

# The Need for Evaluation Capacity-Building in After-School Programs: Results from the Michigan Evaluation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers

Laurie A. Van Egeren, PhD

Celeste Sturdevant Reed, PhD

Beth Prince, MA

Megan Platte

Laura Bates, MA

Community Evaluation and Research Center  
University Outreach and Engagement  
Michigan State University

American Evaluation Association Meeting, Baltimore, MD  
November 10, 2007



# Purpose of Presentation

- Describe annual reporting system intended to contribute to program improvement and build evaluation capacity in Michigan 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers
- Report change over three years in program directors' perceptions of:
  - The annual reporting system for building capacity
  - Usefulness of evaluators
  - Usefulness of evaluation



# Program Overview

- Evaluation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) after-school programs in Michigan
- Funded by MI Dept of Education through U.S. Dept of Education
- 37 organizations, 187-193 sites (range = 1 to 15 sites)
  - Mostly school districts
  - A few community-based organizations and intermediate school districts
- Goals: Increase academic achievement and general functioning for students in low-performing schools in high-poverty areas

# Evaluation Evolution

- Original purpose:
  - Assess outcomes
  - Report to federal funder
  - Identify what contributes to a successful program
- Over 5 years, evolved into the above, plus a program improvement model
  - Local evaluators were often not constructed to be helpful
  - Many grantees never saw their results
  - Many programs had no experience with doing or using evaluation for program improvement
  - Program improvement training and technical assistance was sporadic and lacked transfer to program operations



# Bounding the Role of State Evaluators

- Not to provide individualized program improvement evaluation to each grantee
- But data collection system positions us provide standardized feedback to programs
- Annual Report Form (ARF)
  - Provide programs with their individualized data results in a form that can be compared within and across programs
  - Standardize annual reporting to the state (versus semi-structured narrative reports) to facilitate comparisons across programs
  - Collect additional information about program processes



# Capacity-Building Activities

- **Annual Report Form (ARF)—2004-05 paper; from 2005-06 online**
  - Web-based annual reporting structure
  - Individualized results in eight areas
  - Programs are required to identify specific strategies to meet goals, address problems
  - Programs must address whether and how they addressed the strategies identified in the previous year
- **Trainings—from 2005-06**
  - Completing the ARF
  - Using data for program improvement
  - Using reports from the real-time web-based attendance tracking system for program improvement
  - Using data for sustainability
- **Improved training and technical assistance—from 2006-07 on**
  - High/Scope Educational Research Foundation
  - Youth Program Quality Assessment
- **Revised and defined evaluator roles—from 2007-08**



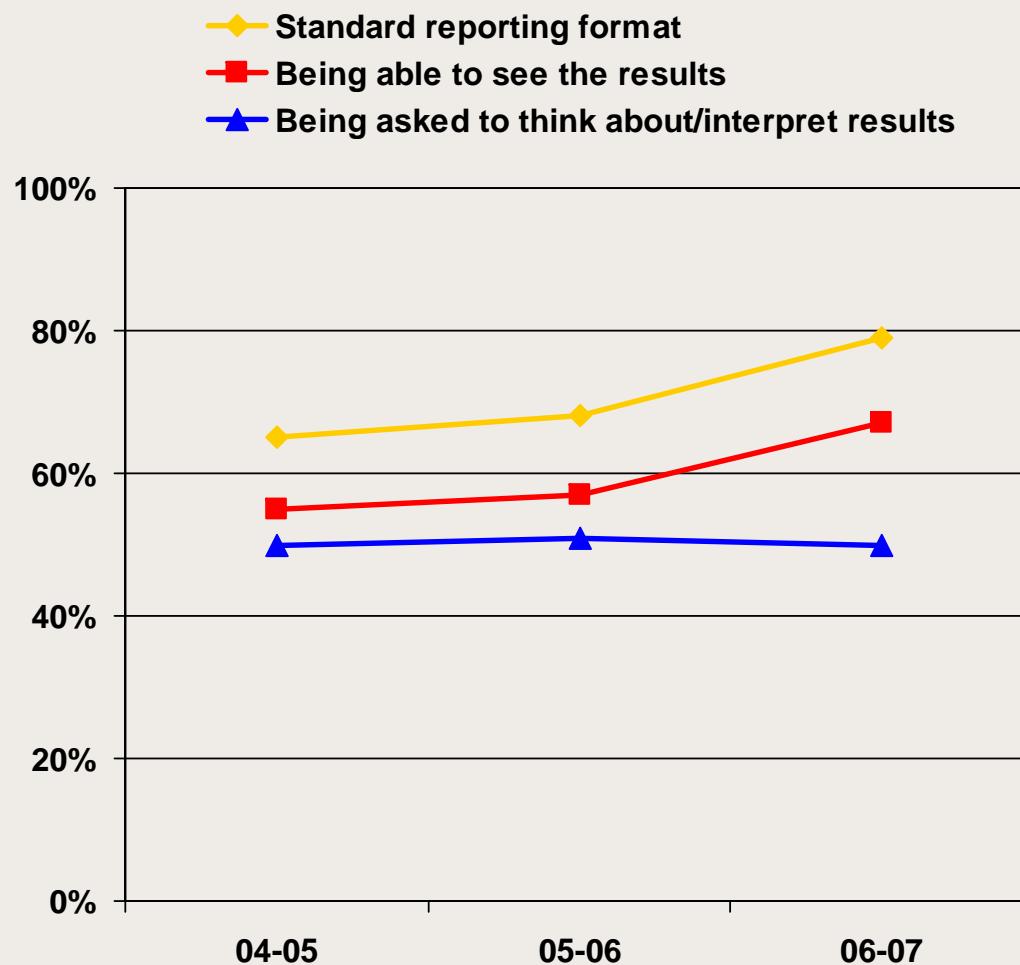
# Sample

- **2004-05 and 2005-06:** 37 grantees, 187-193 sites
- **2006-07:** 25 grantees so far (data not complete)
- **Grantee form:** Completed by Program Director (and team)
- **Site form:** Completed by Site Coordinator (and team)



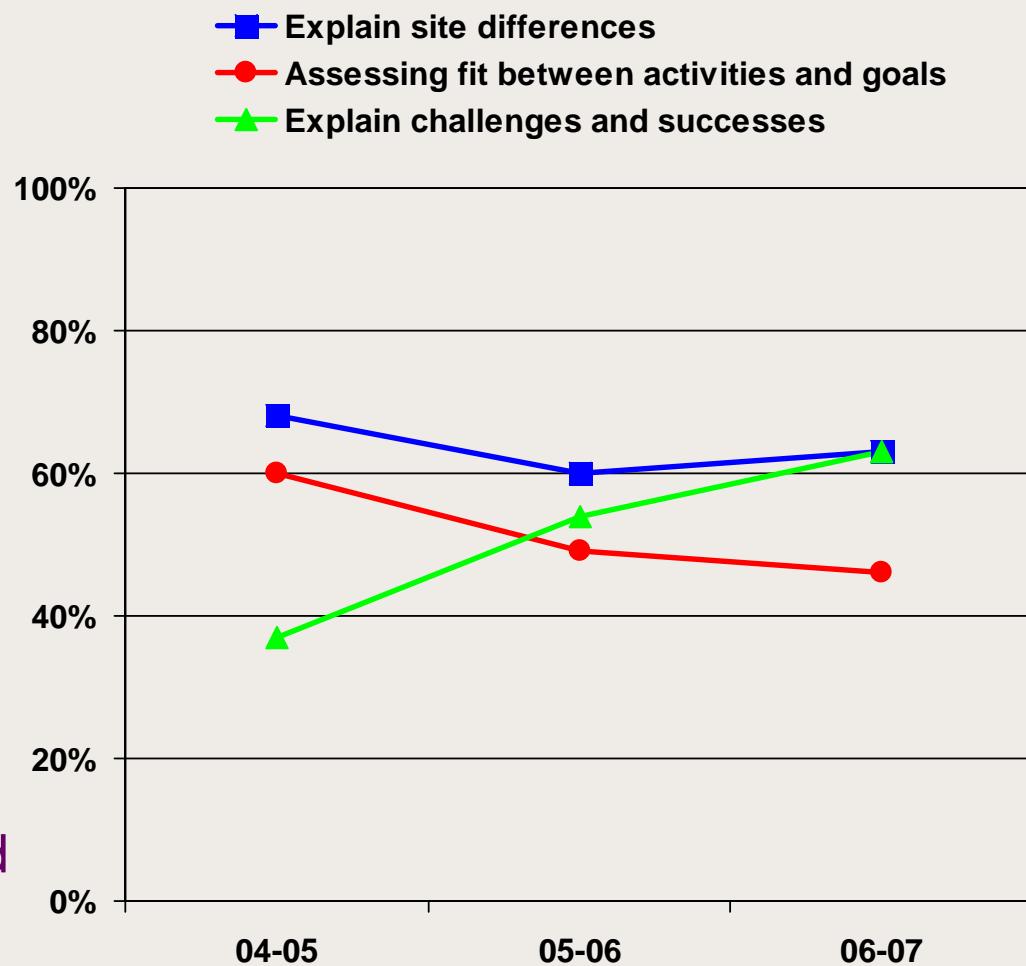
# Have Perceptions of ARF Usefulness Changed?

- **Yes.** Percent of grantees who report the ARF is *very useful*:
  - Having a standard reporting format **increased**
  - Being able to see results **increased**
  - Interpreting results remained **stable**



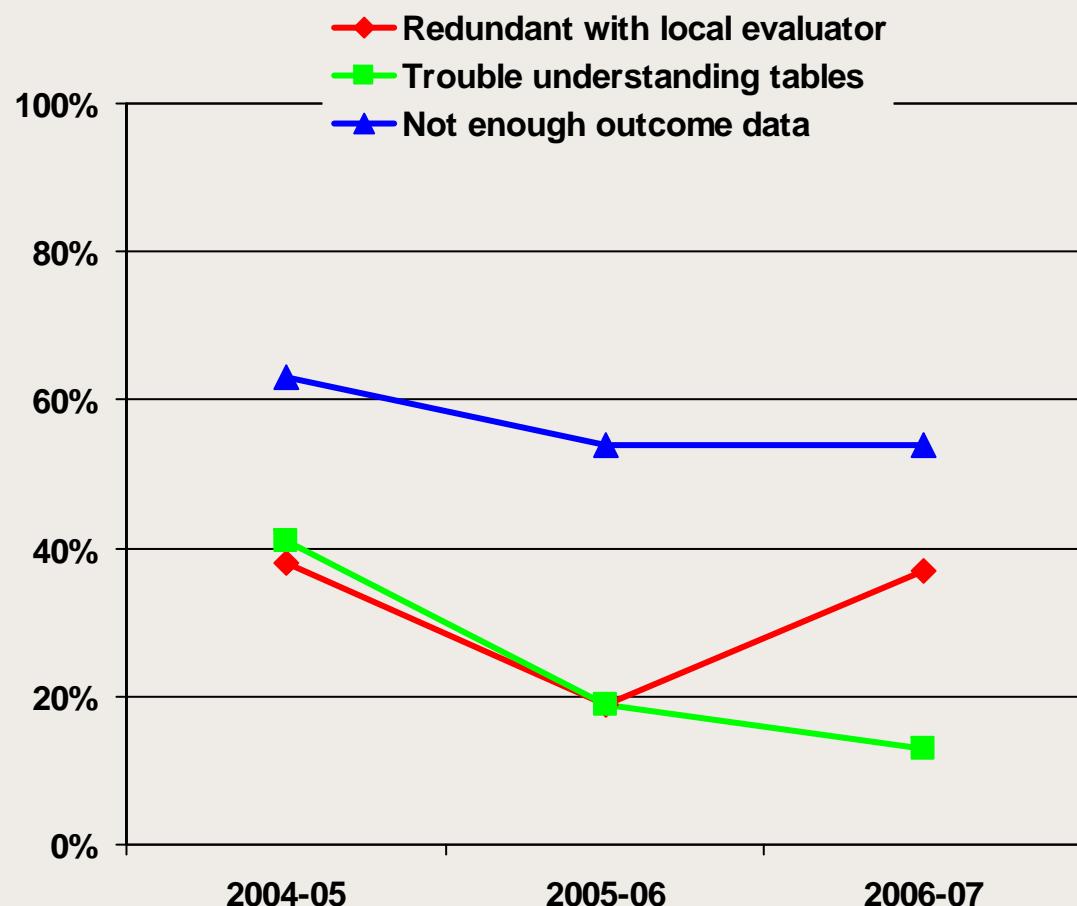
# Have Perceptions of ARF Usefulness Changed?

- **Yes.** Percent of grantees who report the ARF is *very useful*:
  - For explaining challenges and successes **increased**
  - For explaining site differences remained **stable**
  - For assessing fit between activities and goals went **down.\***



# Have Perceptions of ARF Problems Changed?

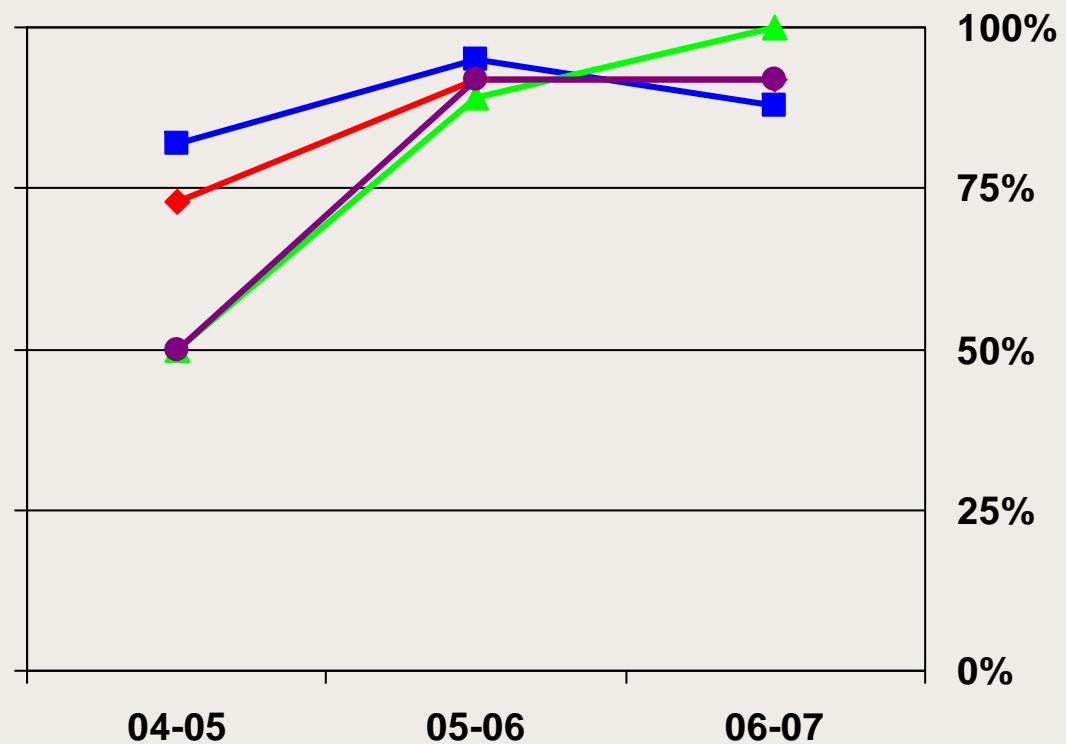
- Change in ratings of *somewhat or very*:
  - **Decrease** in trouble understanding tables
  - **Decrease** in insufficient data
  - **Inconsistent change** in redundant with local evaluator\*



## Have Intentions to Use ARF DATA Changed?

- Most PDs are more likely to use the ARF data
- All categories **improved** except *Reporting to Stakeholders*, which has generally been stable.

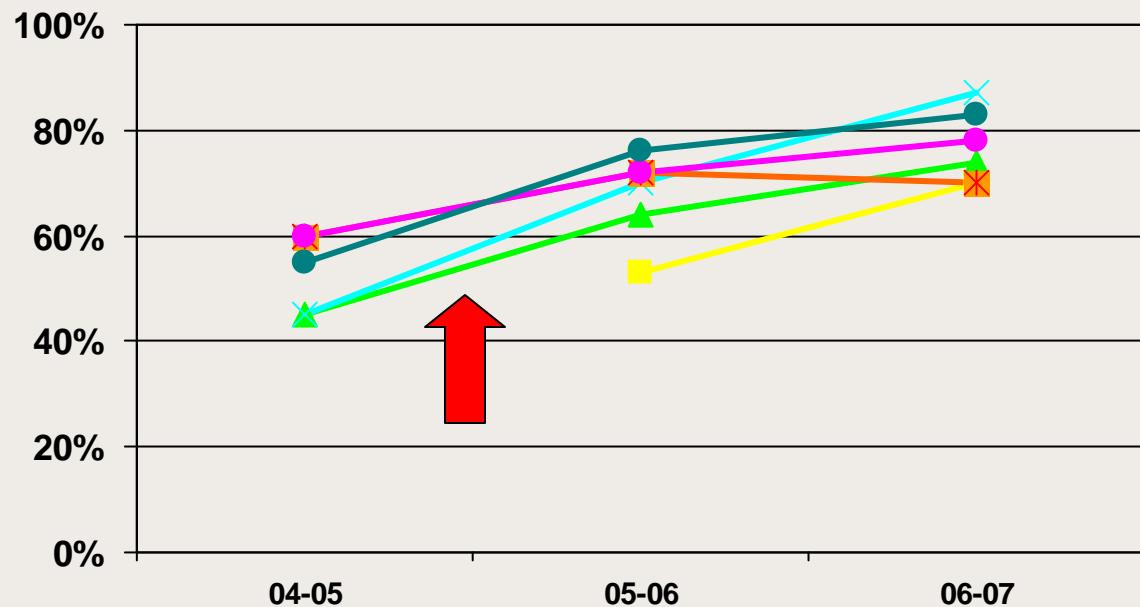
- Program Improvement
- Reports to board, stakeholders
- Advocacy efforts
- Grant requests



# How Helpful are Local Evaluators?

- Assistance from evaluators **improved** between 04-05 and 05-06
- Between 05-06 and 06-07, new scale on items to give continuous ranking; here, from *slightly* to *very helpful*; hard to compare

- Works w us on funding and sustainability
- ▲ Gets school outcomes
- ✖ Helps meet reporting requirements
- ✖ Collect additional information
- Analyzes and reports state data
- Helps with program improvement



# A culture for using data for program improvement is spreading...

- When program directors reported that using evaluation data was *very important* for making program improvement decisions, site coordinators were **significantly more likely** to report the same ( $p < .001$ ).



# Implications

- One problem in large evaluations is getting data back to grantees
- Online interactive reporting with questions designed to enhance understanding (priming) seems to build capacity to use data
- Building capacity at higher administration can potentially support a culture of evaluation at the lower levels
- Training and policy changes increase likelihood of use and understanding



## Contact Information

**Laurie A. Van Egeren  
Community Evaluation and Research Center  
University Outreach and Engagement**

Michigan State University  
Kellogg Center, Garden Level  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1022  
Phone: (517) 355-0140  
Fax: (517) 432-9541  
E-mail: [vanegere@msu.edu](mailto:vanegere@msu.edu)  
Web site: [outreach.msu.edu](http://outreach.msu.edu)

