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Independence Charter School 21st Century Program Cohort 10: Local Evaluation Report, 2019-2020

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1. Introduction

In 2019 Independence Charter School (ICS) received a five-year grant from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, Cohort 10. ICS was one of 72 Cohort 10 awardees statewide in Pennsylvania, and one of seven charter schools in Pennsylvania to receive a Cohort 10 award. The ICS Cohort 10 program began operations in fall 2019 with the 2019-2020 school year.

The goals of the 21st CCLC program are to (1) provide students in high-poverty communities across the U.S. with opportunities for academic enrichment, including tutoring, to help them meet state and local academic standards; (2) offer students an array of enrichment programs and activities such as youth development, service learning, nutrition and health education, drug and violence prevention, counseling, arts, music, physical fitness and wellness, technology education, and career and technical programs; and (3) offer families of students in 21st CCLC programs opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education, including literacy and related educational development opportunities.

ICS is a tuition-free, K-8 charter school in Philadelphia that serves an ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged student population, with an enrollment during the 2019-2020 school year of 821 children.[1] Students are enrolled at ICS through an annual lottery process. ICS has a nationally recognized global studies program that emphasizes academic excellence and second-language acquisition. ICS is a school-wide Title I building. About one-half (52%) of its students are economically disadvantaged, 5% are English Language Learners (ELLs), and 16% are in Special Education.[2] The racial/ethnic composition of ICS students is 42% African American, 25% white, 23% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 5% two or more races. By gender, the ICS student population is evenly distributed between females (50%) and males (50%).

By The Numbers, a Pennsylvania-based consulting firm, was contracted by ICS to be the external evaluator of its 21st CCLC Cohort 10 program. We have also served as the external evaluator of their Cohort 7 21st CCLC program, which ended at the conclusion of Summer 2020 programming. This is our local evaluation report for Cohort 10 for 2019-2020.

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[1] School enrollment figures are from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Charter%20Schools/Pages/Annual-Reports-Data-and-Resources.aspx

[2] Student demographics are from PDE's Future Ready PA Index, https://futurereadypa.org/

2. Evaluation Timeline and Activities

Data for this evaluation report were collected through three avenues. First, we received data on student academic achievement and growth, and student behavior, for individual students in the Cohort 10 21st CCLC program from staff at ICS. Second, we received copies of Quarterly Performance Reports (QPRs) and other materials submitted by ICS to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) during 2019-2020. Third, we communicated via email with program staff during 2019-2020.

During our local evaluations of the ICS Cohort 7 21st CCLC program, we made an annual site visit to ICS, typically in April or May. An annual site visit for this year had been planned for the same time frame for both Cohorts 7 and 10, but it was cancelled following the closures of Pennsylvania K-12 schools in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. Program Operations

During the 2019-2020 program year, the ICS Cohort 10 21st CCLC program operated after school for students. Prior to the school closures in March 2020, after-school programming was provided for K-8 students Monday through Friday for 13 hours per week, 3:15-5:30 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and 1:30-5:30 pm on Wednesdays (the regular school day at ICS ends early on Wednesdays). Following the school closures, the ICS Cohort 10 program switched to online programming for its K-8 participants, which ran in May and early June 2020 for 10 hours per week (4:00-6:00 pm on Monday through Friday).

The target student population for the ICS Cohort 10 program was those showing the most academic, social, and economic need based on assessment scores and input from building administrators, teachers, and staff. For students in grades 3-8, ICS began with PSSA scores and invited those who scored Basic or Below Basic. ICS also received Reading Benchmark data from each grade and invited students who were not meeting benchmarks. ICS Cohort 10 program staff worked with the ELL and IEP coordinators at ICS to invite students who were ESL (English as a Second Language), ELL (English Language Learners), or in Special Education.

The ICS Cohort 10 school-year program provided remediation and acceleration in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) utilizing resources from the regular school-day curricula and community partners. Community partners provide services such as enrichment curricula and activities, tutoring, and volunteer staffing services. The ICS Cohort 10 program used small-group, interactive STEAM activities and one-on-one learning as appropriate to each student. For example, middle school students worked on a computer program through which they coded apps for mobile devices. Students also engaged in learning activities using Lego Robotics.

Literacy activities in the ICS Cohort 10 program included guided reading and independent reading. The ICS Cohort 10 program also used Raz-Kids, an online guided reading app for K-5 students with interactive e-books, downloadable books, and reading quizzes. For arts and music, the ICS Cohort 10 program included twice-a-week hands-on lessons on rhythm, drumming, and mixed-media art. The ICS Cohort 10 program provided 15-20 minutes daily for students to work on homework and school-day projects.

The shift to online programming following the school closures in March 2020 encountered three major challenges. First, there was a great deal of uncertainty about when or if the schools would reopen in spring 2020. Waiting in March and April for a possible reopening led to a delay until May in the launch of online programming. Second, there were staff shortages. Most of the ICS Cohort 10 program staff were also school-day teachers. When school-day programming went online, many of these staff were overwhelmed with preparing for school-day teaching, leaving no time to work after school with 21st CCLC programming. Third, many community partners stopped all services or furloughed the staff that supported the ICS Cohort 10 program.

In the online ICS Cohort 10 program in May and early June, literacy support to K-8 students was provided through e-books on the Reading A-Z website. Math support was provided through the online Freckle app, in which students complete a diagnostic and then work on math problems at their own skill level. The ICS Cohort 10 program also hosted virtual office hours on Zoom, during which students could sign in to receive homework help. Virtual meetings were held with individual families during this time to learn more about the needs of each family and to ensure that the family and students had the resources needed to be engaged in virtual learning.

4. Participating Students

The ICS Cohort 10 program was approved to serve 50 students during the 2019-2020 program year: 35 elementary school students and 15 middle school students, all during the school year. This is less than the approved number for the 2020-2021 program year (140 students in total), primarily because the ICS Cohorts 7 and 10 programs ran side-by-side during 2019-2020. The Cohort 7 program has since ended and many of the students who were in Cohort 7 are now anticipated to participate in Cohort 10. Also, the Cohort 10 program did not have a summer program during 2019-2020, but it does for subsequent program years.

We received data from ICS on 48 students who attended the Cohort 10 program for at least one day during the 2019-2020 program year: 35 elementary school students and 13 middle school students. The ICS Cohort 10 program therefore met its approved number for elementary school students, and came close to its approved numbers for middle school students and total number of students.

Sixteen of the 48 students participated in the ICS Cohort 7 program in Summer 2019, and then were switched to Cohort 10 for the 2019-2020 school year. These students participated in the Summer 2019 Cohort 7 program for an average of about 22 days, and then in the 2019-2020 school year Cohort 10 program for an average of about 78 days.

Among the 48 Cohort 10 students, 45 (94%) were regular attendees. Regular attendees—also referred to as regular program participants or just regular participants—are defined as students attending the 21st CCLC program for at least 30 days during the summer and/or school year. Most of our calculations in this report are based on the regular attendees since most of the student-related performance indicators refer to regular attendees. Of the 45 regular attendees, 34 (76%) were in elementary school and 11 (24%) were in middle school.

Table 1. 21ˢᵗ CCLC Students by Attendance Category*

21ˢᵗ CCLC Attendance Category	Number of Students	Percent of Students
At least 1 day but less than 30 days	3	6%
30-59 days	17	35%
60-89 days	13	27%
90 or more days	15	31%
All attending students	48	100%
Regular attendees (30+ days)	45	94%

* Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Demographic data were available for 40 of the 45 regular attendees. They indicate that three-fifths (60%) of regular attendees were economically disadvantaged, as measured by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches. One-fourth (25%) of regular attendees had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and 8% had a 504 Plan. About one-sixth (18%) of regular attendees were ESL or ELL. These demographic data indicate that ICS was successful in reaching its target populations of academically at-risk students, ESL/ELL students, and students in Special Education.

With respect to race, 16 regular attendees (40%) identified as Black or African American, six (15%) as White, one (3%) as Asian, four (10%) as Two or More Races, and 13 (33%) as not specified.[3] In terms of ethnicity, 13 regular attendees (33%) identified as Hispanic or Latino and the other 27 (68%) as not Hispanic or Latino.[4] All 13 students with race not specified identified as Hispanic or Latino. More than three-fifths (63%) of the regular attendees were male.

The school closings in March 2020 and the shift to online programming in May 2020 had a major, negative impact on Cohort 10 program attendance. The figures in Table 2 indicate that the number of students attending at least one day declined from 48 prior to school closures to 15 during online programming, a decline of about 70%. Average daily attendance declined from 27 prior to the school closures to 8 during online programming, also a decline of about 70%. Cohort 10 program administrators indicated that they did not track online attendance as well as they would have liked, but even so these are very large declines. As discussed in section 3, online participation was impeded by a delay in the launch of online programming, staff shortages, and loss of support from community partners.

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[3] Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

[4] Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 2. 21ˢᵗ CCLC Student Participation Before and After School Closures

Time Period	Mode	Number of Days of Program Operations	Number of Students Attending at Least 1 Day	Average Daily Student Attendance
September-March, Prior to School Closures	In person	118	48	27
May-June, After School Closures	Online	15	15	8

5. 21ˢᵗ Century Federal Performance (GPRA) Indicators

This section reports the federal Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) objectives, measures, and indicators for the 21ˢᵗ CCLC program at ICS. There are three federal GPRA performance measures for Cohort 10 21ˢᵗ CCLC programs: (1) Students regularly participating in the program will meet or exceed state and local academic achievement standards in reading and math; (2) Students regularly participating in the program will show improvement in the performance measures of school attendance, classroom performance and/or reduced disciplinary referrals; and (3) Participants in 21ˢᵗ CCLC programs will demonstrate additional positive educational, social, and behavioral changes. Some performance indicators under these GPRA measures are for elementary program participants, some are for middle/high school participants, and some are for participants regardless of statutory area.

A. Student Academic Achievement

Federal performance indicators for student academic achievement are reported in Table 3. GPRA indicators 1.1-1.6 are based on report card grades. Improvement on report card grades is defined at the federal level as a positive move of half a letter grade or five percentage points or more. ICS operates on a trimester system, so fall grades are for the first trimester and spring grades are for the third trimester. Following the school closures in March 2020, many schools in Pennsylvania went to a pass/fail grading system for the spring or did not issue spring grades. ICS did not issue third trimester report card grades for K-2 students, but did issue them for students in grades 3-8. Therefore, the reporting here for GPRA 1.1-1.6 is based on grades 3-8 only.

For state assessments, which are also part of federal performance indicators for student academic achievement, improvement is defined as a positive move of one or more proficiency levels. However, the 2020 PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) Exams were cancelled due to Covid-19, preventing calculation of GPRA 1.7 and 1.8.

The scales for mathematics and reading/ELA (English Language Arts) report card grades at ICS, and items that are graded, vary by grade level. We used the scales and scores reported for each grade. A small number of students in grades 3 and 4 received an SLA (Spanish Language Arts) report card grade instead of an ELA grade. In those cases, we used the SLA grade.

Table 3. Federal Performance Measure 1: Student Academic Achievement

Federal Performance Indicator	Target (%)	2019-2020 Achievement (%)
The percentage of elementary 21st CCLC regular program participants whose mathematics grades improved from fall to spring (GPRA 1.1)	48.5%	36% (= 4/11)
The percentage of middle or high school 21st CCLC regular program participants whose mathematics grades improved from fall to spring (GPRA 1.2)	48.5%	38% (= 3/8)
The percentage of all 21st CCLC regular program participants whose mathematics grades improved from fall to spring (GPRA 1.3)	48.5%	37% (= 7/19)
The percentage of elementary 21st CCLC regular program participants whose reading/English grades improved from fall to spring (GPRA 1.4)	48.5%	50% (= 7/14)
The percentage of middle or high school 21st CCLC regular program participants whose reading/English grades improved from fall to spring (GPRA 1.5)	48.5%	50% (= 3/6)
The percentage of all 21st CCLC regular program participants whose reading/English grades improved from fall to spring (GPRA 1.6)	70%	50% (= 10/20)
The percentage of elementary 21st CCLC regular program participants who improve from not proficient to proficient or above in reading on state assessments (PSSA) (GPRA 1.7)	45%	Not available
The percentage of middle/high school 21st CCLC regular program participants who improve from not proficient to proficient or above in mathematics on state assessments (PSSA or Keystone Exam) (GPRA 1.8)	25%	Not available

Report card grades at ICS for grade 3 are calculated on a 0.5-interval scale ranging from 0.5 to 3.0, so that an improvement for federal purposes is an increase of 0.5 (5% × 3 = 0.15, rounded up to 0.5). For math, we used the overall math score. For reading, we used the overall ELA or SLA score. For grades 4-8, report card grades at ICS are letter grades ranging from F to A+, so that improvement for federal purposes is an increase of a half a letter grade or more. We used report card grades in mathematics and ELA.

Calculation of performance at the federal level excludes students already achieving at the highest level, so those students in grade 3 with a fall report grade of 3 are excluded from the report card calculations. Similarly, students in grades 4-8 obtaining an A+ in the fall are excluded from the report card calculations.

GPRA 1.1 is the percentage of elementary 21st CCLC regular program participants whose mathematics grades improved from fall to spring, and GPRA 1.2 is the percentage of middle or high school 21st CCLC regular program participants whose mathematics grades improved from fall to spring, with a target of 48.5% in both cases. GPRA 1.3 is the percentage of all 21st CCLC regular program participants whose mathematics grades improved from fall to spring, also with a target of 48.5%.

We received matched fall 2019 and spring 2020 report card grades for 24 regular attendees. At the elementary school level, fall math grades for three regular attendees with matched fall and spring report card grades were at the highest level for federal purposes, and so were excluded from the calculations. At the middle school level, fall math grades for two regular attendees were at the highest level. Somewhat more than one-third of regular attendees not already at the highest level improved their mathematics grades from fall to spring (36% for elementary school students, 38% for middle school students, and 37% overall), so that ICS made progress on these indicators and did not achieve the target levels of progress.

GPRA 1.4 is the percentage of elementary school 21st CCLC regular program participants whose reading/English grades improved from fall to spring, with a target of 48.5%. GPRA 1.5 is the percentage of middle or high school 21st CCLC regular program participants whose reading/English grades improved from fall to spring, with a target of 48.5%. GPRA 1.6 is the percentage of all 21st CCLC regular program participants whose reading/English grades improved from fall to spring, with a target of 70%.

In reading/English, four of the middle school regular attendees with matched fall and spring report card grades were already at the highest level in the fall and so were excluded from the calculations. None of the elementary school regular attendees were already at the highest level in the fall. Among the elementary school students, one-half (50%) improved their reading/English report card grades from fall to spring. Similarly, among the middle school students not already at the highest level in the fall, one-half (50%) improved their reading/English report card grades. Overall, one-half (50%) improved their reading/English report card grades. ICS therefore made very good progress on these indicators and exceeded the target levels of progress.

B. Student Academic Behavior

Performance on student behavior indicators is typically measured using results from the Annual Teacher Survey. The current version of the Teacher Survey asks teachers of participating students about their students' performance in seven areas: completing homework to the teacher's satisfaction, participating in class, volunteering (e.g., for extra credit), being attentive in class, behaving well in class, academic performance, and coming to school motivated to learn. Response options for each area are did not need to improve, significant improvement, moderate improvement, slight improvement, no change, slight decline, moderate decline, and significant decline. We received completed Teacher Surveys for 31 of the 45 regular attendees; all 31 were elementary school students.

Table 4. Federal Performance Measure 2: Student Academic Behavior

Federal Performance Indicator	Target (%)	2019-2020 Achievement (%)
The percentage of elementary 21st CCLC regular program participants with teacher-reported improvement in homework completion and class participation (of students needing to improve) (GPRA 1.9)	90%	96% (= 26/27) Homework Completion 85% (23/27) Class Participation
The percentage of middle and high school 21st CCLC program participants with teacher-reported improvement in homework completion and class participation (of students needing to improve) (GPRA 1.10)	93%	Not available
The percentage of all 21st CCLC regular program participants with teacher-reported improvement in homework completion and class participation (of students needing to improve) (GPRA 1.11)	77%	96% (= 26/27) Homework Completion 85% (23/27) Class Participation

Federal performance indicators for student academic behavior are reported in Table 4. GPRA 1.9 is the percentage of elementary school 21st CCLC regular program participants with teacher-reported improvements in homework completion and class participation, among those students rated as needing to improve. The target for GPRA 1.9 is 90%. GPRA 1.10 is the percentage of middle or high school 21st CCLC regular program participants with teacher-reported improvements in homework completion and class participation, among those students rated as needing to improve, with a target of 93%. GPRA 1.11 is the percentage of all 21st CCLC program participants with teacher-reported improvement in homework completion and class participation, among those students rated as needing to improve, with a target of 77%.

For homework completion, four elementary school regular attendees with Teacher Survey data were rated as not needing to improve. Among the 27 needing to improve, 26 students (96%) were rated as having improved. For class participation, 4 elementary school regular attendees were also rated as not needing to improve. Among the 27 needing to improve, 23 students (85%) were rated as having improved. No Teacher Survey data were available for middle school students. Nonetheless, these figures indicate that ICS made very good progress on GPRA indicators 1.9 and 1.11, exceeding the target on indicator 1.11 and exceeding or coming close to the target on indicator 1.9.

C. Student Educational, Social, and Emotional Development

Federal performance indicators for student educational, social, and emotional development are reported in Table 5. Like the federal student behavior indicators, these are typically measured using results from the Teacher Survey. GPRA 1.12 is the percentage of elementary school 21st CCLC participants with teacher-reported improvements in student behavior, among those students rated as needing to improve, with a target of 75%. GPRA 1.13 is the percentage of middle and high school 21st CCLC participants with teacher-reported improvements in student behavior, among those students rated as needing to improve, with a target of 75%. GPRA 1.14 is the percentage of 21st CCLC participants with teacher-reported improvements in student behavior, among those students rated as needing to improve, again with a target of 75%.

On the Teacher Survey, the question most closely tied to student educational, social, and emotional development is behaving well in class. On this question, 12 elementary school regular attendees with Teacher Survey data were rated as not needing to improve. Among the 19 needing to improve, 17 students (89%) were rated as having improved. No data were available for middle school students. Even so, these figures indicate that ICS made excellent progress on GPRA indicators 1.12 and 1.14, exceeding the target levels of progress.

Table 5. Federal Performance Measure 3: Student Educational, Social, and Emotional Development

Federal Performance Indicator	Target (%)	2019-2020 Achievement (%)
The percentage of elementary 21st CCLC participants with teacher-reported improvements in student behavior (of students needing to improve) (GPRA 1.12)	75%	89% (= 17/19)
The percentage of middle and high school 21st CCLC participants with teacher-reported improvements in student behavior (of students needing to improve) (GPRA 1.13)	75%	Not available
The percentage of all 21st CCLC participants with teacher-reported improvements in student behavior (of students needing to improve) (GPRA 1.14)	75%	89% (= 17/19)

D. Summary: Federal Performance Indicators

Overall, the results for the GPRA performance indicators show that the ICS 21st CCLC Cohort 10 program made very good progress during 2019-2020 in improving student academic achievement, student academic behavior and student educational, social, and emotional development. The one area that came up somewhat below target was student achievement in math.

6. Additional Analyses of Program Performance

This section examines additional findings from the Teacher Survey for the ICS 21st CCLC Cohort 10 program; changes from 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 in student school-day attendance (days tardy, days absent) and discipline incidents; and potential differences among students in their performance depending on their extent of participation in the Cohort 10 program.

A. Additional Teacher Survey Findings

The Teacher Survey asks teachers of participating students about their students' performance in seven areas. Three of these areas—completing homework to the teacher's satisfaction, participating in class, and behaving well in class—are covered by the GPRA performance indicators. Table 6 presents findings for the ICS 21st CCLC Cohort 10 program on the other four areas—volunteering (e.g., for extra credit), being attentive in class, academic performance, and coming to school motivated to learn.

Table 6. Additional Teacher Survey Results *

Federal Performance Indicator	Associated Federal Performance Measure	2019-2020 Achievement (%)
The percentage of regularly attending students improving their academic performance as measured by the Teacher Survey	#1 (Academic Achievement)	96% (= 27/28)
The percentage of regularly attending students improving their class attentiveness as measured by the Teacher Survey	#2 (Academic Behavior)	84% (= 21/25)
The percentage of regularly attending students improving their volunteering in class as measured by the Teacher Survey	#3 (Educational/Social/ Emotional)	80% (= 16/20)
The percentage of regularly attending students improving their motivation to learn as measured by the Teacher Survey	#3 (Educational/Social/ Emotional)	96% (= 22/23)

* Each student improvement indicator is calculated for those students needing to improve in that area. Students already at the highest level in a particular area are excluded from the calculations for that area.

An indicator related to federal performance measure 1 (academic achievement) is the percentage of regularly attending students improving their academic performance as measured by the Teacher Survey, among those needing to improve. Among the 31 regular attendees with Teacher Survey data, three were rated as not needing to improve. Among the remaining 28 students, 27 students (96%) were rated as having improved. The other student (4%) was rated as "No Change".

An indicator related to federal performance measure 2 (academic behavior) is the percentage of regularly attending students improving their class attentiveness, among those needing to improve. Among the 31 regular attendees with Teacher Survey data, six were rated as not needing to improve their class attentiveness. Among the remaining 25 students, 21 students (84%) were rated as having improved. The other four students (16%) were rated as "No Change".

Two indicators related to federal performance measure 3 (educational, social, and emotional development) are the percentages of regularly attending students improving their volunteering in class and their motivation to learn as measured by the Teacher Survey, among those needing to improve. Among the 31 regular attendees with Teacher Survey data, 11 were rated as not needing to improve their volunteering in class. Among the remaining 20 students, 16 students (80%) were rated as having improved. The other four students (20%) were rated as "No Change". With respect to their motivation to learn, eight regular attendees were rated as not needing to improve. Among the remaining 23 students, 22 students (96%) were rated as having improved. The other student (4%) was rated as "No Change".

Overall, the findings in this section are very positive, particularly with regard to the percentages of regularly attending students needing to improve who improved their academic performance and their motivation to learn.

B. Additional Student Behavior Indicators

We received matched 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school year data for all 45 regular attendees on three indicators of student behavior: unexcused absences, unexcused days tardy, and discipline incidents. An issue in comparing the two years on these indicators is that data for the 2019-2020 school year were only collected for the days of in-person operations from September to March, and not for the days when instruction was online. In order to make the figures for the two years comparable, we adjusted the 2019-2020 figures upward to account for the fact that they were collected over a smaller number of days than the 2018-2019 figures. Specifically, we multiplied a student's 2019-2020 figure for each indicator by the ratio of the maximum number of days the student could have attended ICS during the 2018-2019 school year (had the student been in school every day) to the maximum number of days the student could have attended ICS in person during the 2019-2020 school year.

For 43 of the 45 regular attendees, this ratio was equal to the length of the 2018-2019 school year (178 days) divided by length of the 2019-2020 in-person school year (124 days), or approximately 1.44.[5] For the other two regular attendees, their 2018-2019 maximum possible was 174 days, for a ratio of 174/124 ≈ 1.40.[6]

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[5] This procedure is appropriate if a student's unexcused absences and tardies would have occurred at the same rate during March-June 2020 as they did during September 2019 – March 2020, had in-person operations continued for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year instead of going online.

[6] The 2 regular attendees with a 2018-2019 maximum of 174 days were both in 1st grade, and may have been late admittees to ICS as part of its annual lottery process for enrolling students.

Like the Teacher Survey, the focus here is on regular attendees who needed to improve their performance on the three behavioral indicators. Twenty-eight regular attendees did not have any unexcused absences during 2018-2019 are so are removed from the calculations. Among the remaining 17, 10 students (59%) reduced their number of days of unexcused absences between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

Twenty-seven regular attendees did not have any unexcused tardies during 2018-2019 are so are removed from the calculations. Among the remaining 18, 13 students (72%) reduced their number of days tardy between 2018-2019 and 2019-2010.

Discipline incidents were measured by the number of major discipline incidents, such as assault, bullying, fighting, or threats of violence. Forty-three of the 45 regular attendees had no major discipline incidents in 2018-2019 and so are removed from the calculations. Among the remaining two students, both (100%) reduced their number of major discipline incidents between the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

The findings in this section are positive, indicating that a majority of students who needed to improve their unexcused absences, unexcused tardies, or major discipline incidents between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 did improve.

C. Student-Level Participation and Performance

This section examines whether students who participate more in the ICS 21st CCLC Cohort 10 program perform better on indicators of academic achievement, academic behavior, or educational, social, and emotional development. This is a difficult question to answer because there are two, competing effects. On the one hand, students who participate more in a 21st CCLC program have more have days on which to take advantage of the opportunities and support that the program offers. Students who attend for fewer days miss some of those opportunities. On the other hand, students who participate more may be doing so because they have more academic or behavioral needs. If we compare two groups of students, one that participates for fewer days and another that participates for more days, the groups may have differences that go well beyond the extent of their 21st CCLC participation. This confounds attempts to attribute differences in performance between the two groups to their 21st CCLC participation.

An alternative approach would involve a comparison or control group of students not attending a 21st CCLC program that is similar or statistically the same in terms of academic and behavioral characteristics to a group of students participating in the program. However, this can be expensive and administratively complex, and is not required in 21st CCLC evaluation plans.

The comparisons that can be made with the data available for this year's ICS 21st CCLC Cohort 10 program evaluation concern report card grades and Teacher Survey results for regular attendees. As one way to make this comparison, we divided regular attendees into three groups depending on their number of days of 21st CCLC participation: 30-59 days, 60-89 days, and 90 days or more. We then compared report card grades and Teacher Survey results between these three groups. We also examined variations within and between these three groups by analyzing the impact of the number of days of 21st CCLC participation, as a continuous variable, on report card grades and Teacher Survey results.

For reading/ELA, among the 20 regular attendees with matched fall-spring report card grades who were not already at the highest level in the fall, there were no statistically significant differences between the three groups (30-59 days of 21st CCLC participation, 60-89 days, and 90+ days) in terms of whether they improved their reading/ELA report card grade between the fall and spring, stayed the same, or declined.[7] For math, among the 19 regular attendees with matched fall-spring report card grades who were not already at the highest level in the fall, there also were no statistically significant differences among the three groups in terms of whether they improved their report card grade, stayed the same, or declined.[8]

The statistical results were similar when the number of days of 21st CCLC participation was treated as a continuous variable. The impact of number of days of participation on the likelihood of improvement in report card grades was not statistically significant for reading/ELA or math.[9] As a caveat, the small sample sizes here (20 for reading/ELA and 19 for math) limit the statistical power of these tests, i.e., their ability to detect an impact of 21st CCLC participation on report card grades if in fact there is one to be detected.

Among the 31 regular attendees with completed Teacher Surveys, there were statistically significant differences between the three groups (30-59 days of 21st CCLC participation, 60-89 days, and 90+ days) in Teacher Survey ratings for academic performance, but not for the other six items on the Teacher Survey.[10] For academic performance, only one out of seven students (14%) attending 30-59 days had a moderate or significant improvement, compared to nine out of 10 students (90%) attending 60-89 days and 12 out of 14 students (86%) attending 90 days or more. The same conclusions hold if we exclude those rated as "did not need to improve" in an area, so that the comparison is only among students rated as needing to improve.[11]

When the number of days of 21st CCLC participation was treated as a continuous variable, and the analysis was among students rated as needing to improve, statistically significant impacts of

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[7] Pearson chi-square test results (*n*=20): χ^2 =2.095, *df*=4, *p*=0.718.

[8] Pearson chi-square test results (*n*=19): χ^2 =5.922, *df*=4, *p*=0.205.

[9] Ordinal logistic regression was conducted using three report card grade outcome categories: grade improved between fall and spring, stayed the same, or declined. For reading/ELA, model χ^2 =0.857, *df*=1, *p*=0.355; days of participation coefficient=0.017, Wald statistic=0.896, *df*=1, *p*=0.344. For math, model χ^2 =0.020, *df*=1, *p*=0.886; days of participation coefficient=-0.002, Wald statistic=0.020, *df*=1, *p*=0.888.

[10] Pearson chi-square test results including students rated as not needing to improve (*n*=31): completing homework to the teacher's satisfaction, χ^2 =12.658, *df*=8, *p*=0.124; participating in class, χ^2 =11.463, *df*=8, *p*=0.177; volunteering, χ^2 =6.218, *df*=8, *p*=0.623; being attentive in class, χ^2 =13.739, *df*=8, *p*=0.089; behaving well in class, χ^2=10.154, *df*=8, *p*=0.254; academic performance, χ^2 =15.779, *df*=8, *p*=0.046; and coming to school motivated to learn, χ^2 =10.953, *df*=10, *p*=0.361.

[11] Pearson chi-square test results excluding students rated as not needing to improve: completing homework to the teacher's satisfaction (*n*=27), χ^2 =10.988, *df*=6, *p*=0.089; participating in class (*n*=27), χ^2 =5.499, *df*=6, *p*=0.482; volunteering (*n*=20), χ^2 =5.125, *df*=6, *p*=0.528; being attentive in class (*n*=25), χ^2 =7.188, *df*=6, *p*=0.304; behaving well in class (*n*=19), χ^2=10.326, *df*=6, *p*=0.112; academic performance (*n*=28), χ^2 =13.948, *df*=6, *p*=0.030; and coming to school motivated to learn (*n*=23), χ^2 =9.679, *df*=8, *p*=0.288.

participation on a student's rating were found for completing homework to the teacher's satisfaction and academic performance.[12] Regular attendees who participated a greater number of days received, on average, higher ratings in terms of their improvement in these two areas. No statistically significant impacts were found for the other five areas on the Teacher Survey, although participating in class and behaving well in class came close to statistical significance (*p* greater than 0.05 but less than 0.10). In these two areas, there was a tendency for regular attendees who participated a greater number of days to receive higher ratings in terms of their improvement in these areas.

7. Parent and Family Involvement

According to the QPRs, the ICS Cohort 10 program held two open house events in October and December 2019 to provide parents an opportunity to meet the Cohort 10 program staff. At the December event there was also a book exchange and a presenting on reading with your child at home. The total number of parents and adult family members attending was 12 in October and nine in December.

For the online programming in May and June 2020, parent portals were created in the Reading A-to-Z learning modules in which parents could review reports of their child's progress. As noted in Section 3, virtual meetings were also held with individual families during this time to learn more about the needs of each family and to ensure that the family and students had the resources needed to be engaged in virtual learning.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings in this evaluation report indicate that the ICS 21st CCLC Cohort 10 program was successful in 2019-2020 reaching its target populations of academically at-risk students, ESL/ELL students, and students in Special Education. It came very close to, and basically met, its approved student numbers. The findings in this report also indicate that the ICS Cohort 10 program made very good progress during 2019-2020 toward improving student academic achievement, student academic behavior, and student educational, social, and emotional development. This is impressive considering the many challenges created by Covid-19.

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[12] Ordinal logistic regression was conducted using the seven Teacher Survey outcome categories, which range from significant improvement to significant decline. For completing homework to the teacher's satisfaction, model χ^2 =5.159, *df*=1, *p*=0.023; days of participation coefficient=0.056, Wald statistic=5.025, *df*=1, *p*=0.025. For participating in class, model χ^2 =3.130, *df*=1, *p*=0.077; days of participation coefficient=0.037, Wald statistic=2.952, *df*=1, *p*=0.086. For volunteering, model χ^2 =0.670, *df*=1, *p*=0.413; days of participation coefficient=0.022, Wald statistic=0.663, *df*=1, *p*=0.416. For being attentive in class, model χ^2 =2.710, *df*=1, *p*=0.100; days of participation coefficient=0.046, Wald statistic=2.441, *df*=1, *p*=0.118. For behaving well in class, model χ^2 =4.082, *df*=1, *p*=0.043; days of participation coefficient=0.063, Wald statistic=3.703, *df*=1, *p*=0.054. For academic performance, model χ^2 =3.728, *df*=1, *p*=0.053; days of participation coefficient=0.051, Wald statistic=4.151, *df*=1, *p*=0.042. For coming to school motivated to learn, model χ^2 =1.023, *df*=1, *p*=0.312; days of participation coefficient=0.029, Wald statistic=1.160, *df*=1, *p*=0.281.

Bright spots on the GPRA indicators for 2019-2020 include improvements by regular attendees in reading/ELA report card grades between fall 2019 and spring 2020. Bright spots also include teacher-reported improvements in homework completion, class participation, and student behavior. Other bright spots include teacher-reported improvements in academic performance, class attentiveness, volunteering in class, and motivation to learn. For homework completion and academic performance, students who participated in the ICS Cohort 10 program for a greater number of days had, on average, higher ratings in terms of their improvement in these two areas. Bright spots also include reductions between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 in the numbers of unexcused school day absences, unexcused school days tardy, and major discipline incidents.

The only area of concern coming out of this evaluation report concerns math report card grades. While the ICS Cohort 10 program exceeded the targets for the GPRA indicators on reading/ELA report card grades, it was short of the GPRA targets for math. Our evaluations of the ICS Cohort 7 program have found that the Cohort 7 program had excellent results in some years in improving math report card grades, including 2019-2020, and in other years had results that were not as good as this year's Cohort 10. This year's regular attendees in ICS Cohorts 7 and 10 were similar in terms how they started the 2019-2020 school year in math, in that there was not a statistically significant difference between their average fall 2019 math grades.[13]

A recommendation coming out of this area of concern is for ICS to review and synthesize its Cohort 7 experiences for best practices in both math and reading/ELA. Which practices worked best in an in-person environment? Which ones are working best in the current online environment? ICS has a strong record from its Cohort 7 grant that can be successfully applied to its Cohort 10 grant.

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[13] Independent samples t-test assuming equal variances of fall 2019 math report card grades for Cohort 7 versus Cohort 10, excluding students already at the highest possible grade in fall 2019, and expressing a student's math report card grade as a percentage of the highest possible for that student (e.g., a math grade of C would be C/A+ = 2/4.33 ≈ 46%): Cohort 7 mean=68.707, standard deviation=12.684, n=54; Cohort 10 mean=72.447, standard deviation=10.086, n=25; t=1.295, df=77, p=0.199.