early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted African American families in the state of Michigan. African Americans make up 14% of Michigan's population, yet in April 2020 made up 33% of reported infections and 40% of the state's COVID-19 deaths (Wayland, Repko, & Feuer, 2020). More specifically, 26% of Michigan's infections and 25% of

deaths were in Detroit, a city with a population that is 79% African American. African Americans regularly encountered conditions that increased their risk of exposure to the coronavirus; in particular they were "more likely to be uninsured, receive low-quality healthcare, live in food deserts, and exposure to indoor and outdoor toxins, all of which are linked to underlying health conditions that heighten risk for COVID-19" (Yip, 2020, p. 3).

> *"COVID-19 hit the African American community really hard early on. We lost a lot of people, and it impacted a lot of people I'm close to. It was traumatic – it seemed like everyone was either sick or dying"* (20, Staff).

Black families have been found to be more financially vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic, and have higher rates of food, financial, and housing insecurity. This brings about difficulties in affording technology – specifically devices and Wi-Fi – and resources necessary for virtual learning in addition to systemic lack of investment by government and business to support technology infrastructure in these communities. With Black parents more likely to serve as essential workers, students are often unable to have academic supervision and support while learning is remote (Yip, 2020, p. 6). Research also showed that Black children additionally experienced higher levels of stress due to concerns regarding their family's financial situation, potential exposure of family members to the coronavirus, recent race-related trauma, social distancing, and family loss (Yip, 2020, p. 7).

Challenges Faced by Rural Communities

Rural communities in Michigan have also been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Unfortunately, "systemic health and social inequities have put some rural residents at increased risk of getting COVID-19" (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). At the beginning of the pandemic, rural communities had lower cases because of the greater ability to lessen community spread compared to urban and suburban areas; however, these areas have been severely impacted by the financial and economic costs of the coronavirus pandemic. Students in rural areas have faced a number of issues in accessing virtual learning resources. Because of the remoteness of these communities, internet connectivity is weaker or even unavailable, and ultimately limits the ability to utilize certain online platforms, such as Zoom. In addition, because of the negative economic impact of the pandemic coupled with high rates of poverty in communities served by 21st CLCC programs, students and families were unable to afford the resources necessary for virtual learning – including Wi-Fi and devices. While some schools

were able to provide their students with hotspots, they often were not strong enough, so students in these areas had to rely on their parent's cell phones and data to participate.

> *"One of our biggest challenges was ensuring kids had devices and internet connection. In our program 12 families out of 50 didn't have a computer, email or internet in their home. Even though the district provided 2500 Chromebooks and hotspots, some families decided to opt out because they assumed the closure would be temporary. Some of these districts only provided one device per family, so siblings had to share devices while their parents were also working from home"* (2, SC).

> *"Our program had school districts in 3 different counties. Some of our districts had internet connectivity as low as 20%, and the highest rate of connectivity was 60% of families. We had to figure out the best ways to work with kids in a rural area."* (3, PD)

Challenges Faced by Immigrant Families

Diverse school districts with a large number of immigrant families encountered issues related to language barriers. Since many of these parents either don't speak English or only know a few words, programs faced difficulties getting in contact with these families because they had to rely on interpreters or liaisons in order to communicate with families. Many were also overwhelmed by the number of calls and questions they received, and some even stopped answering phone calls and messages completely. English Language Learner (ELL) students across the state can depend on afterschool programming to succeed academically. Students, especially those unable to get help at home and struggling in school prior to the pandemic, were unsure of how the virus would impact their grades. A diverse and bilingual staff were able to meet the needs of the students in the midst of school closures. However, programs faced difficulty in engaging and communicating with ELL students virtually.

> *"The program has an extremely diverse staff. Just about everyone has English as their second language or is able to speak multiple languages. Because of this, we were really able to meet the needs of the students virtually since there weren't any language barriers."* (20, Staff)

> *"Our students were very interested in virtual programming, and engagement was fair. They wanted to pass – they were terrified of the virus and didn't know the status of their grades. Students didn't want to fail, especially those that were struggling before COVID-19, so the pandemic really upped the ante."* (20, Staff)

Theme Two: Personnel Management

Program administrators and staff members endured a number of difficulties adapting to school closures and executing their program. For some programs, staffing was the most challenging part of running programs virtually.

Program Resources and Funding

Programs lacked resources and funding to make the transition to remote delivery, which constrained the activities and lessons they were able to do. During the initial phases of the shutdown, many programs were under the impression that schools would only be closed for two weeks, so staff, administrators, and even students took only essential supplies from their sites. In lower-income areas in particular, students didn't have items in their homes that they would typically access at the program. Because a number of programs did not have the funding to purchase these supplies for every student, they had to develop activities using items that would be commonly found in the home and that relied more heavily on technology rather than facilitated hands-on activities. Even programs that did have the finances to provide materials for their students experienced difficulties in distributing resources to students. For programs in rural areas, families are very spread out, which makes transportation and delivery difficult.

> *"The hardest part is getting the students and families the tools they needed to participate." (5, SC)*

> *"I wish the program gave me a personal budget, or a larger budget in general. I wanted to drop off weekly activity kits on people's porches. I had the time, just not the finances."* (19, Staff)

Technical Difficulties

Program staff and administrators also encountered issues related to technology accessibility and connectivity. While younger staff were enthusiastic about the transition to virtual programming, older and even elderly staff faced difficulties in adapting to a new form of delivery. For those to whom technology does not come easily, learning how to navigate unfamiliar platforms caused added stress. Program staff and administrators additionally experienced device-related issues. A number of staff stated that their computers crashed early on in the school closures or that their devices were not compatible with programs such as Zoom. Those that had issues with poor internet connectivity, generally as a result of remoteness, faced issues during program time.

"There were at least three or four staff we ended up losing because of technology. They didn't have the computer and WiFi… We ended up giving out some of the iPads to staff to keep them engaged. The technology was a huge part of learning how to do stuff… and it flustered some staff and these are also some of the staff members who experienced the loss of loved ones. So just coupled with the pressure of learning new things, the pressure of anxiety and the pressure of technology NOT working, which wasn't really working most of the time, it's probably human errors, but you know, during that time it was just everything. So during that time we probably lost at least four staff" (18, Asst. PD)

"Sometimes staff would cut out and lose service or be frozen. Kids would draw attention to this, and lose focus" (10, Asst. PD)

Financial Stress/Loss of Wages

Program staff were vulnerable to the economic hardships that were brought about by school closures and shutdowns. They were concerned about whether they would lose their jobs and source of income and have to apply for unemployment. For a number of programs, the transition to virtual programming meant that only site leadership would get paid, and staff would not be earning wages during the shutdown. Some staff worked at 21st CLCC programs to earn additional income, but for some staff, 21st CCLC was their only source of income. While some developed a professional development schedule for frontline workers to ensure they were still being productive and getting hours, these staff members were unable to work as much as they typically do.

"We were really concerned about staff retention. We wanted to make sure that all staff would get paid, but instead only site leadership would get paid. It was really stressful to run the program ourselves, and this job serves as the only source of income for some of our staff." (22, SC).

Staff Encountering Personal Issues and Burnout

Program staff and administrators were overworked when trying to transition their programs to an alternative format, with many working to do so before receiving guidance from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). Those involved in planning during the initial stages of the school closures had received little direction at that point. Because programs were unable to plan very far ahead, their sense of stability and security was undermined, and they had

constant concerns about attendance, meeting required program hours, and whether their new form of programming would actually be a success. The transition to an alternative form of programming was rushed for many programs, and staff were unable to get a break for months, contributing to staff burnout. Many were working longer days in order to be more accessible to students, developing programs without needed resources or guidance, and doing what they could to ensure their staff would be able to earn an income.

> *"Our staff were burnt out. The coordinators were taking on a lot of pressure from our staff, our families, our students, and our personal life, on top of all of the stresses of COVID-19. We practically shut down for a week to give our staff some time to reboot and plan without being on camera, since some felt like they were having a nervous breakdown."* (18, PD).

> *"Personal obligations made it difficult to have a balance between work and home life. It's hard to have the two combined in the middle of the day. We have to take care of personal business, and that resulted in difficulties in communication."* (19, Staff).

Maintaining a Digital Presence

Program administrators reported some difficulties with staff accountability. While some staff and coordinators were going above and beyond with their activities and lessons, others were not putting in as much effort. Especially in the initial phase of the school closure, some administrators stated their staff – much like their students – viewed this as a vacation. Many staff had issues related to being virtually present. Because they were not in their traditional space of employment, and were instead in their own space, some staff had a different mindset and had difficulties acknowledging that they were at work. Staff would be disengaged during Zoom meetings or even lessons and activities, some not even turning on their camera although the bandwidth would have allowed it.

> *"In person, my staff are awesome, but virtually they're different people."* (7, SC)

> *"Staff were experiencing issues. We had a situation where I think for a week and a half several areas of the city didn't have electricity because of a huge storm. So staff AND students experienced that….We also had a challenge of incorporating youth voice because it's different when you're face to face.*" (18, Asst. PD)

Lack of Interest

Many programs encountered staff shortages because of a lack of interest in participating in alternative forms of programming. Because staff were not in person and directly working with their students, they elected to apply for unemployment and return in the fall when they anticipated schools would be open once again. The overall lack of interest additionally contributed to difficulties in staff accountability. Communication between staff and administrators was hindered.

> *"The ability for on-site follow-through is completely out the window, and now we can only communicate by texting and calling. Our staff technically have to respond. Reliability and accountability drops as a result"* (12, SC)

Theme Three: Responding to Community Needs

Immediate Community Engagement

Armed with strong knowledge of and connection with youth and families, programs were immediately concerned with meeting the basic needs of kids and families. The first priority of many programs was to check in with families to see how they were coping and whether the program could provide any supplies or resources. Although programs were initially unsure of how to navigate the development of virtual and alternative forms of programming, they made sure to establish contact with their students and families and provide assistance to those in need.

> *"I really had a duty to help employees and students without any knowledge of what was happening."* (1, PD)

> *"We're so deeply embedded in the community here. We have a unique opportunity to interact with our families and kids every day. During the pandemic, we're even more visible."* (6, SC)

Checking in with Families

Program staff and administrators utilized text messages, phone calls, emails, Remind 101, social media platforms, Google Classrooms, Classroom Dojo, and even handwritten letters to make contact with their families. Through these immediate check-ins, programs asked the families in their communities "What can we do?" and "How can we help you?" By establishing a

strong rapport with the families in their communities, programs ensured that parents and children would not be left behind, and connected them with resources and information. Programs wanted to let their families know that they were cared about, working to soften the uncertainties that were associated with the pandemic.

> *"We reached out to families and gathered low-cost resources for families and children. We utilized our Facebook groups and posted links to our Zoom sessions and other ways to engage children. We wanted to let families know we're still here, and that they can talk to us and get in touch if they needed anything."* (8, Asst. SC)

Food Distribution

Many programs were immediately concerned with the basic needs of students and families. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, school meals were often the only well-balanced meals children would get all day. Most programs immediately connected with local school districts or community partners to set up a distribution center for food or other necessities or offered porch drop-offs to families in need. Students who came to food distribution sites or had meals dropped off at their home were able to safely see the familiar faces of their program staff.

> *"We started food distribution at the very beginning. We were able to connect with kids and parents, which gave everyone a sense of normalcy. There was a lot of need for food distribution in the community, and we distributed more meals during this closure than when school is normally closed over the summer or on breaks. Two-thirds of kids in our building came to get meals, and between 265-500 meals go out the door every day."* (6, SC)

Engaging Youth and Combatting Zoom Fatigue

One challenge programs encountered once their virtual programs were up and running involved engaging their youth. Participation in virtual programming towards the end of the school year and summer was significantly lower for most programs for a number of reasons. Students were experiencing burnout from virtual schooling. Making schoolwork and program attendance optional made it easy for students to not participate, and students were disappointed that summer programming would be online.

> *"One challenge we faced was constantly engaging the youth. We had to reinvent as we go on the fly, and fast, to keep the kids."* (4, SC).

"In a classroom you can mix things up, so it's easier to keep kids focused. Over Zoom, students were easily distracted and found it hard to retain concentration" (8, Asst. SC).

To overcome these challenges and ensure that youth were present and engaged, programs used a variety of different platforms and forms of programming. In order to be accessible to students, programs across the state of Michigan developed three types of alternative programming – virtual, hybrid, and offline – so all students were able to participate. All programs developed unique lessons and activities that would be engaging and independent for their students so they would be occupied and not have to rely on parents for assistance.

Virtual Programming

Programs that were in urban and suburban areas of Michigan with somewhat more consistent internet access developed online forms of programming. Online meetings and activities served not only as an educational but also a social space, so kids were able to communicate with program staff and other students. Administrators and staff used a variety of platforms, including Google Classrooms, Class Dojo, Kahoot, Book Nook, Jeopardy, and YouTube to ensure that their activities were interactive and engaging. Activities not only kept students busy, but also provided them with information in an enjoyable way. Programs that utilized video conferencing through Zoom or Microsoft Teams worked to ensure that these spaces would not exclusively be focused on academics, but also serve as a social space for students.

Programs commonly utilized the following activities:

- Breakout rooms on Zoom as a means to facilitate small group discussions
- Virtual Jeopardy and Kahoot! as learning activities
- Virtual field trips followed by reflections
- YouTube videos
- Google Classroom and Class Dojo used for activities and videos, and to update students and their families
- Book Nook, for reading and comprehension
- Simple science experiments, with either a live tutorial or a pre-recorded video

- Try Something New – students were encouraged to videotape themselves learning a new skill or hobby

- Other hands-on activities that would not be able to occur in regular programming

Offline Programming

To circumvent poor internet connections, programs located in rural areas of the state developed technology-free programming. These programs worked to design their activities around things that would be found in the home, and any additional materials would be distributed by the program.

Hybrid Programming

Some programs worked to develop both virtual and offline program options. While the majority of students had WiFi or access to internet, program administrators or staff were unsure of the quality, so they developed a hybrid model of programming. These programs worked to reinvent their program by complementing "paper" activities with virtual activities and dropping off supplies at students' homes. For students who were very young or did not have reliable internet connection, programs provided at-home learning packets so students would still be able to do activities and would only have to attend check-in calls at the end of the week. Programs that relied primarily on technology also made sure to incorporate offline components as well, particularly exercise and movement activities, so their students would not be staring at a screen all day.

Connecting Better with School Administration

Programs across the state had varying relationships and partnerships with local school districts. School-based programs were not guaranteed a seat at the table when discussing school closures, contacting families, transitioning to virtual learning, or even school reopening. In some cases, afterschool programming was considered to be "separate" from the district, not something that should be prioritized. The disconnect within some communities between local school districts and school-based afterschool programs created difficulties that ultimately hindered program delivery.

> *"Even though our program is connected with the district, we still faced an uphill battle because of technology. Our district blocked Zoom because of Zoombombing and other security issues and glitches without telling us, so we still used it in our program. So*

students who had district computers weren't able to access our meetings, while students with personal devices could participate. Students who received these district computers had a lot of platforms we use blocked from them, and we couldn't use websites like Facebook, Zoom, or Flipgrid." (18, PD).

Theme Four: New Opportunities

Learning New Ways of Programming

Although the transition to virtual or other forms of programming were extremely stressful, program staff and administrations remained optimistic. School closures forced programs to look for other avenues of programming, viewing this as a learning experience and a way to find new ways to connect with students. While the impact of the pandemic on afterschool programming as a whole is negative, programs worked to find opportunities to turn this experience into something positive. Programs took advantage of smaller groups in order to build stronger relationships with students. Those who had been in the field for years tended to shy away from technology. However, some staff reported that the challenges they faced didn't present themselves as challenging because, ultimately, they knew if the program was stopped, kids would have missed out on education, enrichment, and social interaction.

> *"We pushed the staff to research and see what the kids were into. We couldn't assume we could have the kids do what you offer them during the face-to-face time. The staff had to step out of the comfort zone."* (18, Asst. PD)

Flexible Scheduling

Additionally, the transition to alternative forms of programming allowed greater flexibility for some students and staff. They were no longer confined to hosting programming for three hours after school four days a week. Program staff learned that flexibility would alleviate a number of their stresses during the school closures, and they needed to adjust and not be rigid with their normal schedule. By shifting around programming times and being flexible, programs enabled kids to communicate and participate at times that were convenient for them.

> *"Now you have a 12-year-old kid who could be at home alone and they had the option to sleep in till 2 to 3 o'clock, or even high schoolers. So we had to shift our time being for our secondary program because our secondary kids are not getting up before 1 o'clock. So we push their programming to 2 o'clock so at least they had to get up, brush their teeth, eat something and get onto camera, and/or seek out help for credit recovery*

stuff." (18, Asst. PD)

Re-Developing Afterschool Programming

Some program staff and administrators have seen the transition to virtual forms of programming to be an opportunity for greater research in the field and the development of new best practices. These individuals have noticed the positive impacts that virtually programming has had on some of their students. They are working to counter the notion that technology is bad for relationships because some students have benefited from this type of relationship building. While a virtual platform can never fully substitute or replicate in-person relationship building, staff and administrators have noticed confidence boosts in several of their students. This can be attributed to smaller peer groups, and the fact that kids were in spaces in which they were comfortable. Although home was not a safe environment for all students involved in 21st CLCC programs, some found being at home soothing since school might not be their safe space either. Virtual programming is positioned to meet the needs of students who are not supported by or struggle with in-person learning. It can give students a safe space to talk about the things they enjoy and can reduce judgment and frustration since one can turn on the mute button. It can alleviate many of the stresses that are associated with in-person learning and programming.

> *"Something genuine is happening here and there's no face-to-face in-person relationship-building beforehand. I can easily find a "how to make a slime" video on YouTube, and maybe it will be more professional, funnier, and maybe be more educational, but it wouldn't be me. It wouldn't be the person that they're spending time with, and relationship building isn't happening at that time."* (12, SC)

> *"I tried to make it fun and engaging by breaking the ice, being very very goofy, and taking the time to engage every single kid. I felt very lucky because I had relatively small group. So I could beat the clock, but also engage every single kid. And they didn't have to be there if they didn't want to, and they kept coming, which tells me something genuine is happening."* (12, SC).

Greater Incorporation of Youth Voice

Programs wanted to ensure that activities and lessons were not only educational, but also enjoyable for their students. They worked to incorporate youth voice into the program to

promote engagement and retention by providing students with activities they would actually want to do. Staff and administrators incorporated activities like virtual movie nights followed by a discussion, and even TikTok challenges. Programs that worked with ELL students focused strongly on SAT/ACT prep and provided students with extra guidance for these standardized tests. Thus, programs developed activities that they would not typically do in person in order to engage their students.

> *"We worked to arrange activities based on what the students liked the most, and we developed a lot of enrichment and hands-on activities."* (10, Asst. PD)

> *"We made sure our activities were easily accessible. With these activities, we led conversations to make it educational. We made sure they were facilitated by someone who could connect the dots."* (12, SC).

Providing Remote but Safe Care

Programs that developed independent activities or relied on platforms and websites students with which students were familiar were able to maintain some components of safe care. Students were occupied during program hours and did not have to rely on their parents, siblings, or relatives for entertainment.

> *"We had parents saying, 'You're babysitting my kids on a computer screen when I was working!' Even some of our district leaders, they had their kids logged on. To see their kids laughing and joking on a Zoom or Google Meets with their friends, they enjoyed that too. Because that also allowed them to do their district leadership stuff, while engaging their kids as well, and making sure their kids were getting a balance of both academic support and engagement."* (21, PD).

Strengthening Relationships with Parents and Families

Through virtual programming, program staff and administrators made sure not just to engage with the students, but also to work directly with the parents. In addition to the check-in calls made at the beginning of the closure, some programs conducted parent feedback sessions, parent surveys regarding their concerns and internet connectivity at home, and how the program and community could support them during this difficult time. One program held weekly parent engagement nights, where program administrators would bring in different speakers with the goal of alleviating some of the stress parents faced during the pandemic.

> *"We talked about unemployment and issues, held a yoga night, we had district officials come in teach parents how to work with students in math and science. We had nutritionists talk about how to keep children healthy during the pandemic, and therapists to talk about how students were grieving."* (21, PD).

New Strategies for Team Management

The transition to alternative forms of programming allowed administrators to improve their staff management techniques and develop closer relationships with their staff. Program administrators were able to more effectively delegate tasks. This lightened administrator's stress and overall workload and allowed staff to feel a greater sense of ownership towards the program. Additionally, programs found that communication was key during this unprecedented time. Programs were able to hold more regular staff meetings and enable everyone to share their ideas for improving the program. These meetings and check-ins developed a space to re-evaluate what programs were doing and how program staff were feeling. Remote programming also enabled greater cooperation and collaboration between sites. Staff and administrators were able to pool their resources, experiences, and knowledge while developing different lessons and programs. Virtual training sessions and meetings allowed for people across different sites to be included.

> *"It's not my program, it's our program…I wanted everyone to feel like they have a say."* (2, SC)

> *"Our team was split up in all these different age groups, so everyone was kinda taking a crack at this virtual thing in our own ways. And we all come together and share what worked well and what didn't. And if we did not have that, if we did not have all those data points, I'm sure it'd not have been nearly as successful as it was."* (6, SC)

Positive Relationship with Nearby School District

Strong relationships between afterschool programs and local school districts benefitted programs in executing virtual programming. By collaborating closely with teachers and administration at districts and individual schools, programs were able to access a wider variety of resources and work alongside these individuals to ensure students in their areas were getting the best possible education. Programs worked with the information technology departments at their district to guarantee students involved in afterschool programming would continue to have access to district-owned devices. Afterschool programs and districts planned their

programs together to prevent overlap between the two. Staff and administrators regularly sat in on meetings held by the school and district to discuss navigating the closure and plans for summer and fall.

> *"We had multiple meetings with the main district that we serve. We planned the activities, what the content would be. We planned all of that together from day one. Another district that we serve wanted to keep their program more traditional even though it's virtual, so we are still in that afterschool space, but we promoted it as an integrated program with that particular school…We're loving the fully integrated program."* (14, PD)

> *"It's a new way of doing programming. One of the benefits to this is a lot of them didn't understand what afterschool was about – that it's not just latchkey, that you're not just doing arts and crafts, but there is still learning going on. It's extended learning and it builds on what they learned during the school day. We've gotten a lot of buy in from the teachers for this integrated programming, and we think it's going to help us in the fall with aligning our curriculum to theirs and building and maintaining strong relationships."* (14, PD)

Collaborations Among Programs Across the State

One thing that programs could have benefitted from is collaboration between programs across the state. Programs were entering unknown terrain, since most, if not all, activities these programs traditionally do have been face-to-face. Programs would have liked to collaborate with others and share what worked for them with other sites and receive more suggestions and direction from other sites. Hearing new ideas and best practices and learning what is exciting and engaging for students would have alleviated a lot of the stress that was associated with the transition to remote programming.

> *"I wish there was a unified effort from the state, where we all could have used and shared resources. There are some programs that were still trying to go face to face, there were others that went paperless. I wish statewide we could've pooled together our resources to where if we're doing an activity, coordinators or administrative staff across the state could have collaborated…This could act as a way for kids to see what's happening on the East side versus the West side, in Grand Rapids and Lansing versus what's happening in the South. A lot of us were trying, but I don't think it was universally done."* (18, PD)

Summary

During the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, Michigan 21st CCLC programs utilized their close relationships and existing resources within the community to overcome many challenges in reaching out to youth and families. Program administrators encountered many difficulties related to staffing, including supporting staff with personal health concerns and family crises, dealing with resistance or difficulties from staff adapting virtual programming, and providing staff with adequate hours and incomes. In response to these challenges, programs prioritized communication and collaboration, and developed new methods of team management.

The pandemic also pushed the programs to act as first responders to help ensure families have access to food and resources and to regularly check in with youth and families with phone calls, text messages and emails. They were able to provide virtual or off-line programming, supplying youth and families with the materials to complete hands-on activities and/or participate in virtual social gatherings. Ultimately, new opportunities arose for greater collaboration within and across programs and potentially with other institutions such as schools, local businesses, and other not-for-profit networks. Programs may also have the ability to provide youth with the opportunity to continue with virtual programming, which could be particularly beneficial for youth who are more comfortable in that environment, those on the waitlist due to in-person capacity limits, and those with transportation or other challenges who would not be able to participate otherwise.