

Directors' Use of Data in Decision Making in 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants

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Reports of conflicting results of 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) program success may plague the 21st CCLC reputation, potentially reducing support and capacity to which they can serve youth at risk. Recently renamed the Nita. M. Lowey 21CCLC, evidence of positive impact of youth participation in this federal program remains mixed (Leos-Urbel, 2015). As a result of conflicting data, critical stakeholders, such as school districts and policy makers, may lack understanding of 21CCLC effectiveness. (Farrell, Collier-Meek, & Furman, 2019). Expectation from policy makers is increasing that evidence-based practices are used to guide practical decision making throughout the field of education. (Mahoney, 2016).

Considering this increased expectation, success in today's data-oriented environment requires program leaders and stakeholders to be able to think about data, analytically (Provost & Fawcett, 2013). The problem and the importance of this study is to identify how directors collect, analyze and report data may be contributing to the lack of stakeholder understanding and mixed review of program success. The purpose of this formative research is to examine the data practices of 21st CCLC directors and how they use data to base decisions regarding their programs. The potential concern is a science to practice gap, meaning a lack of evidence-based data collection and analysis procedures at the site level, further undermining the credibility of the 21st CCLC initiative (Mahoney, 2016). Granger introduces an important question, "the question is not if or why programs are successful but how is data used at program level to drive decisions and program

improvement” (Granger, 2010). Through semi- structured interviews of Washington State, Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC directors, this inquiry seeks to answer what professional development directors’ need to collect program data accurately, to develop a deeper understanding of the data, and implement program improvement and decisions based on the data.

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1.0 Introduction

Evidence shows data-driven decision-making benefits programming (Provost & Fawcett, 2013). Using data effectively is critical to program improvement and success. Data can help program leadership see things they might otherwise miss. It can help program leaders get to the root causes of a problem in the program, not just the symptom. Data can help programs by providing measurement of student progress and program effectiveness. Data can identify instructional effectiveness and guide curriculum development. Use of valid and reliable data can allow leadership to allocate resources wisely and promote accountability. Program leadership and staff must know how to collect, analyze data accurately and consistently to implement data driven decision making in programs effectively. “Data-driven decision-making is about gathering data to understand if a program is meeting its purpose and vision” (Houston, 2002, p. 1). Data-driven decision-making means collecting analyzing, reporting data for program improvement requiring staff to acquire these skill sets. It is reported, “today’s programs are collecting more data than ever.” (Yoo, Whitaker, & McCombs, 2019, p.7).

1.1 Problem Statement

Washington State, Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC programs’ use of data and procedures may be contributing to the mixed reports of program effectiveness. The concern is use of data may be contributing to a research to practice gap. Dr. Tseng expands on this concern, “this gap between research and practice is country wide” (Tseng, 2012, p.1). The problem is 21st CCLCs are

challenged to provide credible evidence of effectiveness. The United States Department of Education reports “research indicates mixed effects on math and reading scores for participating students” (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2017, p.17). The significance of this research is to investigate the connection of how 21st CCLC programs use data and the inconsistent review of program effectiveness. This dissertation examines how Washington State 21st CCLCs collect, understand and communicate their program data. 21st CCLCs are federally, grant funded, out-of-school time programs which provide academic support, enrichment activities and a safe environment for low-income students in low-resourced communities. Recent reports state “education lacks useful data about whether the 21st CCLC program is achieving its objectives to improve students’ behavioral outcomes such as attendance and discipline” (GAO, 2017, p. 22). Programs such as these may not have site-level systematic data collection, analysis, and dissemination procedures in place, possibly even the existence of data to address program outcomes cannot be assumed (Naftzger et al., 2007). Further research suggests programs “waste time and energy collecting data incorrectly” (Yoo et al., 2019, p.1). Programs must interpret evidence and research to develop meaning and program implications for their unique challenges and circumstances (Tseng, 2012). For programs to receive benefits from data, thinking about what to collect, how to collect and how to use data, needs happen at the site level and be aligned with state level expectations. Developing a better understanding of the data processes in place will allow for more precise problem solving and more appropriate recommendations for program improvement (Provost & Fawcett, 2013).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This dissertation research investigates how Washington State 21st CCLC programs collect, interpret and use data to drive decisions and implement change in their programs. For change to happen at the site level, after school program staff need time to be trained with accessibility to data readily available, along with the resources supporting data efforts. Data-driven programs involve staff and stakeholders that strive for a common goal. “Data provides the substance for meaningful on-going dialogue within the educational community” (Houston, 2002, p.12). Data does not help a program when the data is not valid and reliable, or it is not used when making program decisions.

Professional development on data use is necessary at the site level in 21st CCLC programs. One of the biggest challenges in implementing data driven decision making is knowing where to begin. Data can be intimidating and confusing, discouraging staff from becoming involved. There are limited formal education requirements for those who care for youth in the out of school time hours (Mahoney & Warner, 2014). After school staff are typically not trained to assess validity of data and program evidence (Mahoney, 2016, p. 35). Afterschool programs also experience high turnover, although professional development like this, can increase staff retention. (Huang & Cho, 2010).

Program staff need to begin data collection by defining what they want to know (Houston, 2002). Without specific, evidence-based data collection procedures in place, the credibility of program data is at risk (Naftzger et al., 2007). Yoo confirms this opinion, “often, afterschool programs collect the wrong data, in the wrong way” (Yoo et al., 2019 p.1). To demonstrate consistent evidence of positive impacts of 21st CCLC participating youth, site-level procedures need to change (Farrell et al., 2019). Data knowledge can also be used to benefit programs in other ways. Data collection can also be used to inform schools, school districts, community, potential

fundere and policy makers about programming, increasing awareness and support (Afterschool Alliance, 2014b). It is crucial for 21st CCLC program staff to know about program data, have productive conversations with stakeholders and make wise decisions about their programs. This relevant research formed the inquiry questions. The sources and research lead to the following inquiry questions.

1.3 Inquiry Question #1

To what extent have Washington State 21st CCLC, Program Directors developed consistent, useful data collection procedures in their programs?

This is important because the Government Accountability Report from the United States Department of Education says, “States will have to evaluate their programs in conjunction with new data collection and evaluation planning requirements, including requirements to track student progress over time and to include state standardized test scores and other indicators of student success, such as improved school-day attendance” (GAO, 2017, p 26).

We learn from Naftzger, much of the data collected relating to student academic improvement and behaviors are reported directly by grantees without procedures in place verifying the validity of the presented data.(Naftzger et al., 2007) Besides knowing what data to collect, program directors needs to know what data is available and how to access it. Many grantees directly collect and report most of the data with few protocols in place or knowledge of evidence-based data collection practices. We want to know how, “Data helps program leaders determine whether their perceptions match reality” (Houston, 2002, p. 5) Accuracy may not be verified since

data is self-reported at the site level.(Naftzger et al., 2007). Without protocols in place, discrepancies in program data can happen.

1.4 Inquiry Question #2

What data analytical methods do Washington State 21st CCLC program directors employ?
How confident are they in their data interpretation?

We want to know what directors do to make sense of their data. Directors' and program leadership staff need to build assessment literacy, identifying relevant outcomes, using accurate measuring tools and data management systems to effectively analyze and interpret data (Surr, 2012). Research suggests more staff involvement in data procedures. "Successful integration of data-driven decision-making into educational strategy requires a team approach" (Houston, 2002, p. 13). We need to look at what analytical methods are being used. Research also shows it is unclear whether the data collected is useful to program staff, whether it is accessible or able to be interpreted by staff (Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013). Rather than, only depending on personal experience or gut instinct, it is essential for directors to develop the practice of basing decisions on the analysis of data (Provost et al., 2013). Programs should use data to set goals related to desired outcomes. Staff and supervisors must have support and knowledge of data informed best practices to achieve their program improvement goals (Danielson, Harris, & Barnett, 2018). It is important for programs to share data. Sharing data will allow all stakeholders to understand what is happening in the program and hold each other accountable while measuring program improvement. (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012). Programs may feel that available evidence does not specifically address their problems. This evidence may not connect to the specific

program context and may not be relatable to program leaders because it is not presented in user-friendly language (Barton, Mazzeo, & Nelsestuen, 2014). Information needs to be presented so that it understandable to nonscientists.

1.5 Inquiry Question #3

What professional development do Washington State 21st CCLC Directors need to use data more effectively, especially in the service of continuous improvement of their programming?

Some afterschool administrators, instructional and curricular staff may have not developed the competencies needed to self-assess, collect, and interpret data. Trained after school workers are needed for quality program improvement. After school staff are often low paid, part time employees with a variety of job and life experience. Professional development is an area in which program leaders and coordinators can help programs improve. (Browne, 2015). Directors need to demonstrate how to incorporate the assessment into everyday practice to their staff (Surr, 2012). I

Mendels states, “evidence and research-based strategies must be used to improve teaching and learning and initiate discussions about instructional approaches, both in teams and with individuals.” (Mendels, 2012 p. 56). Programs need to move beyond random improvement to intentional improvement, asking the question why. 21st CCLC programs need to look at change over time during their five-year grant cycle requiring the development of a data base. It is found, programs struggle to meet their goals, possibly because of the lack of program structure and limited training and support for staff" (Farrell et al., 2019). When looking at these elements, it is important to consider what Browne suggests, “effective use of data is the element of a successful afterschool system that is least developed in the field at large” (Browne, 2015, p. 31).

1.6 Background

The 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant was conceived in the 1990's under the Elementary and Second Education Act (Farrell et al, 2019). The main goal of after school programming was to provide a safe space for children afterschool while their parents worked. Programs had little program evaluation at that time. (Mahoney, & Warner, 2014). Goals for afterschool programming quickly moved beyond providing safety as funding significantly increased and public interests saw afterschool and summer programming to educate its children for future success. In 2001, the 21st CCLC grant was expanded during the No Child Left Behind Act with an emphasis on scientifically based research and increased accountability to prove their public value (Peterson, 2013). Under the No Child Left Behind Act the 21st CCCLC grant experienced increased funding, increased accountability and increased evaluation processes. This time also marked a shift in program goals. 21st CCLC programs were required to provide academic enrichment opportunities to high-need students in high-poverty communities. The concern was the growing achievement gap (Leos-Urbel, 2015). The goal was improved academic performance. "Current 21st CCLC measures primarily focus on students' reading and math scores on state tests (GAO, 2017, p. 20). In 2015, after many challenges including efforts to eliminate the program, the 21st CCLC grant was included in Every Student Succeeds Act. Current Government Administration proposes to eliminate 21st CCLC claiming lack of evidence of academic achievement even though there is a decade of evaluations showing positive outcomes for participating students (Peterson, 2018). Congress renamed the 21st CCLC grant to the Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC grant in 2020 to honor Representative Lowey who played a key role in the original bill. More than ever, 21st CCLC programs need to improve the accuracy of their data collecting, analyzing, and communicating procedures.

1.7 Context

The 21st CCLC grant is the largest federally funded after school program in the United States. This is the only federal funding source for after school programming. This effort has grown to a 1-billion-dollar federal grant. Ninety percent of 21st CCLCs are in school districts (Leos-Urbel, 2015). This makes school districts the largest stakeholder. It is estimated the funding needs to be three times the size. Three out of four grants are declined due to lack of funding (Alliance, 2014a). This federal funding is awarded to states who then have a competitive grant. The grant is awarded only to school districts or community organizations serving the most at-risk youth, low-income, low performing students. The 21st CCLC Grant has moved beyond only providing a safe place for school age youth to focusing in improving students' academic performance and social and emotional wellbeing. Regardless of need, popularity, or success, 21st CCLC programs remain dependent on this funding. The United States Department of Education reports sustainability of these programs remain a challenge. Less than ten percent of 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant Programs remain once the funding ends (GAO, 2017, p 27).

Currently the 21st CCLC grant is receiving less federal funding. In 2018 the appropriation was \$1,211,673.000 while the 2019 appropriation was \$1,205,773. The funding is less, yet unfortunately, the need continues to grow. The United States Department of Education website states the purpose of 21st CCLC grant is “The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.”(U.S. Department of Education, 2018, 21st CCLC programs) Presently 21st CCLC Grants are awarded yearly though a highly competitive proposal process. “The formula that determines the funding amount for a

particular state is based in part on the percentage of total students from low-income families enrolled in K-12 public schools and how much that state spends per pupil on education.” (GAO, 2017, p 5) The grant requires the centers to provide students with activities that are targeted to their academic needs and aligned with the instruction they receive during the school day. It also provides families with opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education. The grant proposal process requires states to use a rigorous peer review process in reviewing grant applications. Current demand for programs is that two out of every three applications cannot be funded. It is clear, receiving these grants has become a competitive process, with current funding challenge to meet all youth needs. It is important now, more than ever, to provide evidence of program success.

It is important when reviewing the research to look at it from the 21st CCLC grant context nationally as well as in Washington State. In Washington State, there are five-year grant cohorts of programs of approximately ten programs awarded 21st CCLC grants in Washington State each year. Each program is required to provide a minimum of one part time Director and one part-time, Coordinator.

All 21st CCLC programs in Washington State are also required to have external evaluators who make yearly observations using the Weikert Center's Youth Program Assessment tool. Evaluators complete a report based on these observations, along with attendance data and turn it in to the State evaluators. 21st CCLC program Directors are responsible for ensuring the collection of data are a critical link to reporting outcomes Washington State Program managers receive on evidence of impact and data pertaining to Washington State 21st CCLC programs.

2.0 Literature Review

A broad search was completed to understand the background of the 21st CCLC grant of after school program goals and impact. Resources regarding data use in the after school program context were searched and the role in programming. Program relationships with diverse stakeholders and how stakeholders look at and use data were studied. School districts are an important stakeholder. Ninety percent of 21st CCLC programs are in school districts making them the largest stakeholder. Sources were gathered on program data and the impact of data on program sustainability. Sustainability remains a challenge for 21st CCLC grant as less than ten percent of programs remain after the grant funding ends.

2.1 Background

Afterschool programs provide young people opportunities for learning academics, socioemotional and other life skills. After school programs offer organized activities such as sports, community service and are important in creating a larger, diverse developmental community in school. The impact on participating youth of these opportunities is still unclear. “Education lacks useful data about whether the program is achieving its objectives to improve students’ behavioral outcomes such as attendance and discipline” (GAO, 2017, p.22). Currently, sixty percent of public elementary schools offer after school programs onsite. “The afterschool field has been expanding for the last twenty years because parents and other taxpayers want the field to deliver on four goals: improvement in the safety and health of our communities and our

youth, improvement in the safety and health of our communities; improvement of students' academic performance; development of their civic, artistic, and other skills; and provision of care for young people while parents work”(Granger, Durlak, Yohalem, & Reisner, 2007, p.3). The concern is the widening achievement gap in schools and the goal is to increase educational success and self-sufficiency for children, families and communities. Educational partnerships are focused on preparing students to become successful adults. Providing young people opportunities, especially in a low-income community is a way to reduce the achievement gap. Ultimately, 21st CCLC after school programs are working towards reducing this opportunity gap in low-income communities.

Yet, evidence of achieving this goal remains unclear and may be because, according to Browne, “effective use of data is the least developed element in the afterschool system” (Browne, 2015, p. 31). The demand for implementation and dissemination of evidence-based practices, those which have been found to meet their goals through rigorous scientific scrutiny-have gained substantial momentum during the past decades. (Esbensen, Matsuda, Taylor, & Peterson, 2011) Still, understanding the data is critical to program improvement. “Despite the scientific evidence linking out of school time program participation to positive youth development, a limited investment has been made to ensure that this research is designed to be useful for the problems that practitioners face or whether the knowledge is accessible and interpretable by non-scientists.” (Mahoney, 2016, p.35).

Reports show that after school programs improve youth outcomes, however, not all after school programs are effective. “To be effective programs must focus on quality. Better quality programming should, in turn, lead to better developmental outcomes for the participants” (Mahoney, 2016, p.35). The 21st CCLC is determined to facilitate high quality programs, requiring

each grant to go through a rigorous yearly evaluation. “Our overall conclusion is that out of school time programs are generally effective at producing the primary outcomes that would be expected based on their content and design” (McCombs, Whitaker, & Yoo, 2017, p.2). 21st CCLC Grant Programs are expected to be aligned with the statutes policies and guidelines. They are designed to reinforce and complement instruction in the regular school day. (GAO, 2017, p.6)

The 21st CCLC Grant not only provides a safe place for school age youth in need, it focuses on improving students’ academic performance and social and emotional wellbeing. Grant proposals often align their program goals with state and school district goals. Programs are responsible for those goals for the duration of the grant. Research shows current evidence on 21st CCLC outcomes fails to prove consistent, universal improvement in academics. There is an increasing expectation from policy makers that evidence-based practices be used throughout the field of education to guide practical decision making.” (Mahoney,2016, p.35).

The focus of these evaluations was to identify what is necessary to develop a quality after school program. Research suggests it takes approximately five years of continual revision and implementation to fully implement a successful 21st CCLC program (GAO, 2017, p 9). States report extra points during the initial awarding are given for support from the school or district during the initial grant awarding competition. (GAO, 2017, p. 8) Current research further illustrates the continued disparity of after school program opportunities between high income and low-income youth. The highest income families spend almost seven times more on enrichment activities for their children and this spending gap creates an opportunity gap. (McCombs et al., 2017)

Programs applying for grants are required to detail evidence-based practices and curriculum they will be using to accomplish the proposed outcomes. This is consistent with policy

guidelines. “A central role for research in the education policy, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) specifies “scientifically based research” as the basis of decision-making. NCLB defines “scientifically based research” as “the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs (Asen, Gurke, Solomon, Conners, & Gumm, 2011 p.201)

The 21st CCLC programs monitor the attendance of participants, labeling a student who attends thirty times as a regular attendee. The 21st CCLC grant only counts an attendee, once they are regular. Program attendance often represents quality because in many cases children are choosing to be there (Browne, 2015). If a program has a large number of regular attendees by the end of the year, then the program is considered to be a quality program because students are choosing to attend because they feel engaged, a sense of belonging, and find the program beneficial.

The rigorous yearly evaluation required of all 21st CCLC grants is part of the program improvement process and develops the foundation for professional development. After school staff need professional development to gain the skills needed to effectively improve their programs. (Browne, 2015). “Evaluations of program fidelity allow for two additional outcomes; they help identify programs and program components that can be exported to and implemented in other locations and they provide greater understanding of potential barriers and remedies what programs are being implemented in different locales” (Esbensen et al., 2011p. 16).

2.2 Data

The disconnect in understanding meaningful programmatic data can create a science to practice gap preventing the use of research and evidence in the effort to solve the problem and improve programming. A trusting environment supports data interpretation. Evidence reveals social relationships are important in providing a trusting environment to review complicated data in a clear way (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 5). Research indicates data can be debatable, prompting difficult conversations. (Gamse, Spielberger, Axelrod, & Spain, 2019). Research shows there is basically three motivating reasons to collect data, compliance, accountability and continuous improvement. Staff may respond differently to data based on their motivation. Spielberger states compliance is the weakest way to use of data because the data may never be critically reviewed or related to making decisions about programming (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 2). The David P. Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment tool which tracks performance may be used as a tool to minimize the controversy of the afterschool program model for success.

School districts are the largest stakeholder. Therefore, school districts need the focus of research with answers to be relevant and available to be considered useful. (Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013). Joint work with stakeholders like School districts can create tension with independent research, yet this independence is important because it can credibility to program work. (Coburn et al., 2013). Strategies can be used to enhance communication with stakeholders. "Afterschool system leaders recognized that communicating effectively about data required more than simple data collection and analysis, and that better data visualization could facilitate more accurate interpretation" (Gamse et al., 2019, p. 12).

Understanding the data system, requires knowing key factors. According to Spielberger, people, processes and technology are key factors in the development and planning of data systems.

(Spielberger, et al., 2016, p. 5). According to Gamse, increasing the accessibility and the appeal of information about a program system can be an effective strategy for obtaining additional resources and support for the system (Gamse et al., 2019).

Presently, 21st CCLC Grants in Washington State are evaluated using the Youth Program Quality Assessment from the Weikert Center. Programs are rated on how they are applying the YPQA methods, thus determining quality. This assessment is field tested and evidenced based and identifies staff training needs, relying on observations. Although this research is site specific, it uniquely independent. School district administrators and certified teachers have little knowledge or understanding of the YPQA methods, possibly underestimating the value.

Detailed goals and plans are documented in the 21st CCLC grant request for proposal, the beginning of the grant process. These strategies inform the state of the readiness of the system, such as the existing management information system (MIS), Data sharing agreements and technology (Gamse et al., 2019). These plans not only identify research-based theory and curriculum but also organizational structure and professional development plan for staff. Design of the program is critical in the original grant process. Yet, research indicates that lack of program fidelity, rather than poor program design is a primary reason for the failure of programs (Esbensen et al., 2011). For research or data to be considered useful to practitioners regarding evidence about their programs, it needs easily accessible, relevant to the population served and presented in a way a practitioner can understand. As a result, “decision making guided primarily by empirical research is likely to be uncommon for the typical out of school time practitioner” (Mahoney, 2016, p. 34). “Data for accountability were used to simplify and streamline reporting requirements and deepen understanding of organizational operations and patterns” (Gamse et al., 2019 p.26).

“They all need up-to-date, accurate information to make sound decisions. They need to know where the demand for programs is highest. They need to know how to interpret it and how to get it into the right hands and how to act on it effectively” (Browne 2015, p. 17). “Staff turnover required afterschool systems to repeat basic training on data entry and data quality” (Gamse et al., 2019, p. 12). Staff longevity is an issue for both the regular school day and after school time. Tangible goals with relevant data sources need to be communicated with measurements that truly connect with outcomes.

“A key element in an afterschool system is strong leadership from major player. There is no substitute for the leadership of a committed mayor. After school coordination were far more likely to be stable or receive increased funding for system-building efforts over a five-year period with a highly committed mayor” (Browne, 2015, p. 10). This type of leadership allows decision making to be managed and directed by individuals vested in the education process.” (Vernon-Dotson, & Floyd, 2012, p.39) Programmatic decisions can be driven by leadership with data the after-school programming provides.

2.3 Stakeholders

School board members can be involved in complicated negotiations with potentially competing interests. “Scientifically based research played a comparatively modest role in the board deliberations we observed. Research accounts for less than ten percent of all evidence used by school board member.” (Mahoney, 2016, p.36). School board members throughout the nation influence school district policy as they make decisions about staff, budgets and curriculum while also serving local community member interests. “School board members, who remain the key

decision makers at the local level, negotiate complex and potentially conflicting roles as elected officials, experts, and community members; these different roles cannot be subsumed under a communications model based on an idealized vision of research. In these roles, school board members often must balance their understanding of technical policy problems with their awareness of community interest and values.” (Asen et al., 2011, p. 196)

Institutional research along with local inquiry fuels school board debates, often dependent on the members’ personal perspective and knowledge. These deliberations can take place at the stake of the critical investigative process expanding the meaning of the research to meet the need of the school board member. “Rationality may take different shapes, as scholars, studying the public sphere have demonstrated. Inviting such inquiries, any particular argumentative artifact can be taken to be grounded in any one of the spheres or a combinatorial relationship.” (Asen et al., 2011, p. 198)

Leadership development is key to the sustainability in the program. Universal leadership development promotes staff longevity and growth supporting the quality of the program. School districts and after school programs are challenged to increase leadership capacity. One solution to sustainability is distributed leadership throughout the district. Distributed leadership, a practice distributed over leaders, followers, and their context. Leadership is performed by the entire educational community, affording daily interactions between formal school leaders and other members within organizations.

“One emphasis is the leader’s understanding of their own beliefs and values as well as the beliefs and values of others, enabling the emergence of a shared vision and goal. Another emphasis is a principal’s role in understanding the complexity of organizational life.” (Rieckhoff, & Larsen, 2012, p. 60). The role of principals has changed due to the increasing pressure to meet school

improvement goals. They are expected to create a vision for their students based on data with clearly articulated instructional plan. Principals are required to develop and implement a plan for optimal learning for each child. “Principals emphasize research-based strategies to improve teaching and learning and initiate discussions about instructional approaches, both in teams and with individuals.” (Mendels, 2012, p. 56). The overwhelming role principals have in the educational setting provides an opportunity for afterschool programs to partner in data gathering. “Local officials, who direct the daily operations of schools and classrooms, face an increasing number of federal prescriptions designed to guide their decision-making.” (Asen et al., 2011, p. 195)

Effective principals create a climate where students and families feel supported and responded to. Principals ensure teachers work with one another, guiding each other to improve instructional practices that support students using evidence-based practices. They are looking for a youth centered culture, that is reliable. “Graduates can look back on it, their siblings can look forward to it. Our principals would be bereft without it “(Browne, 2015 p.11). Principals are a key afterschool program stakeholder; therefore, it is important to consider what they look at. “Principals look at qualitative and quantitative data focusing on four key areas: leadership development, school improvement goal attainment, professional development planning and focus, and school-wide changes over time” (Rieckhoff et al., 2012, p. 69). Principals forge a sense of community and share a commitment for increasing student achievement, engaging the faculty and enhancing the school climate with overarching goal of building a capacity for change. They were allowed and in fact encouraged to reveal their untapped and often unrecognized leadership capacities. (Vernon-Dotson, & Floyd, 2012, p. 44)

There is an empirical link between school leadership and student achievement. School leadership is an important factor in children's academic achievement and its indirect impact is statistically significant. The school wide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students should universally be adopted by all leaders for broad, long term support. "All leaders eventually step down. For a school superintendent, the time in office can be particularly brief." (Browne, 2015, p. 10)

There are high expectations for all school leadership. Clear and public standards need to be communicated to stakeholders and community partners. As Browne suggests, "we've acknowledged that mayors, superintendents and other civic leaders- as important as they are to get a system up and running- will not be around to champion your system forever." (Browne, 2015, p. 29).

Often, educators and policy makers may not have the time or the skill to identify, access, analyze and apply data, or the capacity to use analysis to inform policies, program and resource allocation decisions. In addition, they may feel that the available research evidence does not specifically address their problems, fails to relate to their specific context, or is not presented in user-friendly context, or isn't presented in user-friendly language. (Barton et al., 2014, p. 1)

Partners can collaborate with school leadership and motivate a stronger connection with data and results. School leaders such as counselors can help develop a vision. "Developing a vision for partnerships and examining how partnerships can help realize both the school and counseling programs and the school's visions. A critical task at this partnership stage comprises gaining buy in from principals and other school staff. For example, aligning the

vision for school counseling and for partnerships and influence principals' expectations regarding counselor's partnership roles." (Bryan, & Henry, 2012,p. 411).

High staff turnover in after school programs can negatively impact the quality of the program. "Turnover in districts is a persistent challenge. The average tenure of a superintendent in urban schools remains short. When superintendents leave there can also be turnover in district offices with closest ties to instruction. Because new relationships must be formed, trust rebuilt, and focus maintained in the face of significant change, this turnover can be difficult for partnerships." (Coburn et al., 2013, p. 19). This supports the goal of distributed leadership.

Teachers are a critical after school program stakeholder, recruiting students, providing classroom space and their opinion matters to building principals, however they are overwhelmed. Teachers engaged in more leadership responsibilities will participate in more project which provide evidence of outcomes as they respond to each of the accreditations standards." (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p.120). This requirement stresses the importance of making meaning of data. "In light of these concerns, teacher educators are seeking to develop strategies for assessing the results of their efforts that appreciate the complexity of teaching and learning and that provide a variety of lenses on the process of learning to teach. "(Darling-Hammond, 2006, p.120). Understanding the data issues of the regular school day can influence the impact in the after school context.

"The impact or "effectiveness" data increasingly demanded by policy makers are, of course, the most difficult to collect and interpret for several reasons: First is the difficulty of developing or obtaining comparable premeasures and post measures of student learning that can gauge in valid ways that educators feel appropriately reflect genuine learning; Second is the difficulty attributing changes in student attitudes on performances to an

individual teacher, given all of the other factors influencing children, including other teachers past and present; third is the difficulty of attributing what the teacher knows or does to the influence of teacher education. Complex and costly research designs are needed to deal with these issues.” (Darling-Hammond, 2006 p.121). Again, all this takes time, time that can be utilized in the out of school setting.

Teachers opinions of after school programs located on site, matter. Research identifies, “five emerging themes as areas of important learning for these experienced teachers: increased effectiveness working with struggling students; greater sophistication in curriculum planning, particularly in identifying and matching long-term objectives and assessment; greater appreciation for collaborative teaching and ability to nurture collegial support; and ability to nurture collegial support; structured opportunities for feedback and reflection on teaching practice; and development of theoretical frameworks to support teaching skills and vision.” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 127). To promote such smart practices, effective professional development is essential ingredient in successful scale-up strategy. “Effective professional development increases teacher’s knowledge, skills and attitudes related to new practice, which in turn should lead to changes in instruction, which in turn should lead to improved student learning.” (Klingner, Boardman, & McMaster, 2013).

Developing teacher support can help a program. “Approaches to cultivating strong administrative support and teacher buy-in includes involving school and district personnel in identifying the instructional practices to adopt; engaging administrators in discussing how to provide ongoing support to teachers; limiting the number of innovations introduced at one time; communicating the importance of the practices to teachers” (Klingner et al 2013, p. 203).

Principals leadership capacity can be extended when teachers lead. Students can experience shared leadership benefitting from better decisions. The 21stCCLC supports the youth population most at risk needing experienced teachers. We learn from research, “the new teachers are not only inexperienced and new to the profession but also had little or no experience in working with this population, often labeled as hard to teach. (Vernon-Dotson, & Floyd, 2012, p. 41)

Mentor teachers can assist new teachers meeting the academic needs of the diverse population in after school programs. Leadership teams can be developed to improve instructional strategies among teachers and support staff in after school programing. Developing a community of teacher learners and teacher leaders can improve educational practice for all. Teachers are a critical component for long lasting change in school culture and student success. A school’s responsibility is to encourage all teacher to be leaders. Through this collaboration, teachers’ practices promote school wide change and solutions.

When teachers can assess their own learning opportunities, they can focus on meeting the needs of all students. This type of creativity, experimentation and self-directed activities is not widely practiced in professional development. This type of collaboration focuses on shared decision making, shared problem, continuous feedback for improvement and can be facilitated in after school settings.

Communication is critical when reporting data to stakeholders and community leaders and needs to be purposeful and meaningful. Communication takes time, this time needs to be valued and planned for. Ways of communication need to be developed through presentations, reports, meetings, professional development, social media, website. To create trust with partnerships, program leaders must follow through on commitments and communicate realistic timelines about the progress of work.

For key stakeholders to buy in the vision needs to be clearly communicated. A plan devised through multiple perspectives needs to be put in place on how the vision is developed. A plan needs to be developed and put in place to share this vision. The plan needs to be broken down in steps. “A critical need exists for collaboration among counselors, teachers, parents and other stakeholders. Research indicates that when collective group of school, family and community stakeholders work together, achievement gaps decrease.” (Bryan, & Henry, 2012, p. 1)

By cultivating the continuity of this behavior, expectation and dependence can create community collaboration. This work will influence future generations, shaping a supportive stakeholder community for years to come. “Fostering a shared understanding of quality- not just specific standards but the importance of standards in general- will help ensure buy in for the systems quality improvement work and pave the way for assessments and interventions that might otherwise be met with skepticism, resistance and mistrust.” (Browne, 2015, p. 23).

Community strengths can be leveraged to meet common goals. Multiple perspectives and support are critical to program longevity. Outside partners bring new strengths, talents and gifts to the program. District strengths can be asset mapped and utilized through collaboration and braiding multiple funding streams to support the shared vision. This includes shared planning of funds. “Alliances have made purpose tangible through written goals. Alliances have established goals that articulate how they work toward their shared purpose. Alliances stay focused using a logic model, revisiting goals at each meeting and using clear communication.” (Barton et al., 2014, p. 2)

Family and community are other stakeholders important in the pathway to success for after school program. After school program leadership need to implement effective strategies for family and community program collaboration. “To foster family and community empowerment school

partners use the following principles: They intentionally involve culturally diverse and low-income parents and community members in the partnership process; purposely diminish their roles as the experts; respect families and community member, knowledge and insight, regard each other as valuable resources and assets, involve family and community member in mutual and equitable decisions about partnership goals, activities and outcomes refuse to blame each other; and encourage families and communities to define issues that affect their children” (Bryan & Henry, 2012, p. 411).

After school programs need to encourage open dialogue about challenges and solutions. “To foster shared ownership, stakeholders must engage honestly and constructively with each other to solve problems and make midcourse corrections. (Blank et al., 2012, p. 16) Engage partners in the use of data. “Sharing data enables all stakeholders to understand where things stand and hold each other accountable for making measurable progress. (Blank et al., 2012, p. 17).

Engaging different stakeholders required after school program leadership to consider different perspectives. Different data has different meaning to different stakeholders. Front line staff and parent may want to see images of their youth engaged while school board members may want to see graphs and charts. Understanding the role of program quality and its role in student impact and performance is key to stakeholders’ buy in and program support. Understanding the goals and expectations are important first steps. Holding fidelity to the process and vision is necessary to accomplishing these goals. Key agency decision makers need to be identified and a shared vision developed. Knowing these decision makers will change overtime needs to be imbedded into the process.

2.4 Sustainability

Intentional relationship building should be the primary focus for after school programs to be successfully sustainable. “Research Partnerships are motivated by big problems. They are also driven by the expectation that research and evidence can help solve these problems. It is critical that partnerships keep this shared purpose in mind to ensure that each activity is connected to that purpose (Barton et al., 2014). “Lack of sustainable funding for after school programs still persists. Less than ten percent of centers had been able to continue operating after the 21st Century grants expired. (GAO, 2017, p. 9)

School District leadership are the largest stakeholders in afterschool programs and counseling are part of that leadership. School counselors can provide critical support for at risk youth in the after-school context. School counselors possess the leadership skills that allow them to form strong connections between schools, families and communities promoting academic achievements.” (Bryan, & Henry, 2012). Strong relationships with the host school may determine after school program sustainability. Strong partnerships with the leadership and staff at host schools helped determine whether a project ran smoothly or not. “Essential ingredients of the most effective partnerships were: mutual respect between the project coordinator and the principal, shared teachers and paraprofessional staff members, appreciation that students benefitted from the after school experience, and flexibility among schools teaching, custodial, cafeteria and security staff”(Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005, p. 11).

“Community schools garner financing and programmatic support from multiple sources. On average only about one-quarter of all resources in community school initiatives come from school districts” (Blank et al., 2012). Shared professional development can act as an incubator for new staff expanding leadership possibilities. Sustainable funding and constant staff turnover

continue to challenge after school program sustainability. Distributed leadership can minimize the effect of staff turnover

“When a leader leaves, at least some mid-level staff members are likely to stay behind or even move up the ladder, so it makes sense for them to have meaningful responsibilities and their own working relationships with peers in government, the school system and partner foundations and nonprofits” (Browne, 2015, p. 30). Blending staff by hiring teachers and school aides from the school-day program promotes instructional alignment with consistent expectations between the norms of the school-day program and the afterschool program.

“We define research practice partnerships at the district level as: “Long term, mutualistic collaborations between practitioners and researchers that are intentionally organized to investigate problems of practice and solutions for improving district outcomes.” (Coburn et al., 2013). Creating a partnership between educators and research designed to promote data and evidence use is a growing approach to reduce the research to practice gap. These partnerships can bring diverse stakeholders, such as practitioners and policy makers together to work towards a common solution through questioning, data analysis. Still the data can be perceived by non-scientists as complex and abstract. Interpretation and data training are necessary to develop the process of intentional program evolution and growth.

To address these matters, both entities must collaborate and work together to create learning communities guided by shared beliefs about teaching and student learning, based on mutual trust and respect, and grounded in current evidence-based research and practitioner knowledge. Collaborative relationships can be solidified through school-university partnerships that are committed to providing equitable learning opportunities for

all and preparing teacher to meet the needs of diverse student populations. (Vernon-Dotson, & Floyd, 2012 p.1).

A research partnership must have a shared purpose, with understanding and support by key decision maker to have the power to affect change. Facilitating partnerships between schools and colleges can improve educational opportunities for youth.

Collaboration with school district need to happen to create a path for sustainability. Conflicting agendas can jeopardize collaboration and need to be exposed to overcome obstacles in meeting the goal. All problems cannot be solved by one entity. Priorities need to be established with shared tasks, responsibilities and resources. Academic achievement and social outcome may be at risk with conflicting interests. Partners must be committed to the common goal.

2.5 Program Improvement

After school programs serve students with different needs. This may be the cause of inconsistent math and reading scores in afterschool programming. “An obvious goal for evaluations of program outcomes is to identify areas where it appears the program is succeeding or and less well. Another goal is to evaluate the effects of program reforms on candidate’s opportunities to learn on later performance. Using different strategies allowed us to triangulate data from several sources to look for patterns in responses” (Darling-Hammond, 2006. p. 133).

After school program improvement means “scaling up must involve more than the spread of the surface-level aspects of a new approach, such as the routines, activities, and materials associated with it. Scaling up also requires proliferations of the beliefs, norms, and principles

underlying the approach” (Klingner et al., 2013, p. 198). The perception of program improvement relates to expectations. Research confirms, “homework help in multipurpose programs does not result in higher standardized test scores. This is an unrealistic expectation for an after-school program that is providing forty-five minutes of homework help each day” (McCombs et al., 2017, p. 11)

21st CCCLC grants are required to develop academic goals. GAO states, “while education has developed performance measures to align with some 21st Century program objectives primarily student academic outcomes it has not aligned its measures with other program objectives related to key student behavioral and socio-emotional outcomes” (GAO, 2017, p. 20).

“States will have to evaluate their programs in conjunction with new data collection and evaluation planning requirements, including requirements to track student progress over time and to include state standardized test scores and other indicators of student success, such as improved school-day attendance” (GAO, 2017, p. 26). “Education has not established any performance measures for socio-emotional outcomes, although social skills are also included in program objectives, and socio-emotional learning is an important component of 21st Century implementations across states. Socio-emotional learning involves students’ knowledge and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions and establish positive relationships, among other things” (GAO, 2017, p. 21).

As federal funding is minimizing for 21st CCLC grants for is the funding for Washington State grants. This means less students are being served, especially with no grant competition planned in Washington State, next year. The impact of 21st CCLC’s inconsistent data on program success may be influencing this funding decline. This is the motivation for this research on how data is used in current 21st CCLC Grants.

3.0 Methods

Qualitative methods are the basis of this research. Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods. (Vernon-Dotson, & Floyd, 2012) The purpose of this formative research is to look at the Qualitative elements. (Office of Data, Analysis, Research & Evaluation Administration, [ODAR] 2016) such as needs, interest and behavior of Washington State 21st CCLC directors in relation to their program data. Specifically, we are looking at how 21st CCLC Washington State Directors collect and use their program data, how they analyze and communicate about their program data and how data informs their decision making. To learn about the people, processes and procedures (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 4) involved in data in 21st CCLC grants in Washington State, nine experienced directors were interviewed.

3.1 Participants

All participants are 21st CCLC Directors in Washington State representing nineteen of the current 45 Washington State grants. This was just over a twenty five percent sample size. The 21st CCLC Washington State Directors interviewed were required to have a minimum of five years of experience directing 21st CCLC grants. The sample size for this research is nine directors interviewed. Eight directors interviewed were female and one was male. Sixty seven percent of the interviewed directors have earned graduate degrees. Two participating directors have their

teaching certificate. Of the nine directors interviewed, only one works with an urban school district while eight directors worked with rural school districts. Eighty-nine percent of the interview participants work full time managing their programs. One third of the director participants facilitate their programs through non-profits, one third facilitate their programs through a school district, and one third facilitate their programs through an education service district. The average tenure participants served as director was nine years.

3.2 Sample Description

Nineteen grant programs were represented out of a total of forty-five 21st CCLC grants in Washington State. These nineteen grant programs were facilitated through fifty-one sites with a goal to serve 3,830 regularly attending students. The 21st CCLC grant guidelines consider a student who attends thirty days, a regular attender. Four of the 21st CCLC programs are facilitated out of community centers. One program is located at a school on a Native American reservation. Thirty program sites focus on Elementary students while fourteen sites serve middle school students. Six sites serve high school students. Five program sites focus on serving students in kindergarten through grade twelve. One site serves only high school students. Each site has a designated site coordinator. Programs create their own staff structure. The fifty-one site coordinators work hours varied from twenty hours a week to forty hours a week. Eleven of the site coordinators work thirty-two hours a week with an assistant coordinator who works fifteen to seventeen hours a week to allow for site coordinators to attend grant required meetings and trainings without stopping the program. One grant facilitated their grant with a site coordinator who worked twenty-five hours a

week along with a full time after school program Family coordinator who also developed program curriculum and facilitated staff training inspired by their local culture.

3.3 Instrument

The primary research tool is a semi- structured interview composed of seven questions with probes focusing on a specific community, experienced Washington State 21st CCLC program directors. This mixed method research tool uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The semi-structured interview will seek to uncover qualitative findings such as the director's experiences and feelings of confidence about collecting, analyzing, communicating and implementing data as well as quantitative findings such as percentages and number of participants. The interview tool will look at how and who collects the 21st CCLC required data, specifically primary data such as attendance, academic growth, and Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA). Each semi-structured interview is recorded and allotted one hour, allowing time for individual director's perspective.

The interview design organizes the questions with prompts into logical sequenced categories and segments with analysis in mind. The first step in Qualitative research is to consider what questions the study needs to answer (ODAR, 2016). The interview questions are divided in seven themes, directors' professional preparation, grant demographics, data collected, making sense of data, data driven change in program and needed support to understand data. The interview questions were carefully developed to support the inquiry questions which were grounded in prior, relevant research. The interview also asks what other data was chosen to be collected at the program level where we learn about unique programmatic elements. The interview seeks to

identify the directors' motivation such as compliance, accountability and program improvement. (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 2) The interviews investigate three elements, people, processes, and technology which determine the after school program data system. (Spielberger et al., 2016 p 5) The interview asks who data is reported to, specifically, school administrators, funders or staff. The survey further seeks the impact of the social relationships to the program in terms of increasing support, lack of support or indifference. (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 3)

Interview questions will look to uncover opportunities and choices in how the director developed systems of support for data collection. We will be pursuing qualitative evidence such as motive, values, concerns and needs. Ample time will be given so we may hear their authentic stories about using data in their programs. Through these programs authentic stories, the goal is to understand the directors' perceived changes to their work as a result of increasing data mandates and perceived obstacles to implementing data driven change.

For this research, the definition of data is "any information collected for a particular purpose or collected in a way that ensures accuracy and consistency. (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 4)

3.4 Interview Questions

The interview questions are designed to support and answer the inquiry questions.

1. Tell me about your professional preparation and your career prior to becoming a Washington State, 21st CCLC Grant Director?

Prompts: Work experience, education, pathway, length of time as a director

2. Tell me about the 21st CCLC Grant Programs you are running?

Prompts: number of Grants, number of Sites, number of Students Served, student age,
Location of grants- School/Urban/Rural, number of staff/ratios

2a. Do you remember how the program goals were developed in the grant proposal?

Were stakeholders (For this interview: The definition of stakeholders is the school district, program partners, parents and students) involved in this process? If so, how?

Prompts: data used to develop grant goals, articulate, measurable, attainable

2b. Have you added any goals as your program has progressed?

Prompt: Why was this goal added?

3. So, now I want to talk to you about the Data you collect in your program, what types of data and how you collect it and why? *Remember: For this interview the definition of Data is any information collected for a particular purpose and collected in a way that ensures accuracy and consistency.*

3a. What type of data do you collect?

Prompt: Attendance, YPQA, Student Academic Performance, Student Behavior

3b. What motivated this data collection?

Prompt: YPQA, Academic Data, Attendance, Student Behavior:

Prompt: compliance/ program improvement/monitoring

3c. What challenges have you experienced in your efforts to collect data?

Prompt: people, processes, and technology

3d. What people, processes, and technology do you use to collect these different types of data?

3e. What systems do you have in place to manage your attendance data information?

Prompt: routines, norms or practices evolved and repeated over time, research partners, MIS, Surveys, Focus groups, Interviews.

3f. Who is responsible for collecting the attendance data?

Prompt: Program Frontline Staff, Program Evaluator, Site Coordinator, Director, School District

3g. How do you participate in the organizational development of your attendance data collection? Ensure Accuracy, Transfer data overtime.

3h. How often to you review attendance_data with staff?

Prompt: training, frequency, data experts

NOW...

3i. What systems do you have in place to manage your academic_data information?

Prompt: routines, norms or practices evolved and repeated over time, research partners, MIS, Surveys, Focus groups, Interviews.

3j. Who is responsible for collecting the academic data?

Prompt: Program Frontline Staff, Program Evaluator, Site Coordinator, Director, School District

3k. How do you participate in the organizational development of your academic data collection? Ensure Accuracy, Transfer data overtime.

3l. How often do you review academic data with staff?

3m. Do you experience resistance from school staff to provide student data?

AND...

3n. What systems do you have in place to manage your YPQA_data information?

Prompt: routines, norms or practices evolved and repeated over time, research partners, MIS, Surveys, Focus groups, Interviews.

3o. Who is responsible for collecting the YPQA data?

Prompt: Program Frontline Staff, Program Evaluator, Site Coordinator, Director, School District, Data expert

3p. How do you participate in the organizational development of your YPQA data collection? Ensure Accuracy, Transfer data overtime.

Prompt: How often do you review YPQA data with staff?

3q. What data do you feel is relevant? What data is exciting or interesting to your staff?

3r. What data is easily accessible? Which data is not?

Prompt: Barriers to accessing the data, what data is accessible to your staff?

3s. In your unique context, what are the key facilitators or barriers to building program capacity to collect and organize data?

3t. How does your longstanding relationship with stakeholders affect your access to data?

Prompt: Parents, Students, School Staff, Funders

3u. In your unique context, what are the key facilitators or barriers to building program capacity to collect and organize data?

4. How do you make sense of your data and who do you involve in the process?

4a. What strategies do you use to analyze and interpret data?

Prompt: Do you separate data by gender, grade, other indicators

4b. How do you involve staff in developing an understanding of the data?

4c. What opportunities do you have to interpret data and with whom?

4d. How does this analysis differ between different data?

4e. How to do you use data to support the INDIVIDUAL student?

5. Let's talk about how you communicate your data and who you communicate it to?

Prompt: What tools do you use to report your data? (Reports, graphs, charts, presentations)

5a. Who do you share your data with?

Prompt: Attendance, YPQA, Student Academic Performance, Student Behavior,
Other

5b. How often do you communicate your data?

5c. Why do you communicate the data you do?

Prompt: mandated, advocacy, program improvement?

5d. How do you use data to build buy in, trust or motivation?

5e. How do you involve staff in data reporting?

Prompt: Program Frontline Staff, Program Evaluator, Site Coordinator, Director,
School District. Data expert

5f. How does your data drive how you advocate for your program and students?

5g. Did you have a time where data quality concerns prevented timely and accurate reporting?

5h. Do you have data sharing agreements with your stakeholders?

5i. How were you involved in the data agreement?

5j. How has your data fostered internal and external conversations about system goals, priorities and areal of growth?

6. We have talked a lot about how you handle program data. Once you've collected and reported your data, give me an example of how you have used data to make change in your program?

Prompt: Example of change made, why, was the data used mandated or optional?

Prompt: Changes to Program Structure, Program Content, Program Implementation

Prompt: Which data do you find most important, why?

6a. Which data do you find least important, why?

6b. Which data do you find most understandable, why?

6c. Which data do you find most confusing, why?

Prompt: Attendance, YPQA, Student Academic Performance, Student Behavior,
Other

7. I would like to finish this interview by investigating, what support might you or your staff need to develop a deeper understanding in using data to make decisions in the program?

7a. What training have you attended/received regarding data?

Prompt: Collection, inputting, management, analysis, implementation and reporting

Prompt: Attendance, YPQA, Student Academic Performance, Student Behavior

7b. What additional type of Data training would you like to have?

Prompt: Collection, inputting, management, analysis, implementation and reporting

Prompt: Attendance, YPQA, Student Academic Performance, Student Behavior

7c. Have you experienced obstacles to receiving Data Training?

7d. What type of data training do you provide to your staff?

Prompt: Collection, inputting, management, analysis, implementation and reporting

Prompt: Attendance, YPQA, Student Academic Performance, Student Behavior

7e. Can you share experiences where data professional development was effective or not effective?

This qualitative research will look at how and what types of data is collected and how this data is reported and used within the program. 21st CCLC grants require directors to collect certain

data, primarily student attendance, parent participation student academic growth. The goal is to develop a better understanding of how this data is gathered and disseminated. Ultimately, we are looking to understand what data is meaningful from the participating directors' perspective.

Currently attendance is anchor data determining program success from the 21st CCLC state level perspective. Each program has a specific goal of how many students have attended thirty days. Each Washington State 21CCLC grant is required to identify a minimum of three goals that determine program success. These goals are unique to each grant. We seek to learn more about who was involved in this initial goal development. We are trying to understand the participating directors' involvement and or protocol for data collection. We want to learn more about their experiences in presenting data. The goal of this research is the answers to the interview questions will answer the inquiry questions.

3.5 Inquiry Questions

The concern is the current 21st CCLC funding is at risk due to our current governmental administration stating there was a lack of data supporting its positive impact. The goal is to identify how data is used to move beyond 21st CCLC funding in Washington State. I will identify from the 21st CCLC's perspective who collects what data and how.

We will find out how the data is shared and to whom. We are trying to find what data is missing, and what data is considered reliable by whom. A gap may be identified in transferring information or professional development.

Through semi- structured interviews of Washington State 21st CCLC grant directors this research seeks to answer what professional development directors' need to collect program data

accurately, to analyze and develop a deeper understanding of the data, and implement program improvement and decisions based on the data. Basically, through this process we hope to share ways in which programs use data to improve programming and secure funding. The following inquiry questions are based in this dissertation's research and inspired the interview questions and prompts.

3.6 Study Context

As recommended by Miles and Huberman (2015), this semi structured interview focuses on directors lived experiences in relation to their program data. The study focuses on how data is used in 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant programs in Washington State from the grant Directors' perspective. The 21st CCLC grant is the only federally funded grant to support after school programming. Programs are awarded based on program design and academic and economic need. All directors are required to collect certain information as proposed in their request for proposals. The goal is to make this research more accessible and readable to non-scientist readers.

All 21st CCLC programs in Washington State are required to have external evaluators who make yearly observations using the Weikert Center's Youth Program Assessment tool. Evaluators complete a local evaluation based on these observations, along with attendance data and turn it in to the State program manager. 21st CCLC program Directors are a critical link in how Washington State Program managers receive data, evidence of impact and data pertaining to Washington State 21st CCLC programs.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

As a previous 21st CCLC Washington State Grant Director I was able to gain access to current Washington State Directors as an insider. I approached all directors at a 21st CCLC Washington State mandated Director's meeting. Because of the credibility that had been developed, nine directors were comfortable enough to agree to the interview. A follow up confirmation email was sent to the directors who agreed to be interviewed, thanking them for their potential participation. To create data collection transparency and develop trust, the confirmation email reviewed the purpose of the interview and this research. The email also explained the goal of the interview to reduce potential bias. The interview's purpose is to develop a deeper understanding of the data systems 21st CCLC Washington State Directors have put in place to collect, maintain, analyze, and report their data. I seek to uncover how 21st CCLC Washington State Directors are integrating data knowledge with staff and program decisions. The directors were notified each interview would take one hour and a date was confirmed by email. Continuing the goal of transparency, directors were emailed the interview question twenty-four hours prior to the beginning of the interview. The interview was standardized with an interview guide and a consistent opening statement. Each interview began on time and ended on time. At the beginning of each interview, participants were reminded of the goals of the interview and told the interview would be recorded. It was also stated the participants' identities will not be revealed. During the recorded interview, I used a data sheet with questions and prompts so I could also take notes.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis reflects the survey designed focusing on three data areas attendance, academic data and other data collected. Each data focus area is asked the same basic questions, who collects data, what sources are used, if the director reviews and analyzes it, if and who it is reported to, what program improvements were made, and how program support was impacted as a result.

After each interview was completed, I spent four to five hours per interview, relistening to the recordings and transcribing. After all interviews were completed, the audio was transcribed in detail. Pseudonyms were used in the coding and the organization of the quotes to protect the identity of the participant.

Summary sheets of each interview were created from the detailed transcriptions and interview notes from the data sheet. Using the transcriptions, I began coding in themes connected to survey question, including quotes. All survey questions were driven by previous, relevant research. Coding was broken down into the following themes, professional preparation, grant program, data collected, obstacles to collecting data. After quotes were organized thematically, I quantified findings using data displays in tables and charts, allowing for more consistent and verifiable analysis. Transcripts, summaries and charts are reviewed for outliers and contrasting cases. These will be interpreted considering the original tentative conclusions. Once themes and theories have evolved after study and analysis informant feedback was pursued to verify findings.

3.9 Limitations

A limitation was that the focus was the Director's perspective only. The results of the interviews depend on the validity of the Director's self-reporting. This research did not pursue the perspective of the use data in 21st CCLC grants from the Evaluator or Site Coordinator. These roles emerged as key data contributors in the grant programs. Examination of these roles through interviews is beyond the scope of this research.

The interviewers' bias may have been a limitation. Based on experience, it was hypothesized that directors may not be connected to the data required by 21st CCLC grant managers. I also suspect there may be data Directors find important which not required by 21st CCLC grant managers. Finally, I suspect Directors are not reporting data to stakeholders because they are not confident in their understanding of data.

The final limitation was the researcher's experience and understanding in analyzing the results. The interview was designed with the intended data analysis in mind. Participant feedback was completed with five of the nine participant directors to confirm the validity of the results. During the participant feedback, it was identified, new directors, those in their first two or three years of experience may feel differently about data that more experienced directors. New Directors' perspective is beyond the scope of this research.

4.0 Results

The following results are findings from nine, one-hour interviews of Washington State 21st CCLC grant directors. The motivation for this research is the concerning lack of reliable data collection procedures, insecure analysis and communication of data and limited data training for staff at the program level may be contributing to a research to practice gap. Each interview comprised seven questions. The focus of the interview is on the Washington State 21st CCLC experiences and perceptions and the role of data in their programs. We are trying to uncover how Washington State 21st CCLC directors' use data at the program level to drive decisions and program improvement. Reflecting the design of the questions, the results are organized into directors' professional preparation, Grant Goals, Data Collected, Challenges to collecting data, making sense of Data and Data Driven Change in Programs.

4.1 Professional Preparation

The directors interviewed were experienced, with a minimum of five years directing 21st Century grants. All directors, but one, worked full time managing their programs. Four of the directors had previously worked as site coordinators at 21st CCLC grants. Two directors previously worked in higher education in the past, four of the directors worked in family engagement and one director worked in behavioral health. Four directors worked in various positions at school districts, from bus driving to substituting to special education prior to becoming directors. The directors are employed by different stakeholders, three directors worked directly for school districts, three

directors worked for Education Service districts and three directors worked for non-profits. One non-profit was created by one of the directors with other professional colleagues. Six of the nine Directors interviewed have graduate degrees. Two directors have earned teaching certifications. Together, the directors have seventy-eight years of director experience for an average tenure nine years as directors. Eight directors interviewed were female and one was male.

Table 1 Director’s Professional Preparation

Director	Sandra	Brad	Kelly	Lynn	Pam	Maria	Darcy	Becky	Jen
Advanced Degree	X	X	X	X					X
Years as Director	15	7	10	7	11	5	5	5	13
Teacher Certification					X		X		
Previous Coordinator		X	X	X		X			
Currently Work for School District		X			X		X		
Currently works for a non-profit	X		X					X	
Currently works for an Education Service District				X		X			X

In the following table, Directors’ Professional Preparation, pseudonyms were used to protect the Director’s identity. Those pseudonyms are used throughout this report, including Director quotes.

Table 2 Washington State 21st CCLC Grant Demographics

Director	Sandra	Brad	Kelly	Lynn	Pam	Maria	Darcy	Becky	Jen
# of Grants	2	2	1	2	1	5	1	4	1
#of sites	9	6	6	4	4	11	1	8	2
# of sites located at a school	9	6	6	4	4	7	1	8	2
# of sites located at a community center						4			
# of students served (30-day goal)	630	460	390	200	240	1000	120	360	230
Elementary School	6	4	3	2	3	5		6	1
Middle Schools	3	1	3	2	1	2		2	1
High Schools		1							
K-12						4	1		

4.2 Grant Goals

All 21st CCLC grants in Washington State are required to identify the grant goals in their request for proposal. These goals shape the activities in the programs. The Directors share how their program goals were developed. Pam reports, “the goals were developed with a district level administrator. We looked statistically at local community demographics. We looked at student

demographics, state testing, grades, English Language Learners (ELL) and Title One or Learning Assistance Program (LAP) students to identify key areas which needed support. We looked at the local employment data and health data.”

Another Director, Brad, focuses on the value of experience, “eighteen years of experience, and relationship building and running programming provided the foundation for the grant goals.” The director continues to explain the program goals were developed by experience and things the director and staff learned over time and gut instinct.” “Data helps program leaders determine whether their perceptions match reality” (Houston, 2002, p. 5) Three directors talked about the stakeholder involvement in the grant goals, Lynn explains, “We are very transparent with our partners; we share who we need to serve and see how it meets the needs of the goals of our partners.” Lynn explains their process for developing the goals, “first, we worked with the school district, then I talk to my evaluator and tell him the story of the school. Together we develop the goals.” Eight of the program directors stated they worked with the District Superintendent directly to determine grant goals.

Four Directors shared they modified their goals internally later in the program. Lynn revealed, “we modified our goal around family engagement, we realized that our coordinators were making more connections with parents, not through family events, but through personal connections. Now, we go where our families are, we go to the apartment complexes and have activities. We meet parents where they are.” Sandra explained they changed where they were looking for academic recruitment, “we determined the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) scores came out too late and did not include grades kindergarten through second, we are now looking at the Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA) scores. This is a better fit as we have so many kids that are English Language Learners (ELL).” Becky

confirmed their program discontinued collecting Student Behavior data, stating “it was too hard to get and too difficult to understand.”

Table 3 Resources Involved in Goal Developed in Original 21st CCLC Proposal

Director	Sandra	Brad	Kelly	Lynn	Pam	Maria	Darcy	Becky	Jen
Director	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluator				X				X	X
Principal	X		X						
Superintendent	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teachers	X		X				X		
Community			X						
Parents	X	X			X	X			
Youth									
State Goals		X							X
Program Partners		X	X	X	X		X	X	

4.3 Data Collected

In Washington State, all 21st CCLC programs are required to collect and report data on Attendance, Student Academic Performance as well as complete a yearly internal and external Youth Program Quality Assessment. Therefore, the initial motivation for collecting these specific elements is compliance as they are required. However, the focus of the interview was the director’s authentic motivation for collecting this data. The directors collected their data for different reasons.

4.4 Youth Program Quality Assessment

Six directors say they are motivated to collect YPQA data because they feel it is important to their programs' improvement. They also speak about how time consuming and expensive it is for staff training. Sandra reflects, "I am unsure of the role of YPQA in accomplishing the state mandated academic goals of 21st CCLC Washington State grants. Five of the nine directors interviewed invest in Weikert's Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) programming in various ways. Two programs are piloting Social Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SELPQA). Three directors have been trained in the YPQ Trainer of the Trainer series. Another Director hired a Weikert national trainer to come directly to their program to train staff.

Evaluators are involved in YPQA data collection in all programs. Jen explains, "collecting YPQA data is a team effort between the site coordinator, evaluator and director." "Successful integration of data-driven decision-making into educational strategy requires a team approach" (Houston, 2002, p. 13). All directors report site coordinators are responsible for facilitating the YPQA assessment. Three directors report they participate in YPQ observations for their programs.

Directors share their feelings about Youth Program Quality Assessment process. Darcy says, "I am motivated to collect YPQA for program improvement and see how we can improve YPQA standards." Maria confirms, "we collect YPQA because we see a huge difference after staff are trained, we see how confident staff become while facilitating their activities." Lynn clarifies the process, "I love the self-observations, they are really insightful. I believe this is a professional development opportunity because the staff member who is observing, is learning something new, the person who is being observed is learning about their skill, and there is an opportunity for the staff to work on improvement as a team together. I like when our evaluators come out because it gives another perspective."

To the contrary, another director considers some of the Weikert center data to be very confusing. Pam reflects, “some of the Student Skills and Belief Survey is not very useful and I wonder if the type of survey and questions they ask might not be relevant to the students. Sandra also feels YPQ data can be confusing, “YPQA is the most confusing, how do I use it to improve my test scores? I don’t know how to change programs with that information.”

Kelly talks about how she shares YPQ data to program stakeholders. She explains, “If people don’t know about YPQ then they don’t understand it. You need to share why we use YPQA. YPQA data needs to be taught in the presentation. “Kelly shares how she trains her staff in the YPQA methods, “I look at things differently because I am a YPQA method trainer. As a trainer, we did a method every month, so all my staff got an understanding of all YPQA methods.” She finds this time valuable, because she has observed other programs, Kelly, continues when a program is very well trained in the YPQA method, you can see the difference.” Kelly also acknowledges, “our programs have struggles, with the YPQA interventions, it took a long time to figure out what it meant for students to have ownership. “

Two programs have been piloting the Weikert’s SELPQA for the last three years. Brad claims, “this is the best tool for understanding the behavior data and its impact on student success. Our programs are using the best method and monitoring tool for program improvement for staff working with youth day in day out with youth who deal with trauma.” He continues, “we need to ask ourselves; how do we develop future success in our youth’s lives, not just in their academics?” I believe in the non-cognitive skills that actually help youth succeed in life.”

4.5 Attendance

Five directors say they are motivated to collect Attendance to monitor their programs. Jen exclaims, “looking at your attendance is like going to a doctor and checking your pulse, it tells you everything.” Brad states, “I see attendance as the letter of the law and an ethical responsibility in our agreement to receive 21st CCLC funding.” He goes on to clarify, “21st CCLC programs were previously required to collect hours of participation rather than days. I am uninspired by rote perspective of the current attendance requirements; we should be focusing on the quality of interactions.” Darcy confirms this opinion, “we collect attendance for compliance because it is just a requirement. We keep very accurate attendance records for liability, and we have a very specific attendance protocol.”

The directors share their experiences collecting attendance. All directors report their site coordinators are responsible for collecting and inputting all their programs’ attendance data. Lynn explains, “collecting attendance at the frontline looks different, I honor my coordinators style.” Becky confirms, “All sites collect attendance differently.” Brad shares. “often attendance is taken on paper with kids arriving at different times, then the data input into the computer later.” Three directors use EZ reports at twenty sites to manage their attendance information. Three directors previously used EZ reports but no longer use the program, citing reasons such as” too costly,” “required more information than needed” and “difficult program to train staff.” Six directors created their own systems to manage attendance, four directors use Excel, one director uses FileMaker through Skyward, and one director uses Microsoft Access.

Directors share additional procedures implemented in the process of collecting attendance data. Kelly explains, “Our non-profit is huge on policy, how and when to do attendance. Site coordinators are required to input on every Friday. If students miss two or more days, staff are

required to call home. We train parents to call if students will be absent from the after-school program.” Darcy also shares their program’s attendance policy, “we have a very specific attendance agreement students can only have two absences a quarter, parents must call in to have their student excused. It is also a safety and a liability issue. If the student has more than two unexcused absences, they will sit out the rest of the quarter. The staff reviews the attendance and they can see who misses every day.” Maria relates Attendance data to YPQA methods, “if students don’t feel like they belong, students won’t attend, as we know, students vote with their feet.” The directors report the attendance data is the most direct and understandable data. When programs review their attendance, they learn relevant information about their programs.

Three directors state they look at the regular school day attendance as an indicator of how youth are doing. Kelly says, “We found kids who attended our program attended 10% more regular school days than kids who did not participate in the afterschool program. This information was impressive to our stakeholders.” Maria shares, “we know when students miss school, it really impacts the students. Connecting with parents on how this will impact their student is important. Through this communication, we uncover what parents are struggling with and what we can do to help them out. There is a big underlying story as to why students aren’t going to school. Department of Education states, “21st Century program is effective in improving students’ behavioral outcomes, such as school day attendance and reduced disciplinary incidents, more often than their academic outcomes.” (GAO, 2017 p15) Two directors clarify they collect regular day attendance.

4.6 Academic Performance

Five directors report their site coordinators are responsible for collecting Academic Data. Four of those directors use Skyward for Data while the other Director uses EZ reports to maintain their academic data. Two directors collect their programs academic data and two evaluators collect and maintain the academic data for the other two directors. Directors report the most difficult data is the state testing reports Directors state these testing reports are challenging to get, received too late to make a difference and hard for Directors and staff to understand. Sandra states “the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) scores are already behind as we receive last year’s scores. This data is so far behind it does not fit our growth cycle. Lynn says, “we use academic data to figure out how to target students, we get on Skyward to see what subjects’ kids are struggling with. “Directors express mixed views on the academic data value of student grades. Maria states, “the least important data is grades, academic growth is hard to achieve and harder to prove.” Becky confirms, “sometimes the school grades are hard to get on regular basis depending on the districts, but test scores are hard to get all the time.” Pam feels differently, “we see the grades as being valuable. When we see the grade difference, it is important to the staff. They really tell a story about the student.”

Darcy reflects on the responsibility of compliance “the test scores are least important to me, but I know it is most important for the government.” Sandra analyzes, “I guess the most consistent piece of data my programs collect are SBAC scores, however these scores are published at the end of the year, my concern is this timing misses the moment to support the student.” Becky shares her perspective, “knowing where kids are at is really helpful, knowing their reading and math levels. With this knowledge, we can kind of see where they are at with their life stuff and behavior. We are trying to help kids with their life. Education is important but if they haven’t slept

or had food, those are more important.” Brad agrees, “we collect Academic data because it is the law. It is a goal that is what we are trying to achieve that is fundamentally, difficult because what youth are struggling with and experiencing is systemic, systemic levels of oppression and discrimination. As a staff, we are wondering if we are teaching kids to become learners?” Becky confirms, “we are more motivated in offering experience and the relationships they are building than test scores.”

4.7 Other Data Collected

Six directors stated they collect Student Behavior Data. United States Department of Education states research suggests “21st Century Programs improve students’ behavioral outcomes more often than academic outcomes” (GOA, 201,7 p.15) Two Directors felt the 21st CCLC required Youth Skills and Beliefs survey was behavioral data, while the other three directors saw student discipline as Behavior Data. Becky said, “the data that is very interesting is the Student Belief Survey because our evaluator creates a helpful infographic per site, cohort, and school district. This graphic gives a snapshot of the program and the findings of the survey. “Brad explains, “the student behavioral data we collect from the school’s perspective is typically discipline. If they are not coming to school, then we are trying to find out why. We ask what is happening in youth lives. We find everything is connected; their behavior is not isolated. We want them to know they are our most important elements in the program.” Darcy states, “we also had behavior goals, that has to do with discipline, but this is kind of tough on collecting and interpreting.” Becky admits, “we deleted the behavior goal, it proved to be too difficult to measure.”

All 21st CCLC programs in Washington State are required to have a parent program. Two directors state they collect parent engagement data. Five directors use self-created surveys to collect parent perspectives. Brad explains, “they facilitate surveys from parents which provides feedback from parents on their perception of the effectiveness for the program.” Pam shares how they used parent surveys during the request for proposal process, “we sent a survey to all of our parents at all the elementary schools, to identify which school had more parents interested in afterschool programs.” Lynn clarifies the specifics of their program’s parent engagement goals. She said, “we collect family engagement information; eighty percent of our participating families will learn something or feel like their needs are met.” Jen shares she looks at fiscal data and human resource data, “you can tell a lot about a program by looking at where their funds are going. Staffing can determine your professional develop needs or additional support.

Table 4 Management Information Systems Used by Directors

Management Information Systems	Attendance	Academics	YPQA
Excel Spread Sheet	4		
EZ reports	3	1	
Microsoft Access	1		
Skyward	1	5	
Evaluator		2	
Scores Reporter			8
Shared Google Folder			1

Table 5 Data Collected by Whom

Data	Site Coordinator	Director	Evaluator
Attendance	9		
Academic Performance	5	2	2
YPQA	9	3	9

Table 6 Motivation for Data Collection

Data Collected	First Compliance	First Program improvement	First Accountability	Second Compliance	Second Program Improvement
Attendance	2	2	5	2	
Academic Performance	5	3	1	1	
YPQA	3	6		3	1

4.8 Challenges to Collecting Data

Six of the directors agreed they have experienced challenges with people, processes or technology connected to collecting program data. Brad specifies, “a big key is the people involved in the process. Often Site coordinators don’t like the process, but if the people believe that this will help the program and believe in the information, they will make data collection happen accurately.” He continues, “We have had challenges in collecting data. One challenge we have experienced is human error, often this is dependent on the organizational strengths of the site coordinator. Often

the attendance is collected on paper with kids arriving at various times.” Maria shares, “turnover of staff creates a barrier to building data capacity, depending on who left when and if they entered in program information like they said they would.” Research confirms staff turnover required afterschool systems to repeat basic training on data entry and data quality (Gamse et al., 2019). Pam also sees people as part of the problem, “staff do not want to repeatedly collect data” She continues, “we train staff how to input attendance and give them tips to improve accuracy.”

While human error was identified as an obstacle to accuracy and consistency to program attendance Directors report the most common challenge according to directors interviewed was accessing academic data through school districts. Maria reveals, “the hardest data to get is the data the school has control of.” Becky confirms, “the most difficult data to collect is the school district data as a school district was sued for sharing data.”

Darcy shares another perspective, “it is not really resistance to getting the school data, just challenges getting their attention, school staff and teachers are not able to pull the data, they don’t have the time, they are overwhelmed. We have a lot of challenges in this district” She continues, “An important facilitator in collecting data is teachers input, and an important barrier in collecting data is teachers input. We need real good communication with the school. We need to be connected heart to heart with the school and hand in hand. If we could communicate with the district and show them, we are here to support the teacher and serve their kids, it would help, but it doesn’t always come across that way.”

Three directors stated their long-term relationships with districts helped facilitate academic data collection. Brad acknowledges, “we experience no problems accessing data, we have been around for eighteen years and we are seen as the solution.” Pam reiterates, “I am grateful that all the data is very accessible to us and the close relationship I have developed with the data person,

she understands what we need.” Jen confirms, “as someone who has been bringing in funding to school districts for the last twenty years, I am able to have conversations with districts, others are not.” Lynn laments, “when new administrators come in, I have to re-establish myself and that takes more time.”

Directors reported data agreements have improved accessibility to academic data. Two directors reported once the data agreement was signed and their evaluators had access, they could have the data when needed. Lynn talks about how the data agreements can be a time-consuming process, “when working with school districts, we are seeing an improvement, the process takes forever to receive the data agreements.” Pam shares, “the data sharing agreements with were written in conjunction with school district legal counsel.” Sandra offers, “even with a data agreement in place, getting data from the district may take an additional trip to the superintendent.”

Programs can also experience obstacles while collecting YPQA data. Sandra explains how they have overcome YPQA collection challenges, “because of the remote locations of the grants, and hazardous road conditions during YPQA assessment season, the programs video tape observations and view remotely to ensure completion of the data collection. These video tapes can be used as professional development later. Darcy shares, “it is hard to get all the staff together for assessments and scoring as they all work different schedules.”

Table 7 Challenges to Collecting Data

Data	People	Processes	Technology
YPQA		1	
Attendance	4		
Academics	5	1	

4.9 Communicate Data

Six Directors report site coordinators are responsible for connecting with teachers to communicate about the program. Sandra clarifies site coordinators should meet with teachers weekly and principals monthly. Brad acknowledges site coordinators know the students, “they say, I am at the program every day and this is what I am seeing.” Darcy reports site coordinators. “we send emails out to the teachers regarding specific kids, we ask how they are doing.” Lynn says, “I do not review academic data with staff because the site coordinators have conversations with teachers and staff about academics.”

The director communication strategies vary. Directors who work for non- profits seem to communicate with stakeholders more often, some include financial data as well. Sandra shared, “I meet with Superintendents and Principals monthly, I consider it my professional development.” Kelly describes, “we share the changes we have made to the program; we share how we have used the funds. We have a huge yearly event with contributors, partners and stakeholders. Because we share out our data, the support system is huge for our program.” Becky explains, “our evaluator creates this helpful one-page infographic on each site which is posted on our website or we give to stakeholders and legislators. We communicate data when required and it asked for, we do give

an update to our principals a monthly report. We give our stake holders the end of the year report. No one needs to ask; we share our data all the time. We share and show our data because we are making difference and not just after school babysitters. We want to see we are making a difference. Staff have to record data every month, then in show them overall.”

Directors share data to different stakeholders for different reasons. Brad, who works for a school district, says, “we share the data through the website. We will share elements with stake holders as they are relevant. We share the data, leave it open to public as is the grant a requirement. I make a presentation to the school board every year.” While Lynn, who works at an Education Service District, says I communicate the data, because it is required, it shows the work we are doing, we are creating opportunity and leading to racial equity. I use data to build relationships and for writing more grants. Darcy says, “we present yearly at tribal council and as time goes, we expect that partnership will increase.”

The directors disperse program data to their staff in different ways. Lynn provides details, “site coordinators have staff meetings every month, where staff come early, and they review attendance and student academic data. We review YPQA program data when it is due and at observation, approximately three times a year” Brad says, “We share data for the recognition of the hard work you put in day to day, this is the motivation. We share the experiences and touch point to validate our efforts and support our job satisfaction. The site coordinators work long hours and loving your job only takes you so far.” Lynn says, “The evaluator, me, the site coordinator, and principal look at the data. We have a graph which shows attendance, which helps me out. The local evaluation really helps me when everything is pulled together.” Lynn expands, we also communicate data to our students, “We meet with our middle school kids, they have to show us

the skyward, their current grades or show they are up to date on their work, then they can go to the to the enrichment. This allows the staff to provide individualized support.”

Table 8 Who Communicates Data to Whom

21 st CCLC staff and Stakeholders	Director	Site Coordinator	Frontline Staff
Director		7	2
Site Coordinator	7		2
Frontline Staff	2	2	
Superintendent	1		
Principal	3	3	
School Board	1		
Regular day teachers		6	
Evaluator	4		
Funders	2		

4.10 Make Sense of Data

Directors share how they look at and analyze data. Pam describes the process, “they start to analyze data by looking at the beginning framework, and looking at what are our goals, and then looking at where we are today. We also look if there is an improvement, any improvement and how were involved in that. Students make progress for a lot of different reasons.”

Three directors say they depend on their evaluators. Jen says, “I just ask my evaluator,” She continues, “I usually have to read the information a couple times, then understanding where the data came from and the context helps.” Lynn also confirms her reliance on her evaluator, “we look at all the data together, my evaluator creates a graph for attendance that shows change and it helps me understand what is going on. To me the local evaluation makes the most impact.” Darcy explains how she reviews data with staff, “we will pick a particular topic to review, right now we are focusing on our implementation deficiencies, YPQA is an amazing standard but takes time.” She expands, “we are developing a professional learning community with our staff to review data. The idea is to connect with educators and learn to do things better.” Becky confirms, “the evaluator helps us analyze our data.”

Pam breaks down their programs process, “we look at data together, how we collect attendance, then easy reports, and break it down step by step. After the site coordinator has been through a full program cycle year, it starts clicking, and they understand, we state this is why we are doing this. Really knowing the why behind data collection.” Maria supports this theory, “It is important for the staff to know why we are collecting the data because the state want it one way, while a stake holder might want it another way.” Kelly states how the building needs to be considered when looking at the data, “Data wise: you must know your building, not just your program to really understand your data and read it, make changes and understand the consequences, you have to know your building.”

Brad clarifies the role of the site coordinator in his program’s data analysis. He said, “When we look at data, it is helpful when my coordinators have longer term experience, they know the kids, they are at program every day and seeing what is happening. We look to uncover what is the disconnect from experience and outcome.” Sandra also reveals how she involves site

coordinators when making sense of data, “I look at those regular attenders with all the site coordinators to see who is in trouble academically and how they can we help them. We create a hot list and code all students by red, yellow and green. This happens mid-year. no one is asking us; we are trying to keep track of our kids.” Brad confirms, “Fundamentally, we look at if we are serving the right kids. We want to make sure we are providing opportunities for youth in programming. We know, when kids are not coming to school, major things are happening in their lives.”

4.11 Data Driven Change in Programs

Directors share how data has driven decisions they have made in their programs. Sandra expressed, “analysis of our data brought to centerstage the fact that they were not having meaningful parent engagement. The programs were focusing on how parents are connecting with their kids regarding their academics. This focus motivated a two-year project, with wordless books. Parents had reported they did not feel they had meaningful parent engagement at the previous planned events. We found wordless books break down the literacy and language barrier some of their parents have. The goal is to engage with their student regarding content and have a shared positive experience with a book. “Brad talks about a major shift in his program. “Three years ago, our programs participated in two concurrent pilot research programs. We participated in social emotional learning pilot for validation of the SELPQA tool. We realized the framework for the SELPQA related to better to the experience of youth and changed the way we operated with youth. SELPQA changed how we practiced.”

Kelly explains, “some things are out of our control, when the school is in turmoil, you can see it in the data.” Jen confirms, “I actually pulled a program that was not performing and moved it to another district.” Lynn says, “we use data to make change by looking at our thirty-day attenders, if we are not meeting our goal, then we implement tools to increase attendance.” Becky confirms, “as soon as we see a dip in attendance, we send out a student survey created by our evaluators. The results help us determine why this is happening and we make changes to the program.” Pam also uses survey to make change in her programs stating, “the surveys have helped determine some of our activities.” Maria will share data from other sites to educate and motivate the site coordinators.

4.12 Key Findings

This examination into data usage of Washington State 21st CCLC grants concentrated on seven topic areas, director’s professional preparation, program demographics, program data collected, making sense of data, program data communicated, data driven change in programs and needed data professional development.

Directors professional experiences which prepared them to be a 21st CCLC director were examined. Sixty seven percent of directors have advanced degrees, possibly aiding in their ability to research, grant write and provide reports. Forty Five percent of directors had been a coordinator identifying a possible professional pathway for Director recruitment and development. Forty five percent of directors had worked in Family Engagement and Advocacy identifying a possible professional pathway for Director recruitment and development. The average tenure of Grant

directors is nine years. Further study may include comparing the tenure of 21st CCLC site coordinators and frontline staff.

Program details for the director's experience were identified. On average, participating directors manage two grants, six sites and six coordinators. Directors experiences influence their programs. Directors who worked in Family Advocacy spoke of their Parent Engagement Programs, while Directors who had been Site Coordinators provided more hours per week for their Site Coordinators. Eight of the nine directors work full time, while site coordinators hours varied from twenty hours a week to full time. Further study may include the impact of the site coordinators varied work hours on programming and turnover. Only six percent of participating programs served High School Students identifying possible area for growth.

Directors recounted how their grant goals were developed in the request for proposal and who was involved. These initial grant goals shape the program design and influence the program activities. Eight of nine directors interviewed state the School District Superintendent was involved in developing the program goals yet only one director stated they communicate program data to Superintendents throughout the life of their grant. The Superintendents conceivable program disengagement was an unintended outcome from this research and is recommended for further inquiry.

The primary sources of program data collected, specifically attendance data, academic data and YPQA data were studied. Through this research it was identified Site coordinators were key participants in Washington 21st CCLC data collection procedures. The Site Coordinators perspective on data collection is beyond the scope of this research and recommended for further study. Directors motivation for data collection was investigated based on Connecting the Dots research. (Spielberger, et.al., 2016, p. 15) stating the purpose of collection is compliance, program

improvement and monitoring. “Compliance is the weakest way to use of data because the data man never be analyzed or connected to decision making about programming” (Spielberger et al., 2016 p.2) According to directors interviewed, the motivation for collecting attendance data is monitoring, the motivation for collecting academic data is compliance and the motivation for collecting YPQA is program improvement.

Directors share their challenges to collecting program data. Connecting the Dots research, identifies the three components of a data system collection as people, processes and technology. (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 8) Interview results show directors see challenges with people in collecting attendance and academic data. Directors state the Site Coordinators facilitation of the collection process may affect the accuracy of attendance data collection while they express relationships with district administration and personnel impacting access to data. This is consistent with research that “social capital is critical to establishing trust and sharing data in a transparent manner.” (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 4)

Communication of program data is investigated. Seventy eight percent of participating directors said Site Coordinators are responsible for communicating student academic data to teachers. It is crucial for 21st CCLC program staff know about program data, have productive conversations with stakeholders and make effective decisions about their programs (Yoo, et al., 2019, p.III) All directors state they make evaluations available when asked according to the state mandate. According to the interview most of the communication about program data happens between Site Coordinators and Directors. Directors employed by nonprofits showed more awareness in the need to share data to stakeholders, including budget information. These directors had more understanding of the value of communicating data and its relation to sustainability.

One third of participating directors say they depend on their evaluators to help them make sense of data. Directors show YPQA data to Site Coordinators and Staff using presentation tools provided by the state. Directors explain they break down the data to make it more understandable. When asked about how they use data to drive decisions in their programs, directors pause, to search for examples. It is unclear whether programs use data to inform decisions, leading to a possible science to practice gap (Mahoney, 2016, p. 34)

5.0 Discussion Chapter

This formative research takes a mixed method approach using a semi-structured interview as the primary research instrument. The one-hour interview investigates qualitative evidence such as the needs, interest and behavior of Washington State 21st CCLC grant directors in connection to their program data. The goal is to investigate how 21st CCLC programs use data to drive decisions and how program staff make sense of data to implement change. The concern is Washington, 21st CCLC grants use of data and data procedures at the site level may be contributing to the conflicting reports of 21st CCLC effectiveness. The significance of this research is it looks specifically at data usage and procedures at the site level in relation to state goals. This perspective forms the answers to the inquiry questions discussed in this chapter. The validity of the answers to the inquiry questions was confirmed with directors through pursuing participant feedback. Key findings from the interview questions on the seven topic areas, professional preparation, grant program, data collected and challenges, data analysis and data driven change in programs were presented and discussed in the Results Chapter, chapter four. This chapter also reviews limitations and introduces further study and recommendations.

5.1 Answers to Inquiry Questions

When reviewing the answers to the inquiry question, it is necessary to consider the context and lens in which the answers are presented. The purpose of this inquiry is to learn what is happening with 21st CCLC program data at the individual site level and how it is impacting

program review and reporting across Washington State. This perspective influences the answers to the inquiry questions.

Answer to Inquiry Question #1

To what extent have Washington State, 21st CCLC Program Directors developed consistent, useful data collection procedures in their programs?

Interview results indicate program data is collected inconsistently across grants and sites, changing as staff changes. Not all academic data collected is considered useful. YPQA data is collected most consistently and is considered useful. Director Interview results indicate program data is collected and maintained differently in different grants, even at different sites. Three areas of data were investigated, attendance data, academic data and YPQA data. Based on the Connecting the Dots research (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 8) the focus was the three critical components in their data system people, processes and technology.

Directors explained Site coordinators and frontline staff facilitate collecting attendance data, often by paper, then transferring attendance data into a director created Excel spreadsheet, Skyward or EZ Reports. These attendance strategies may change as staff changes, particularly the Site Coordinator. Directors report checking in on attendance collection with Site Coordinators on a weekly or monthly basis. Directors have reported attendance data collection challenges with people completing tasks consistently in a timely manner.

Interviews also confirm Washington State programs collect a variety of different Academic Data including SBAC scores, WELPA scores, grades and missing assignments. Directors state their programs access and manage their academic data in a variety of ways, such as, through their evaluators or Site Coordinators, Skyward, EZ reports or School District Administration and Excel spread sheets. Some directors report experiencing obstacles in collecting academic data school

districts controlled. Director report reviewing academic data in different way through skyward, teachers, SBAC scores, WELPA scores.

Directors consistently state they follow the 21st CCLC state mandate and guideline for collecting and reporting YPQA data. Evaluators, Directors, Site Coordinators and Staff are involved in assessment, analysis and communication of the data. Evaluators facilitate and input the state required external observations while Site Coordinators facilitate the state required internal observations. All directors stall all programs facilitate team-based scoring meetings to determine internal assessment scores. All Washington State, 21st CCLC YPQA Scores are input into the Statewide, Scores Reporter management information system. Interview results show, across the state, 21st CCLC Program directors' attendance and academic data collection procedures are inconsistent. Not all academic data collected is considered useful by program directors. The most consistently and useful data collected, reported by Directors, is the YPQA data.

Two of the Directors shared challenges and conflicts with collecting behavioral goals. A couple directors saw behavior as discipline reports while other directors saw behavior as the results from the youth skills and beliefs surveys. Two of the directors reported they discontinued collection behavior data as it was too difficult to get and too difficult to understand.

Answer to Inquiry Question #2.

What data analytical methods do Washington State 21st CCLC grant program directors employ and how confident are they in their data interpretation?

When viewing academic data, directors employ minimal analytical methods and struggle to find the reasons why a student is performing or not performing. Directors lack confidence in their academic data interpretation. Directors follow YPQA analysis protocol, planning improvement with data and are confident in their interpretation.

This research confirms directors use diverse of data analytical methods to interpret their program data. Directors look at attendance data differently, depending on what they are looking at the attendance data for. Directors report checking in on attendance collection with Site Coordinators on a weekly or monthly basis, looking specifically at students who have attended thirty days to see if they are meeting their program required attendance goals. Other directors report looking at the types of the students who are attending twice a year to see if their programs are serving students in need of academic support as required in the grant proposal.

Directors state they struggle when interpreting academic data and the reasons why a student is performing or not performing. After school staff are typically not trained to assess validity of data and program evidence (Mahoney, 2016, p. 35). Directors have differing opinions of which academic data is valuable and the reason academic data is valuable. Directors question what works to improve a student's academic performance and why that strategy works. The United States Department of Education reports "research indicates mixed effects on math and reading scores for participating students." (GOA, 2017, p. 17) Directors complain they are unable to read some of the academic data and SBAC scores are provided too late, therefore not helpful in determining how 21st CCLC academic programming is contributing to student academic success. Maria reflects, "we don't have influence with the district, but the state will. Getting consistency in how the academic evidence is reported would be an overall improvement."

Most directors state they find the YPQA data understandable and can decipher the graphs and reports provided by the state. Directors say they review YPQA reports with Site Coordinators once the report is ready with the expectation Site Coordinators will review YPQA reports with staff. This culminating evidence suggests directors lack confidence in their data analytical methods and interpretation of program academic data. The interview responses reveal the YPQA

infrastructure and data analytical tools provided by the state increase directors confidence in data interpretation. Kelly, a participating director, states “when a program knows how to apply the YPQ method, you can see a difference in the quality.”

Answer to Inquiry Question #3

What professional development do 21st CCLC, Washington State Directors need to use data more effectively, especially in the service of continuous improvement of their programming?

Directors report they attend the minimum required data training required by the state grant managers. Washington State 21CCLC requires all new Directors and Site Coordinators to attend a Planning with data live session and a follow-up webinar, primarily focused on YPQA data. Directors state this training is not enough, they feel a second live session the following year offered to the Site Coordinators would greatly improve the site coordinators understanding. Interview results show site coordinators collect much of the data. Directors recount attending the minimum required data trainings and describe developing and using surveys to gather information about their programs. More training and support are needed around evidence-based survey science and procedures. One director, Darcy, acknowledges, “Honestly, I have not had much data training. We could use some training for surveys. We have opportunities for conferences and director meeting, not one is directed in this subject is offered, we kind of are winging it.”

Directors want more training and support in how to use YPQA methods to improve student academic performance. Sandra, a participant director claims, “We need Academic Strategies for reading and math, if I want to get kids to college how do we help them improve their grades. If 21st CCLC has an academic mission, help us do that.”

Directors would like a central, uniform management information system for all 21st CCLC data. Directors would like to learn how to communicate about data. Directors would like time to

review data with all staff. Directors would like access to people who truly know about data. Maria expressed, “it would be great to have a cut and dry template from Office of Statewide Public Instruction (OSPI) “ It would be great to have a universal form with all the academic information,” Becky confirmed, “I would like a platform that holds everything, managing all data in one place.”

Directors want training on how to communicate with data. Maria shared, “it would be great to have an outline of how to really present data effectively, that would make it understandable to everyone. I always must take the data apart and connect it with staff or stakeholders for them to understand it.

Directors want more exposure to data experts. Brad says, “we need an expert in data collection, understand correlation, causations and regression model in how to analyze, someone who is classically trained mathematician and statisticians. I would like a better system to connect with interested research specialist, a better system of contracting with universities and non-profits.”

Directors would like simplified directors’ meetings with opportunities for more collaboration with other directors and solutions from the field. A Director Pam, clarifies this opinion, “I find the director meetings can be confusing, after receiving phone calls from new directors and coordinators, I realized we need to take the people that are brand new and help them with what their job is. We have experienced directors with great stuff to share around the room we have a wealth of information that is hands on and concrete.”

Directors use data from self-created surveys to improve their programs. The state might consider providing effective survey tools for Directors and site coordinators to use or provide training on how to develop and analyze their own surveys. Program directors need to be trained with regards to the legal rules of surveying underage youth.

Directors would like to see more data collected over time on their programs to get a better understanding of student improvement. Brad shares, “I wished I would have collected more data over the five years. The academic outcomes are not statistically relevant we need to look at the data over the five years. We have had students, graduate, go to college and comeback and work with us that were not on track to graduate.”

5.2 Recommendations

This research indicates a correlation with United State Department of Education report stating 21st CCLC grants are not making an impact academically, and the lack of consistency of the type of academic data collected, maintained and communicated by 21st CCLC programs. This correlation is supported by Directors reported need for more professional development in how to interpret and communicate academic data. It is important to note, Directors main motivation for collecting academic data is compliance, the least effective reason for collecting data according to the Connecting the Dots research (Spielberger et al., 2016, p. 2)

An unexpected result was the variation of the hours worked by the Site Coordinators. Directors report Site Coordinators work anywhere from twenty - forty hours a week. Directors also state Site Coordinators collect most of the program data. Kelly shares, “Things can be going really good in the program and then you can lose a Site Coordinator, and everything goes to hell in a handbasket.” The relationship of the role of the Site Coordinator as the collector of program data and their perception of data requires further study. The role of the Site Coordinator and their impact to data collection and programming needs to be investigated. According to Directors interviewed, the Site coordinators are key to 21st CCLC data collection and communication. Results show site

coordinators collect 100% of the attendance data and facilitate 100% of the internal YPQA assessments and data. Sixty seven percent of the interviewed directors state Site Coordinators are responsible for communicating academic student data about their programs to teachers. Training may be needed for Site Coordinators to learn how to share this data with teachers. “Afterschool system leaders recognized that communicating effectively about data required more than simple data collection and analysis, and that better data visualization could facilitate more accurate interpretation.” (Gamse et al., 2019). Site Coordinators and Directors attend the same data training and may not meet individual needs. Pam suggested, “The directors suggest the planning with data workshop needs to be earlier, because the time frame to develop goals with that information is too short. She says there needs to be a more realistic time frame. I wish there were some onboarding for site coordinators- like a two-day boot camp- on how to collect data and why as well as boots on the ground practical solutions for facilitating programs for the first year. A new director bootcamp would be good as well.”

Increasing the tenure of staff will increase data accessibility and data transparency supporting more authentic data communication. The interview results are consistent with Connecting the Dots research in that Directors believe the long-term relationships they have developed support their ability to access and receive the data they need are critical to establishing trust required for authentic sharing of data. “Social capital is critical to establishing trust and working the complexities of sharing data in a transparent manner. It is also apparent that the turnover of people within an afterschool system can be both frequent and disruptive” (Spielberger et. al.,2016, p. 5). Participating directors confirm data collection challenges because of staff turnover. Maria, a participating director says” sometimes we learn the staff member has not input the data they said they did and unfortunately, they have left. “These results support the need for

further investigation on the role of the Site Coordinator and their relationship with program data collection. Training may be needed for Site Coordinators to learn how to share this data with teachers. Site Coordinators and Directors attend the same data training and may not meet individual needs.

The results underscore the importance of this research and expose the connection between data collection procedures and mixed reviews of the efficacy of afterschool programming, particularly in academic impact. Interviews reveal inconsistencies in collection and reporting procedures for attendance and academic data across 21st CCLC grants in Washington State. Inconsistent management information systems are used to store maintain data resulting in loss of data and inhibiting data collection over time. Without a central management information system in place, which can be accessed and audited externally, attendance data cannot be verified for validity. Results show the need for increased and improved professional development with more intervention on academic and supports, continuing data training for Program Directors, Site Coordinators into the second and third years of the grant programs.

5.3 Further Study

A limitation of is the focus is the Director's perspective only. This research did not pursue the perspective of the use data in 21st CCLC grants from the Evaluator or Site Coordinator. These roles emerged as key data contributors in the grant programs during the interview process. Further examination of these roles within the 21st CCLC grant and their perspective of data usage in programs is suggested.

During the participant feedback, it was identified, new directors, those in their first two or three years of experience may feel differently about data than more experienced directors. Currently directors and site coordinators attend the same data training. Further research on the impact of these training, unique to the role of the attendee is recommended.

Further investigation of Director's previous experience and the connection to their director role preparation is suggested. This inquiry may identify a career pathway to increasing program staff capacity and professional development aiding in the professional learning community directors desire.

Interview results identified differing opinions on the definition and confusion of behavior from the grant perspective. Directors expressed frustration and confusion with collection and understanding behavior data. Further study is recommended in the definition and goal of behavioral data from the grant perspective. This is consistent with the United States Department of Education report which states, "although existing research on effectiveness points to greater positive behavioral effects than academic effects. Education's current performance measures do not address some key behavioral outcomes" (GOA, 2017, p. 15).

The 21st CCLC initiative is the key federal funding source supporting school-community partnerships that provide quality afterschool and summer learning program. The 21st CCLC initiative is intended to reduce the achievement gap that develops from the lack of learning opportunities available to low-income students. The grant provides services to students attending high poverty, low-performing schools such as, academic enrichment activities that meet state and local achievement standards and additional services such as drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs. 21st CCLC was recently included in Every Student Succeeds Act after many challenges including recent efforts to eliminate the program.

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