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Successful Strategies and Challenges for Extended Learning Time Programs: Case Studies of Six Maine Schools

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Successful Strategies and Challenges
for Extended Learning Time Programs:
Case Studies of Six Maine Schools



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	a
Introduction.....	1
Methodology	3
Selecting the Cases.....	3
Recruitment of Participants.....	3
Findings within the Case Studies.....	6
Case 1: Riverton School in Portland	7
Case 2: Fairmount School in Bangor	12
Case 3: Carl J. Lamb School in Sanford	19
Case 4: Skowhegan Area Middle School.....	23
Case 5: Ellsworth Elementary and Middle School.....	31
Case 6: Mountain View School.....	36
Findings Across the Cases	40
Strategies to Address Recruitment	40
Strategies to Address Staffing.....	41
Strategies to Address Transportation	42
Strategies to Ensure High-Quality Programming.....	43
Strategies to Address Developing and Maintaining Community Partnerships.....	44
Strategies to Address Long-Term Sustainability	45
Implications for Policy and ELT Practice.....	45

Executive Summary

Purpose of the report: At the request of the Maine State Legislature, the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) investigated successful strategies for extended learning time (ELT) opportunities for K-12 students in Maine schools, in support of deliberations on legislative bill LD 1394 “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Strengthen the Adequacy and Equity of Certain Cost Components of the School Funding Formula.” This work was conducted in two parts: 1) a review of the research literature on ELT, criteria for best practices for programs, and potential impacts for students reported in January of this year (Biddle & Mette, 2016), and 2) a study of six school cases in Maine presented in this report. Both reports focus on strategies schools use to provide enrichment opportunities to K-12 students during before or after-school hours over the school year. This work builds on an earlier MEPRI report (Doynos, 2015) that focused on the research literature on extended learning experiences during the summer months.

A review of the literature (Biddle & Mette, 2016) found evidence-based criteria for successful, high-quality ELT programming. These criteria were identified in a meta-analysis of 69 ELT programs (Durlak et al, 2010) and include sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) instructional program components. When ELT programs are designed to intentionally incorporate these criteria, the positive impacts for students are stronger. The available research indicates that students benefit in a variety of ways from participating in enrichment activities through ELT programs. Areas of potential positive impact include academic, social, emotional, school engagement, and health outcomes.

Methodology: This report of six case studies in Maine is primarily descriptive and illustrates both successful strategies used by schools to improve student participation and positive outcomes, as well as the challenges they sometimes encounter in delivering and funding after-school ELT programs. The cases were selected purposefully from the programs in Maine that are supported by *21st Century Community Learning Centers* (21st CCLC) federal grants through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and that met the evidence-based SAFE criteria during our initial review. Cases were also selected to represent the diverse grade levels, demographic variables, and contexts for ELT programs to provide greater insights in the cross-case comparisons.

Participants who had most direct knowledge and involvement with the ELT programs were interviewed in February and March 2016. These included principals, school ELT coordinators, district ELT coordinators, program staff and grant writers. Interviews lasted 60-180 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. Researchers collected extensive program documentation for each case. Narratives were developed to describe each case, and focused on program implementation, funding, staffing, community partnerships, successful strategies and challenges.

Key findings: ELT programs included in our analysis used a number of creative and innovative strategies to address challenges related to recruitment, staffing, transportation, maintaining high quality programming, developing and maintaining robust community partnerships, and planning for their own long-term sustainability. These strategies included:

- Recruitment: Programs used both targeted recruitment strategies (taking students based on referrals or test-scores) and open-enrollment strategies (taking all students that applied

to participate) in order to fill open spots in their programs. Programs selected recruitment strategies that best spoke to their capacity (the number of students they could serve) and their specific goals, structure and mission.

- **Staffing:** Typically, ELT programs can be difficult to staff with experienced youth workers with adequate credentials. ELT sites often tried to recruit teachers, substitute teachers or education technicians (ed techs) to staff their programs, taking advantage of their school-based locations in order to do so. Successful strategies to overcome barriers to this recruitment included allowing teachers with school-age children to bring those children to the ELT program, and scheduling the program around Early Release Days or other types of required professional development.
- **Transportation:** ELT programs typically engaged in some form of cost-sharing with the school district in order to provide adequate transportation home for their students. Often, these cost-sharing arrangements were part of the district's in-kind donation to the program, capitalizing on the lower-costs associated with working transportation for ELT students through existing district contracts rather than new contracts between bus services and ELT programs.
- **High-Quality Programming:** ELT programs used a variety of strategies to make their programs appealing and engaging for youth while supporting positive youth development. These strategies included aligning their programming with in-school culture and curriculum, allowing students the opportunity for voice and leadership, and providing new opportunities and avenues for parent engagement with school sites.
- **Developing Community Partnerships:** Robust community partnerships were important to ELT programs' ability to offer diverse, interest-driven programming for students, as well as to supporting programs through volunteer and community participation as teachers. Cultivating partnerships is primarily the responsibility of school level directors and program staff, a responsibility that can be difficult to fulfill when faced with all the other necessities for running a high quality program. Additionally, programs located in or adjacent to metro-regions benefited from the dense population and corresponding abundance of community and social organizations with whom to partner. ELT programs in more remote locations had more barriers to cultivating and maintaining active partnerships.
- **Long-term Sustainability:** The structure of 21st Century Learning Center Grants means that funding to programs supported in part or in full by these grants will diminish over time and programs must seek alternative funding or continuation grants to survive. However, program staff often lack the capacity to devote adequate time to seek alternative, sustainable funding for these programs. To address this, district or regional partnerships might be a possibility to allow programs to pool resources and take advantage of central office grant-writing capabilities.

Implications: Schools used different strategies to meet the needs of program staffing, student transportation, and partnerships. The nature of some challenges varied across programs, based on the program size, length of program tenure, location, and funding resources. The successes of the schools described in this report provide ideas that can be used to improve similar programs elsewhere in the state. We highlight some important lessons for policy and for practice that emerged from the six case studies:

- Greater collaboration across schools and districts in securing grant funding and developing community partnerships may reduce competition for grants and increase the likelihood of continued funding for both larger and smaller school systems and programs.
- More efficient strategies might be found to share the responsibility for recruitment of community partnerships. Support might come from the district central office, PTOs, or other groups. The state might find creative ways to encourage organizations to partner with schools, through tax credits or other incentives and recognition.
- Programs in rural or isolated regions may require additional funding support through other types of grants or state funding when they lack community partners. Other creative ways to increase partnership support may be needed. For example, high schools, colleges and universities might create service learning courses or internships that provide students with credit for providing staff support to K-12 ELT programs. Private businesses might sponsor school or district programs with funding, volunteers, or material.
- As grant funding decreases over time, schools will need to rely more on district funding or state subsidies to cover the cost of late buses for ELT programs. Other options are reducing the number of days per week that a bus is offered (e.g., as in Ellsworth and Mountain View schools), or requiring parents to pick children up from after-school programs, which may reduce participation rates.
- Schools may need to initially offer incentives and/ or recognition to teachers to encourage greater participation in ELT programs, or require participation on a limited basis, to maintain an optimum balance between highly trained teachers and other support staff and volunteers. More time on publicizing the program and obtaining buy-in from teachers is needed in the earlier years of program implementation. One successful strategy we found at Mountain View School was allowing teachers and other staff to bring their own school-age children to the after-school program. This increased participation. Over time, as the ELT program becomes more established and valued, recruitment of teachers becomes less of a challenge.

Introduction

At the request of the Maine State Legislature, the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) investigated successful strategies for extended learning time (ELT) opportunities for K-12 students in Maine schools, in support of deliberations on legislative bill LD 1394 “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Strengthen the Adequacy and Equity of Certain Cost Components of the School Funding Formula.” This work was conducted in two parts: 1) a review of the research literature on ELT, criteria for best practices for programs, and potential impacts for students reported in January of this year (Biddle & Mette, 2016), and 2) a study of six school cases in Maine presented in this report. Both reports focus on strategies schools use to provide enrichment opportunities to K-12 students during before and after-school hours over the school year. This work builds on an earlier MEPRI report (Doykos, 2015) that focused on the research literature on extended learning experiences during the summer months.

A review of the literature (Biddle & Mette, 2016) found evidence-based criteria for successful, high-quality ELT programming. These criteria were identified in a meta-analysis of 69 ELT programs (Durlak et al., 2010) and include sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) instructional program components. “Sequenced” means that program content is connected and coordinated over time, and allows students to build on developing skills. “Active” describes opportunities for active, hands-on learning rather than passive learning. “Focused” implies at least one content area devoted to the development of academic, social or emotional skills. “Explicit” refers to stated goals communicated to students around the development of targeted academic, social and emotional skills. When ELT programs are designed to intentionally incorporate these criteria, the positive impacts for students are even stronger (Durlak et al.,

2010). The available research indicates that students benefit in a variety of ways from participating in enrichment activities through ELT programs. Areas of potential positive impact include academic, social, emotional, school engagement, and health outcomes.

This report of six case studies in Maine is primarily descriptive and illustrates both successful strategies used by schools to improve student participation and positive outcomes, as well as the challenges they sometimes encounter in delivering and funding after-school ELT programs. In particular, the diverse demographics of the case study sample allowed us to investigate contrasting supports and challenges of programs located in both urban and rural settings. The research literature indicates that rural schools can sometimes struggle to staff and fund their programs, while transportation and student participation may also be challenges. The ELT programs for all six cases presented in this report were funded in part through a federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) grant program called the *21st Century Community Learning Centers* (21st CCLC). The program targets students who are academically low-performing and schools or community-based organizations that serve larger percentages of economically disadvantaged students. The grant program gives priority in funding to Title 1 schools and schools applying for the first time. Initial grants are for five years and continuation grants are for three years, and funding declines over time.

In addition to the federal grant, the ELT programs were supported in part by their school and district budgets, a variety of community partnerships, and volunteer staffing. In some schools, the grant projects were well-established while others were in earlier stages of implementation. While the cases presented here are by no means exhaustive or representative of all ELT programming in Maine schools, they do provide important insights and “lessons

learned” that may inform school and district leaders and policymakers more broadly as they work to improve ELT opportunities for students.

Methodology

Selecting the Cases

Cases were purposefully selected for this study from among the schools that are known to have implemented before and after-school ELT programs with funding from the 21st CCLC federal grant program. This grant program provides a structure for program planning and accountability, as well as documentation that provides important information about program goals, components, and impacts. In addition, we used the “SAFE” criteria for program quality described above to screen potential programs by reviewing program documentation found on school and district websites. We selected six school-based programs that appeared to incorporate the components of evidence-based best practice. That is, ELT programs with content and instructional practices that were: sequenced, provided opportunities for active learning, and were focused on social-emotional skills for youth, and made those goals explicit in their programming (SAFE).

Another consideration in selecting the cases was the goal to have ELT programs that represent diverse demographic variables (enrollment, grade levels served, student poverty, and English language proficiency), geographic location in the state, and rural/ urban setting. Table 1 presents a description of the study case sample and the diversity across the cases. Enrollment and other data from the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) are based on 2014-15 data.

Recruitment of Participants

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Maine, we began recruitment of the schools and participants. We obtained permission from district superintendents and school principals for their schools to participate in this study, noting

that the names of the schools would be shared in our report. In each case, we selected individuals to be interviewed based on their knowledge and close involvement with the ELT program. We interviewed principals, school ELT program coordinators, district coordinators and program staff. In total, we interviewed 16 participants for this study. Table 2 shows the distribution of the participant sample.

Table 1. Description of the Case Study Sample

Case #	District (# K-8 schools)	District K-12 School Enrollment	District K-8 School Enrollment	School Name	School Enrollment	NCES Locale code*	School Grade Span	School Percent eligible for free/reduced lunch	School Percent Limited English Proficiency
Case 1	Portland (13)	6,987	4,820	Riverton School	470	City, small	PreK-5	78%	39%
Case 2	Bangor (9)	3,399	2,644	Fairmount School	317	City, small	4-5	73%	**
Case 3	Sanford (5)	3,155	2,137	Carl J Lamb School	531	Rural, fringe	K-6	65%	2%
Case 4	RSU 54/MSAD 54 (5)	2,633	1,622	Skowhegan Area Middle School	535	Town, remote	6-8	72%	**
Case 5	Ellsworth (1)	1,283	823	Ellsworth Elementary - Middle School	823	Rural, distant	PreK-8	43%	2%
Case 6	RSU 24 (4)	871	630	Mountain View School	237	Rural, distant	PreK-8	69%	**

*Source: Common Core Data, National Center for Educational Statistics

** Percentage for number of LEP students less than 10 is suppressed.

Source: MDOE Data; Enrollment is based on 2014-15 academic year.

Table 2. Participants Interviewed

Job Description	Interviews
Principal	4
School level ELT coordinator	4
District level ELT coordinator	3
Program staff	5
Total:	16

Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix A) and lasted approximately 60-180 minutes. Participants received the questions in advance of the interview. The questions covered a broad range of topics to explore program goals, funding, partnerships, student participation and voice, staffing, challenges and successful strategies or supports. In addition, we asked about impacts of the ELT programs for students and efforts to measure those impacts. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Program documentation was requested and collected, which included extensive reports to the state and federal education agencies. A total of 16 interviews were completed in February and March 2016. Drawing on the interview data and documentation, we constructed narrative descriptions of the cases. These narratives were then shared with the participants to confirm accuracy in reporting.

Findings within the Case Studies

In this section, we present a description of the ELT before and after-school programs for each of the six cases in the study. Our focus is primarily on the after-school programs, which constituted the majority of extended learning time provided in these schools. Each case discussion is organized in a similar way to assist the reader: description of the school setting, ELT programming, community partnerships, ELT funding, successful strategies, and challenges. Following this section, we discuss the findings across all cases and potential implications for policy.

Case 1: Riverton School in Portland

School setting. Portland is the largest urban area in Maine, with a 2014 population estimate of 66,666, and when including the greater Portland metropolitan area consisting of the counties of Cumberland, Sagadahoc, and York, this population estimate climbs to over 523,000. In 2010, 85% identified as White, 7% as Black, 3.5% as Asian, 3% as Hispanic/Latino, and 2.7% as two or more races. Additionally, 21% of people in Portland live in poverty. Increasingly, Portland is home to a variety of immigrants from around the world, including but not limited to Central Africa, East Africa, and the Middle East. A total of 6,987 students were enrolled in Portland Public Schools during the 2014-2015 school year. Riverton School, the school selected for this cases study, served 470 students grades PK-5 during the 2014-2015 school year. LearningWorks, an after-school program serving 11 programs throughout the Portland metropolitan area, targets 60 students at Riverton and over 800 students the metropolitan area.

ELT program. LearningWorks, a Portland-based non-profit that focuses on providing educational opportunities for low-income families, immigrants, and at-risk youth, is partially funded through a 21st CCLC grant. The program focuses on providing additional instruction in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), but also targets overall academic improvement, health and wellness, cultural enrichment and multicultural education, and family involvement. The goals for LearningWorks are, specifically, to provide additional instruction to students who score in the “Partially Meets” category on the Fountas and Pennell Benchmark assessment or the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) standardized test in the hope that the after-school program will help raise test scores in the areas of reading, writing, and math.

What we are looking for is the partially meeting category. Kids that fall in the “partially meets” standard in reading, math, or writing, they are identified by the

school.... So we are looking for the kids that need the extra time and, and a different way of learning, you know, different, we teach differently. So, to give them a different shot at learning some materials.

Additionally, the program is not designed to meet the needs of students who fall into the “Does Not Meet” category, nor is it designed for students who have limited English proficiency as other in-school programs already help meet these students’ needs. The LearningWorks program is, however, an appropriate support structure for English Language Learner (ELL) students who have reached a certain level of proficiency as measured by the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test.

The pedagogical philosophy that informs the LearningWorks program takes into account how poverty impacts brain development and ability to learn. While some aspects of programming review skill drills, most of the after-school instruction targets improving cognition skills by providing problem-solving situations, critical thinking, and executive functions. The LearningWorks after-school program runs for approximately two and a half hours per day, Monday through Thursday, for 120 school calendar days. Transportation is provided for all students who attend, which is a 21st CCLC grant requirement, and roughly one third of the staff are current public school teachers or education technicians (ed techs). Staff recruitment challenges vary from year to year, and staff are provided 10 – 12 training sessions, two hours each, throughout the year.

Community partnerships. The LearningWorks after-school program has developed over 20 community partnerships, including but not limited to:

- Maine Math and Science Alliance (provides onsite professional development for staff)
- Healthy Portland SNAP Ed and Good Shepherd Food Bank (provides healthy eating programming)
- Texas Instruments (provides funding and volunteers)
- Portland Youth Dance and City of Portland Parks and Recreation (provides fee-based and free programming opportunities)

- Portland Museum of Art and Maine College of Art (provides free programming)

Another important partnership is the connection with AIMS HIGH AmeriCorps, which is funded through a three-year grant targeting school turnaround programs that receive School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding. Through this AIMS HIGH AmeriCorps partnership, Riverton is provided additional instructional support in the form of one-on-one and small group tutoring during the school day. Through this particular collaboration, volunteer capacity is built within the school day that helps transition the support for increased academic instruction in the after-school program. These multiple partnerships highlight the community-based approach often needed to support after-school programs.

ELT funding. The LearningWorks after-school program is funded through a 21st CCLC grant, the 11 schools in the Portland metropolitan area that support LearningWorks, and additional grant funding. The program is in the second year of the five-year 21st CCLC grant cycle, which provides 15% of the level of funding for the Riverton program. Much of the funding is used to cover the cost of the 60 staff members and five directors who support the 11 sites, of which seven work at Riverton. Administration costs are not covered by the 21st CCLC grant, but each school partner pays roughly 10% of the yearly grant amount to support administrative costs. This past year, as part of their contribution to cover administration costs, Riverton contributed \$12,850 to the LearningWorks program. Additionally, Riverton and the 10 other schools associated with LearningWorks provide in-kind donations in the form of school building space. Currently, participants are not charged a fee to participate in the LearningWorks after-school program. Including summer programming costs, the average cost per student for the LearningWorks program is about \$2,000. The program has also started working with other grant

foundations, including Texas Instruments, Honda Foundation, the Ronald McDonald Foundation, the Sam L. Cohen Foundation, and the John T. Gorman Foundation.

Successful strategies. The LearningWorks program is partially funded by a 21st CCLC grant, has a well-developed network based on community partnerships that support low-income and immigrant families, and has been able meet grant requirements by showing student academic growth.

Networking in the Portland Metro area: Perhaps the most successful strategy of the LearningWorks program is the network of support that they have built between community members and schools throughout the Portland metropolitan area. One LearningWorks director reflected about the strength of an ELT in the Portland Metro area:

I think it happens sometimes organically. Like, for example, we've been partnering with the Portland Museum of Art the entire time we've had the grant, so for seven-ish years. And, you know, in Portland I think it's easy to collaborate because we have students and organizations, like the Portland Museum of Art, have goals that they want to reach students, and a certain demographic of student. So we work together. We meet together. We explain each of our overall goals. And come up with things, projects that will benefit both of us.

The ability to collaborate with industry and commerce corporations, as well as local community groups that promote education and the arts, is important for the health of any after-school program.

Showing academic growth: Another clear success is the ability of the program to meet grant requirements by showing student academic growth. Eliminating the participation fee is a social justice issue and reduces economic barriers for students living in poverty. Moreover, there is such a great need to support “Partially Meets” students (a requirement of many grants that fund ELT programs), that almost every student enrolled in a LearningWorks after-school program falls into this category. Students participating in the program have seen increases on

standardized test scores – 73% increased math scores as measured by NWEA and 87% increased reading scores as measured by NWEA and Fountas and Pennell Benchmark assessments.

Additionally, through survey information collected from teachers of Riverton during the 2014-2015 school year, educators indicate an increase on all measures in academic performance and a significant increase on measures of behavior in the classroom and engagement in learning.

Challenges. The biggest challenges facing the LearningWorks program are the initial collaborative effort with the participating school districts ensuring the two organizations work together to support students transitioning from the school day to the ELT program, as well as the uncertainty of financial sustainability in the future.

Bridging trust with school districts. One of the initial barriers for LearningWorks has been ensuring a strong, trusting relationship exists between the schools, community partners, and LearningWorks themselves. Due to the 21st CCLC grant requirements, schools must share student data, which has privacy considerations that must be taken into account. One LearningWorks director reflected:

So some of the barriers I think are in the, in the beginning part of our relationship with the school district, schools are not particularly open to having deep involvement with, with community partners. They have, they have cursory involvement with different agencies. But for us, we're actually coming in. They have to share data with us. It's a little nervous for them. Some principals it takes them a little while to figure out that maybe we really need them to be involved. And others, they get it right away. But over time, that evolves. And really, all of them are now at a place where even the most reticent principals, who really kind of thought this was something else that just was being offered in their school, and they didn't really need to attend to it, even, even those that initially were like that are not like that now. So we keep reaching out to them and trying, we try to add value in everything we do in the school.

Additionally, allowing community groups to come into schools and individual classrooms can be a paradigm shift for some educators who see the role of after-school program as separate from

their work during the school day. Moreover, administration involvement to promote the after-school program is necessary.

Financial sustainability. For Riverton and for LearningWorks, a secondary challenge will be declining funding over the next several years as the 21st CCLC grant reduces funding by 25% in the 2017-2018 school year and 35% in the 2018-2019 school year. To maintain the sustainability of the program, LearningWorks has partnered with the superintendents of the 11 participating schools to donate additional funding to help cover the cost of professional development, supervision of staff, and food for students. While the State of Maine covers food costs for after-school snacks, current funding does not cover food costs for LearningWorks staff professional development or sponsored family events. Given a projected \$2.7 million shortfall in the Portland Public School budget, the long-term health of after-school programs is a concern.

Case 2: Fairmount School in Bangor

School setting. Fairmount School currently serves close to 300 students in grades 4-5 from three feeder schools in the Bangor school district. Bangor's population is currently close to 33,000 and Bangor is the third largest school district in Maine with a total of nearly 3,400 students and nine elementary schools. The district serves a diverse demographic population of students over a sprawling urban area. One of Fairmount's three feeder schools has 94% students eligible for the free or reduced school lunch program, which brings the rate up to 73% for Fairmount.

ELT program. Fairmount School, like other elementary schools in the district, is a "community school" that provides extended learning opportunities for students and programs for parents and families. In fall 2014, Fairmount received its first 21st CCLC grant and hired a new program director. The five-year grant provided funding to expand ELT program hours, hire a

program director, and offer scholarships for a few activities that include a fee (e.g., swimming at the YMCA). There is no general fee for participation in the after-school program. Participation is based on both open-enrollment and referral. Students are identified as eligible to participate based on low academic performance on standardized tests including the Scholastic Reading Inventory and math fluency tests.

Fairmount School seeks to provide opportunities for both academic and social/ emotional enrichment for students who might not otherwise have these experiences during their after-school program. A key part of this is the opportunity for positive, healthy social interactions and connections with adults and other students in the program. Beyond the goals for supporting academics and enrichment, other important goals are providing a safe place for students to be during after-school hours and supporting their nutritional needs with snacks during that time.

Fairmount has revised their before- and after-school programming over the first two years of the 21st CCLC grant. In the first year, they increased the before-school time from 30-60 minutes, and after-school program remained 60 minutes (3-4 pm), four days per week. Reviewing the low participation rates for the morning program and high cost of busing, the school revised their program for the second year to offer 30 minutes before school and 2 hours after school (3-5 pm), Monday through Thursday.

Generally, about 54 students (17% of 2014-15 enrollment) come before school for supervised time to practice music instruments, play board games, finish homework, or socialize in the gym. By contrast, participation in the after-school program is very strong in this school. On average, the program serves about 100 students per day (34% of current enrollment) and a total of 260 students participate in some after-school programming over the course of the school

year (88% of current enrollment). The school has a goal of increasing participation to 95% of their school enrollment and increasing parent participation in the program.

For the third quarter this year, Fairmount School's after-school program included 18 different activities or clubs including: homework assistance; mentoring with the guidance counselor and high school volunteers, outdoor recreation, sports, and karate; French; chorus and spring musical; science, math and engineering/ invention-focused clubs; and creative writing and debate clubs. The site director works with staff to develop a program that emphasizes active, hands-on learning through fun activities. The school communicates with parents through their website, newsletters, educational events, and informational meetings. The after-school program includes surveys of parents, students, and teachers. In the second year of the grant, the program director encouraged students to be creative and suggest new clubs or activities based on their interests, and provided opportunity for students to lead these activities with adult supervision. She shared her thoughts on this approach,

This year I was particularly interested in focusing on student voice, choice, responsibility and leadership. To do this I have really focused on what students want out of their after- school programs and worked to develop a strong goal for leadership through the development of student led clubs. . . . So the main goal, I guess, is for children to figure out where their interests lie, and how we can best help them to develop those interests.

Examples of some student-led clubs are chess, sketching, design, inventing, creative writing, and sports. Generally, students have one hour of homework assistance from 3-4 pm, and then they can stay an additional hour until 5 pm and choose from many different activities.

Community partnerships. While staff, teachers, and ed techs lead and supervise most of the after-school activities, some programming is staffed with or staffed and funded through partnerships with community organizations. Community volunteers include parents who lead an activity and students from the high school, colleges, and universities in the local area who

provide homework tutoring or mentoring. Fairmount School occasionally contracts with providers for some activities such as karate instruction and dance, while many of the programs delivered by community organizations are supported by grants and in-kind donations. Examples of partnerships include:

- Bangor Police Department for safety education for students and parents
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension, SNAP-Ed, and Bangor Public Health Department for a nutrition and cooking program
- Fields Pond Audubon Society for a nature program
- Bangor Public Library and Literacy Volunteers of Maine to support literacy
- Discovery Museum in Bangor
- Challenger Learning Center
- Cole Land Transportation Museum
- Maine Math and Science Alliance for instructional materials to support math or science activities, and professional development for the program director through their ACRES (After-school Coaching for Rural Educators in STEM) program
- Local restaurants provide support for multi-cultural programming and scholarships for recreational activities
- Bangor High School provides student volunteers who tutor
- AmeriCorps provides mentors, tutors or volunteers

ELT funding. For the before-school, after-school, and 8-week summer ELT program combined, the 21st CCLC grant provided \$115,346 in funding for the 2015-16 school year, which primarily supported the cost of paying the program director and other staff salaries and benefits. In addition, the school district provided close to \$25,000 to support the cost of staff salaries and the federally-supported food subsidy, and three late buses (\$10,000). In-kind donations from community partners provided \$3,659 for staffing and programs. Local fundraising also provides some funding. Overall, the biggest expenses for the ELT program at Fairmount School are staff salaries and benefits (\$116,968), followed by transportation (\$13,750), followed by food (\$9,187). Altogether, the total funding for ELT programming in 2015-16 was \$143,905. After subtracting the cost of the summer program (\$22,725), the cost per student for the 260 students that have attended some portion of the after-school program this year was \$466.

Successful strategies. Fairmount School has implemented different strategies and adjusted their ELT programming over time to reduce costs and improve learning opportunities for students. In this section we highlight some of the successful strategies we learned about.

Developing community partnerships: In only a year and a half, the program director for the after-school program has developed an impressive range and growing number of community partnerships that support the staffing, materials, and professional development needs for the program. These partnerships have broadened the scope of enrichment opportunities for students. When the 21st CCLC grant was implemented in Sept. 2014, the program had only five community partnerships. That number doubled by the spring and nearly tripled by Sept. 2015. Currently, the school has 20 active partnerships. Clearly, the urban location of the school provides many more opportunities to use community partnerships than would be available in less populated, rural communities. But developing these relationships also requires time and determined effort from the program director.

Coordination between school day and after-school program: There are strong connections and coordination between the after-school program and the school's broader curriculum, learning goals, and teaching staff. Regular teaching staff and after-school staff work on goals to support student learning and behavior goals, and students also work on individual goals for personal and academic growth. The after-school program uses Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and incentives during the school day and after-school learning time. There is also a strong connection for academics between the school day and the after-school program. One example is a student-led ocean/ science research club that came out of students wanting to expand on an ocean unit in their school day. Another example is a new math

fluency club, where teachers identify students who are lower performing and invite them to join the after-school club to improve their math skills through fun, active learning activities.

Outreach and communication with parents: The after-school program provides another vehicle to make strong connections with parents and families. The after-school program offered 15 events for parents and families in 2014-15 and had a strong participation in these events. They also communicate with and engage parents through an open-house, parent advisory board, academic showcase, talent show, and end of year celebration. Teachers and school leaders are working to improve student attendance and performance in school. The principal feels that making this connection with parents is critical. He explained,

Part of the after-school program gives us an additional connection with the parents. . . . and we have a lot of opportunities to speak with the parents. We're seeing that connection to the classroom getting better.

To address problems of chronic absenteeism for some students and low academic performance, the school is developing an initiative for fall 2016 (third year of the grant), where teachers could mentor 3-4 students over the year who meet criteria and reach out to parents with a phone call to encourage the child's participation in the after-school program.

Challenges. The biggest challenges described in the interviews centered on sustainable funding, implementing longer program hours, and managing disruptive student behaviors. A minor challenge was seasonally fluctuating attendance.

Sustaining the program and participation: Although Fairmount School is only a year and a half into their five-year 21st CCLC grant, they are highly conscious that the grant funding will decline over time and that a renewal of the grant is not guaranteed. The goal of sustaining the program is a top priority. The program director has worked hard to develop a large number of community partnerships to support program staffing and costs, and feels these partnerships will

be vital for sustaining a strong program of enrichment opportunities for students. The principal and program director acknowledge that if funding declines, they may be forced to reduce the after-school program hours and activities. Further, the school is concerned about finding the resources to be able to continue to reduce financial barriers for economically disadvantaged students.

Logistics related to longer program hours: The expansion from a one-hour to a two-hour after-school program meant that more snacks were needed for students, more transitions for students occurred between activities, and an office staff person was needed to sign students out for parents who chose to pick up their children rather than using the late bus. A longer program also made it more difficult to recruit teachers to stay and staff the after-school program, so more ed techs were hired to fill this need.

Managing student behavior: Managing disruptive student behavior and finding time for new staff training are also two challenges for the after-school program. Ed techs generally have less experience and training to manage student behavior than regular classroom or special education teachers, making it more difficult to enforce consistent behavioral management strategies from the school day to after-school. The program does spend time orienting all staff and volunteers at the beginning of the year and reinforcing rules and expectations with students. Some students have difficulty controlling their behavior in a less-structured environment and must be dismissed after the homework assistance hour or withdraw from the after-school program. Looking toward the next school year, the school principal anticipates some restrictions on participation for the after-school program based on students' demonstrated effort in school and positive behavior. He explained,

They [students] don't understand that it's a privilege, not a right. And you need to follow the rules. . . . I do want, as we go forward, to develop a little more accountability and responsibility on the students as far as [their] effort.

Seasonal fluctuations in program attendance: Finally, the school routinely sees a decline in student after-school participation during the dark, mid-winter months. Parents may be reluctant to have students dropped off by the bus at 5 pm when it is dark. Participation picks up again when the days get longer. School leaders continue to search for ways to overcome this seasonal challenge. The school has instituted a practice of dropping students off at their home, rather than at a general bus stop to ensure student safety.

Case 3: Carl J. Lamb School in Sanford

School setting. Sanford is located in southern Maine with a 2014 population estimate of 20,906 and includes the village of Springvale. Although Sanford is classified as a rural area, its adjacency to the Portland metropolitan area gives it a suburban feel. In 2010, 17.7% of people in Sanford lived in poverty. A total of 3,155 students were enrolled in Sanford Public Schools during the 2014-2015 school year. Carl J. Lamb, the school selected for this case study, served 531 students grades K-6 during the 2014-2015 school year. Kids Club, the after-school program serving Carl J. Lamb and the two other Sanford elementary schools (Margaret Chase Smith and Willard), targets first through sixth grade students and serves 70 students at Carl J. Lamb, as well as 50 at Margaret Chase Smith and 70 at Willard.

ELT Program. Kids Club is predominately funded through a 21st CCLC grant. The program focuses on providing additional instruction in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), but also incorporates reading skills, the arts in general, health, and wellness. The Kids Club goals, specifically, are to provide additional support to students who score at or below the 40th percentile in reading or math on the Northwest Evaluation

Association (NWEA) standardized test in the hope that the after-school program will help raise test scores. Teachers can also recommend students to participate in the program who score above the 40th percentile but who lack academic support or structure at home. The Kids Club director reflected:

So we have a full range, but the program is primarily geared to these low-performing students, to try to help them gain experiences, using these skills, help them with their homework, get their homework turned in, which typically isn't happening after-school. And just to start to see their, their test scores rise. Their participation rise. And their enjoyment of coming to school.

A typical day of the Kids Club after-school program includes a nutritious snack and physical activity, which lasts for about 30 minutes. Next, students partake in enrichment workshops based on their own areas of interest. These hands-on activities last for about 45 minutes, target STEM and reading exploration, and values teamwork. Additionally, 45 minutes of small group homework support is also provided. The Kids Club Program runs Monday through Thursday, from 3:00-5:00 every day except for Wednesday, which runs from 2:00-5:00. Transportation is provided for all students who attend, and about half of the after-school staff are Sanford Public School employees, which includes teachers and education technicians (ed techs). The other half of the staff are community members or substitute teachers who work for the district.

Community partnerships. The Kids Club after-school program has developed multiple community partnerships throughout the Sanford area. Examples include:

- University of Maine Cooperative Extension (provides onsite STEM-based instruction around engineering and robotics)
- Eat Well Program (provides onsite nutrition education and cooking)
- SNAP-Ed and Good Shepherd Food Bank (provides an offsite, six-week program called “Cooking Matters for Families” to inform nutritional and economic decisions around healthy eating)
- Girl Scouts (provides onsite six-week Girl Scout sessions)
- Kennebunk Savings Bank (provides onsite financial literacy workshop for participants)

These partnerships highlight the community approach that is often needed to support after-school programs from a financial standpoint, but just as importantly, from a cultural point of view that the after-school program is important to the community.

ELT funding. The Kids Club after-school program is funded through a 21st CCLC grant, the Sanford Public Schools budget, local fundraising by the Kids Club organization, and additional grant funding. The program had received two full five-year grants, and is on year two of a continuation grant right now, which provides 60% of the level of funding for the total cost of the program. Currently, the 21st CCLC grant provides \$162,500 in funding to cover all areas of program needs, although most of this funding covers the cost of the 27 staff members at the three sites. The Sanford Public Schools District provides \$66,000 in salary, \$26,000 in transportation, and \$40,000 is budgeted for professional development funds. Additionally, the Sanford Public Schools provides in-kind donations in the form of school building space as well as some use of school supplies; many supplies are donated by families who cannot afford the program. Kids Club charges participants a \$25 registration fee in the fall and spring, as well as \$25 each semester. Including summer programming costs, the average cost per student for the Kids Club program is about \$1,470. The program has also started working with other grant foundations, including the John T. Gorman Foundation, to help meet the instructional needs of students struggling academically in Sanford. A major financial goal of Kids Club is to become self-sustainable in the near future.

Successful strategies. The Kids Club program is partially funded by a 21st CCLC grant, has strong community support that serves low-income families, and has been able to meet grant requirements by showing student academic growth.

Community support. Perhaps the biggest strength of the Kids Club program is how long the program has actively supported students within the Sanford community. Even as funding streams shift, the program has been able to evolve to meet the needs of Sanford students as Kids Club and the Sanford Public Schools continue to work collaboratively on the effort. One success story shared by the Kids Club director highlights the impact of the program:

Well there is a student that I can think of that I remember...when she was a fourth and fifth and sixth grader, when it was still at that point, and I mean she was struggling....always argumentative. And, you know, we just really worked hard with her. And she ended up loving the program. And she keeps coming back to us to volunteer. She has, she made National Honor Society. She's a different person. She's just – and she keeps telling us every time she comes back, 'It's because I, it's this program. I love this program so much. You guys kept me involved and you kept me coming.'

Being located in the Portland metropolitan area is also considered a strength as a greater network of community groups are established to help support after-school programs.

Showing academic growth. Students participating in the program have seen increases on NWEA scores – 81% increased math scores and 69% increased reading scores. Additionally, through survey information collected from teachers in Sanford during the 2014-2015 school year, educators indicate an increase on all measures in academic performance, behavior in the classroom, and engagement in learning. These data highlight how Kids Club is part of the equation when community organizations and school districts work collaboratively to improve student academic, social, emotional, and health outcomes.

Challenges. The biggest challenges facing the Kids Club program is the financial sustainability of the near future, as well as the need to take part in greater collaboration to ensure the school district calendar aligns with the ELT program to support a greater number of teachers being able to work in the after-school program.

Financial sustainability. Not surprising, the primary challenge for Kids Club is funding. Although the Kids Club program has existed for over 12 years, grant funding has continually been transitioned to the school district, in a community that sees poverty above the 14.1% State of Maine average. To become self-sustainable, the program will either need to increase the percentage of operating budget covered by the school district, increase fees charged to participants, or find additional, short-term grant funding. When asked what she would say to the Maine Legislature to ensure a sustainable ELT program, the Kids Club director said:

Funding. You know, I don't know how they would do that, but I don't know, it's just making sure that schools have enough money. Maybe there is a set money for academic supports for after-school, or something like that. I don't know what the answer is. I think this is what we've all been struggling with.

Alignment with school calendar. While the program is well established and supported by both the community and Sanford educators, another opportunity for improvement is to increase the amount of school teachers that work in the after-school program. Currently, the Wednesday early release schedule prevents school employees from working at Kids Club these days, which is a staffing issue for the program. In all, sustainability and continuing to be able to recruit quality school personnel are opportunities for improvement for the Kids Club program.

Case 4: Skowhegan Area Middle School

School setting. The Skowhegan Area Middle School is located in Skowhegan, Maine, classified as a rural, fringe community located in Central Maine. While the town has a population of 8,589, the school serves 563 students in 6th through 8th grades. The majority of the students (96%) identify as white. The school is classified as a Title I school with 64% of the school population eligible for free or reduced price lunch in 2013-14.

ELT program. The Skowhegan Area Middle School (SAMS) After-School Program is a school-based program that uses the Skowhegan Middle School facility to run 2:30 pm to 4:30

pm, Monday through Thursday from September through June. Out of the 535 students at Skowhegan Middle School in grades 6-8, the program typically serves between 50-75 students on a given day. In 2015-16, the program officially has 140 students enrolled (26% of the total students at Skowhegan Area Middle School). The population served was described by the program staff and principal as diverse in a number of ways, particularly with regard to socioeconomic status. Students are recruited into the program at the beginning of the year and the staff shared that in-school teachers do much to support this recruitment through recommending the program to parents. The program is able to provide transportation home for many students – an important precursor to participation -- by bus through cost-sharing with the school district. While this arrangement is unable to meet the needs of all students at the school and some students are unable to attend because the bus drop offs are not close enough to their houses, some parents choose to pick up their students or arrange alternate transportation so their children can participate.

The program has two daily “blocks” of activities that include one time activities, short and long-term curriculum driven classes, and academic support. Classes run the gamut from healthy cooking and crafts to volunteering in the community to outdoor explorations and physical activity (such as ultimate Frisbee or rugby). Student attendance at the program is incentivized through a financial literacy program that allows the students to “earn” money for each hour they attend the program. This “money” then goes towards an incentive trip at the end of the year. Each student must “earn” one thousand dollars by participating in the program in order to attend the incentive trip.

The program has a site coordinator, three paid program staff and one part-time paid staff member. Two of the program staff have been with the program since its founding eight years

ago. The program staff have backgrounds in working with students in a variety of capacities. The three full time staff members are either current teachers, former teachers or long-term substitute teachers for the district, while the part-time staff member has been a parent and business owner in the community for many years. Staff participate in on-going training through monthly staff meetings to set curriculum and discuss students, as well as home-grown professional development efforts organized by the site coordinator.

The staff suggested that over the 8 years that the program has existed, it has evolved significantly from a program focused on providing engaging activities to students to a program that offers students a myriad of supports and opportunities for student academic and social-emotional growth. The mission statement for the program is to “enrich the lives of a regularly attending group of students doing fun, healthy activities blended with academic themes” in addition to “improving the students’ connection to the to school and community by learning new skills, enhancing self-esteem, and building stronger relationships with friends, family and teachers.” The staff articulated this by emphasizing the importance of seeing improvement, in a variety of ways, for students over the year, and described this as their overall goal.

An interesting feature of this program is that much of the day to day logistics are, in fact, managed by students. Students are able to propose and then teach classes on a topic they are interested in with the support of the program staff, and take responsibility for many of the day to day program tasks such as distributing snack and readying program materials. In the words of a program staff member,

We have kids that come down every day and they help set up the program, get ready for the afternoon. They’ll get things written up for what the activities are so the kids can sign up. They’re ready to sign the kids in when they get there. They want to do snack when it’s snack time, because we have to record our snack... It’s student run. And it’s amazing to me that all we [the program staff] do is supervise. We do put the activities out there, and kids bring ideas to us, and say,

“Well, could I do this?” “Yup, when do you want to do it?” And we get them on the schedule.

Additionally, the program staff shared that many students who graduate from the program and move on to high school elect to return and work with the program as teachers, academic support, and mentors to younger students.

Community partnerships. The SAMS program engages in external community partnerships to provide a diversity of programming for its youth participants. These partnerships include:

- Colby College through the Vital Signs program which educates youth about invasive species and the College Knowledge Bowl program
- The “Cooking Matters” program delivered by the Good Shepherd Food Bank
- Field trip to Strawberry Hill Farms to learn about maple syrup production in Maine
- The Skowhegan Police Force through a self-defense class offered by the local deputy sheriff
- A variety of individual adult volunteers who come to the program to teach Zumba

Students also have the opportunity to engage in a variety of volunteer efforts through the program, including:

- Mentoring elementary school students at Mill Stream Elementary through the “Mill Stream Mentoring program”
- Providing healthy lunches for students at Bloomfield Elementary School through the “Healthy Kid Packs Program”

ELT Funding. There is no cost to participants for attending the after-school program. The SAMS program is funded primarily through a 21st Century Learning Center Grant that has been awarded to the district, with some cost-sharing with the district for transportation and, since the program is located at the school, utilities, occupancy fees and administrative costs. Funding covers the ELT programs at the middle school and high school. Out of the \$276,300 annual expenditure, \$195,000 comes from a CCLC grant. The remaining \$81,300 is constituted through in-kind expenses. The largest expense in delivering this program comes from employee wages and benefits, constituting \$186,700, or 67.5%, of the total yearly expenditure. The second

greatest expense for the program is transportation, which annually costs \$23,000, or roughly 16% of the total budget. This figure is unsurprising given the great need for transportation in this area due to its rural location. Maintenance, occupancy expenses, utilities, materials and supplies, as well as food costs total \$42,100 (15%) of the annual budget, while equipment costs account for \$3,500 (1%). The per pupil expenditure for after-school and summer programs at the middle school and high schools totals \$1,334.

Successful strategies. The SAMS program employs a variety of successful strategies that promote a healthy after-school climate for youth and a culture of appreciation and trust, as well as innovative school and home alignment practices that promote the on-going development of social and emotional skills for participating youth and close communication between after-school program staff, teachers, and parents to support academic achievement.

Coordinated academic support for students through on-going communication with teachers and parents: The site coordinator has a room in the building and outside of program hours works to create strong academic alignment between the program and the school. Through daily emails with teachers, the site coordinator is able to obtain specific information about students who have performed poorly on in-class assessments, have missing work, or may be in need of extra academic support in a topic area. The program then offers “Guided Study” time during one of its daily programming blocks to students that fit these criteria and requires that students attend this time to have a focused, supervised opportunity to make up missed assignments and receive help. Program staff circulate during these blocks and work with students on challenging concepts. The building principal reflected,

I know that the team looks at the academic component and communicates with the teachers and emails teachers and checks grades and looks at PowerSchool to see where students are missing work. I don't know how [the program] could be more connected. And we spend a lot of time talking about the connection and how to

maintain connection and how to keep connection. And with the work that [the site coordinator] does and just, just in the overall organization, it ties everything together and supports what we do.

The site coordinator also maintains close connections with parents through phone calls home and through an orientation event in the fall in which parents are encouraged to share strategies that will, in her words, “help the program help their child.” This includes sharing information about special needs, accommodations, services received in school, as well as information about their child’s personality, preferred activities and school work habits. Parents are also given her cell phone and email address and are often in contact during out of program hours regarding support for their child. The results of this coordination, the program staff say, are evident in students’ improvement. A staff member recounted,

Last year I had a student, she came to us, and I swear, almost every week she was in a guided study [the academic support component of the program]. You know, and I’m communicating with mom, and mom’s frustrated. So [the student] was in guided study, and we just kept working at her. This year she has not once been in our guided study. She’s even made the honor roll.

Additionally, the program includes a variety of parent and family outreach activities and supports. The program provides information to parents about local enrichment or college-level courses that are available at low-cost in the area, as well as offers activities or community-building events, such as an annual Halloween party.

A culture of trust, appreciation and safety: As a school-based program, the program maintains a balance between building on the culture of the in-school program and also setting their after-school program apart through cultural features that are unique to the program itself. As part of their alignment with in-school culture, the program staff referred in their interview to the importance of referencing “our core values” – the same core values that are used by in-school teachers and administrators to set a tone for the building (attitude, behavior and commitment).

However, the program staff also emphasized that they work to set the time they have with the students apart from the regular school day. As one staff member said, “It’s very different than in the classroom. Because you’re not the teacher. You’re the mentor.” They emphasized the importance of allowing students the opportunity to engage in different patterns of youth-adult interaction within the context of the program, less formal than school, while still differentiating between mentorship and friendship. They also talked about making students feel safe to take risks and try new things. In the words of a staff member,

A lot of kids don’t take risks in the classroom, but when, I have a student that I see pretty regularly in the guided study, and I know she struggles in class, but she barely knows me. I’m an English teacher. She struggles with math, and the two of us sit there and struggle through it. You know, she comes to me like I am her regular teacher, and we fight through it and we giggle and laugh and figure stuff out....I don’t think in the regular class she’d be willing to put herself out there, in that same manner. To say hey, I need help. Let’s work through this. So it, you know, even the academics, they take risks as well, which is cool.

The program uses a restorative justice approach to managing student behavior that is distinct from the school’s approach to behavior management. In situations that involve conflict, students are asked to sit down and talk with the other person involved in the conflict, be it a staff member or another student, and to take ownership and responsibility for their actions and those actions’ consequences. The program coordinator described the power of the approach by saying, “You put them in a group and you sit down and you have to have the face to face conversation, and they, only one gets to talk at a time, that’s pressure. And that’s like, ‘Oh my god, I didn’t know that’s how you felt.’ ”

Strong leadership by the site coordinator: Talking with both the program staff and the principal made it clear that one key to the successful strategies being employed by the SAMS program was due to the leadership vision and extensive coordination provided by the site coordinator. The program staff attributed the program’s evolution to the vision and direction

provided by the site coordinator, a vision which allowed the program to evolve from a “basketball and graham crackers” type program to become more student-centered and focused on academic and social emotional development. In the words of one staff member,

When we first started, the [staff] who came on board, like right that first year, the first impression was, “Oh neat, it’s a chance to do activities with kids after school. It’s going to be fun. We’ll just play games or do some outdoor things. We can bring our personal interests to the students in a different setting,” which was kind of cool. But it’s definitely evolved over the years, to still include a lot of that, but really direct it with more and more focus. The [site coordinator] has been leading us in this direction of tying in academics with that, Tying in leadership with that, tying in student initiated activities with all that, as opposed to simply showing up and playing a game. We’ve kind of directed it to help build the students where they, a lot of these students need it most...It’s evolved into what it is....Like I said, it was almost like a, a glorified recess... And then, like I said, as we’ve become more experienced and really student centered, the focus has shifted a little.

The building principal echoed these sentiments and elaborated on the communication and coordination necessary to maintain the level of alignment and communication that the program has achieved. He reflected,

[The site coordinator] and I talk fairly frequently. She talks with all the staff. I mean, her communication is steadily improving the program, because as things come up, whether it be in IEP meetings or meetings on team or meetings about a student, she’s made aware of what’s going on and she can support in that way.

The importance of this constant communication to the overall success of the program in providing support for students was clear in speaking with both program staff and the principal.

The site coordinator saw these responsibilities as integral to her work and a part of providing support to students within the context of the program.

Challenges. The program staff and site coordinator spoke to several challenges that they faced, including meeting the administrative requirements of their 21st Century Community Learning Center grant with a small program staff already trying to do a high level of coordination with both the school and students’ families. The grant-dependent nature of the

program obviously remains a challenge to the long-term sustainability of the program, because of the diminishing funding structure of 21st CCLC grants.

Case 5: Ellsworth Elementary and Middle School

School setting. Ellsworth Elementary and Middle School serves 823 preK-8 students (2014-15 school year data), and is located in a rural/ suburban location. The Ellsworth school district serves 1,283 students. The population of Ellsworth was 7,843 in 2010. As the primary “gateway” to Acadia National Park and the Down East coastal region, Ellsworth’s local economy benefits from the town’s location between the urban center of Bangor and vacation destinations along coastal peninsulas. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced school lunch subsidy is 43% at Ellsworth Elementary and Middle School.

ELT program. Ellsworth was formerly part of Regional School Unit 24, which continues to provide fiscal management for the 21st CCLC grant supporting after-school and summer ELT programs in Ellsworth and one other community. The grant is currently in the final year of a three-year continuation award. Ellsworth has had grant funding for its “ASPIRE” after-school program for 15 years. Given the larger school enrollment and constraints of available funding, there are limited slots for the after-school program and not all students can attend who want to. The program targets low-performing students who are referred based on NWEA and state testing results, and participation is by referral for students meeting these criteria. During 2014-15, the after-school program served a total of 77 students in grades 1-5 (17% of students in these grades). The program is offered from 2:30 to 5 pm five days per week.

The after-school program focuses on enrichment activities and time for homework support. In recent years, there has been an increased effort to provide STEM activities. Some of these included Lego robotics, air-powered cars, and bridge building. Supporting students’

developing for a healthy lifestyle and social/emotional skills is an important part of the after-school mission for these programs. In the interview, the program director emphasized the importance of providing a place for students and adults to connect and build relationships and to have fun together, as well as for students to interact with peers across groups.

The real benefit is a sense of community and belonging that happens. And from that, we see changes in behavior and academic success. And we do offer tutoring and homework help and guided study and all of those things. But I think to a T, if you asked the staff involved what makes this, they would say it's the relationships between the adults and the students, and the students and the students, that are able to happen during those two hours that can't happen during the school day.

Providing nutritional support to economically disadvantaged students during after-school hours is also an important health goal of the program, particularly given the high level of poverty and food insecurity in many of the participating communities.

Students typically have an hour for homework or tutoring and then choose another activity for the second hour. For the current school year, the after-school program at Ellsworth Elementary and Middle School included 46 different activities or clubs. Middle school students sometimes create new activities and clubs for the after-school program. The school communicates with parents and families through newsletters, calendars, parent or family events and direct communication. The after-school programs conduct surveys of parents, students, and teachers for feedback and to assess impacts.

Community partnerships. The Ellsworth after-school program benefits from the geographic location and the multiple opportunities for partnerships with local and more distant community organizations for contracted services or in-kind donations. Some of the partnerships include:

- YMCA for weekly swim time for Ellsworth students
- 4-H for curriculum activities
- Camp Beech Cliff for recreational and team-building activities

- Taunton Bay Association for environmental education about watersheds
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension and Healthy Acadia for nutritional education and cooking programs
- Robinson Ballet of Bangor for “Achieve” program focusing on nutrition and dance/movement; and local fire and police safety departments

The program contracts with providers for dance and karate instruction.

ELT funding. Funding for the Ellsworth program is combined with funding for a similar ELT program at Hancock Grammar School in the Hancock School District. For the two combined programs, funding covers before-school, after-school, and summer programming. The majority of the funding for the after-school programs in these two schools comes from a 21st CCLC grant. Students pay a \$20 weekly participation fee for the Ellsworth after-school program, and a one-time fee at the other school. Fees are waived for economically disadvantaged students eligible for the free or reduced school lunch subsidy. Grant funding has declined over the past 15 years and currently provides \$195,000, while the two districts provide another \$50,000 in direct funding and in-kind donations or services total \$93,850 (partly from district support). The districts help support the cost of staff, food, supplies, and transportation. Total staffing costs for the two school programs is \$276,542. Materials and supplies total \$20,000, busing totals \$15,000 and is supported by the school district, and food expenses total \$3,000. Overall, staff salaries and benefits are the major expense, followed by supplies and busing. The cost for a late bus has been cut in half as the districts have a bus two out of four days per week. Parents have preferred to pick their children up after the program, reducing the need for buses every day. After subtracting the cost for the summer program (approximately \$42,269), the average cost per student for the before- and after-school programs across the two schools is \$992.

Successful strategies. The ASPIRE program in Ellsworth has been funded by a 21st CCLC grant for 15 years and that tenure has provided opportunity to solidify strong support for the program from stakeholders as well as insights about what works for program implementation.

Strong parent and teacher support: The program has earned strong support and interest from parents and families as well as teachers in the elementary and middle school. More parents and kids are interested in participating in the program than can currently be supported by funding. Teachers have seen the benefits and positive impacts for student learning and growth, and they readily sign up to staff the after-school program. In fact, the program director shared that there is actually a waiting list of teachers from the school who are willing to staff the after-school program. The high involvement of regular and special education teachers in the program provides more experienced, highly trained teachers to tutor and work with students after school. This means less reliance on ed techs and volunteers. And, teachers and students can enjoy the opportunity to get to know each other through less formal interactions.

Coordination between school day and after-school program: The high involvement of the regular teaching staff increases the continuity between the school day and after-school hours for students and the opportunity to expand students' engagement with the academic curriculum. There is strong coordination between the school day and after-school programs. The schools have a system in place to refer kids who need academic support to the after-school program. Staff include a high proportion of teachers with expertise in behavior and developmental needs, and teachers use Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) which provides continuity with the regular school day.

Challenges. The biggest concern centers on whether or not the 21st CCLC grant will be renewed and the challenge of sustaining the program after the grant, and serving all students and families who want or need to use an after-school program.

Sustaining the program: The Ellsworth program is currently in the final year of a three-year continuation grant. The program has been funded for 15 years, and funding has decreased over time. Despite the strong local support for the program, the splintering of school districts from RSU24 means that several small districts will be competing against each other for renewal of their grants. District leaders and parents are worried about how to sustain the after-school programs and the negative impacts for students and families if the programs cannot be funded in the future. The program director explained this complexity of this challenge:

There's no money in the budget to fund this kind of program. And there's no money locally, outside of the school district, to fund a program. . . . We don't have these pockets of groups that would provide programming free. We can't piece together anything beyond, you know, what we're doing. So the reality is, without grant funding, these programs go away in these areas.

Expanding the participation: As the grant and district level funding for ELT programming is limited, and the grant has declined over time, Ellsworth Elementary and Middle School has been forced to limit participation in the after-school program to students identified as meeting certain criteria of low academic performance. Currently, only 17% of students in grades 1-5 can participate in the after-school program, but many more would like to participate. Parents value the enrichment opportunities, time for homework support, and a safe place for their children to be until 5 pm. Without sufficient funding to increase or maintain the current number of slots, more kids will be home alone and miss the experience afforded by the ELT program.

Case 6: Mountain View School

School setting. Mountain View School is located in Sullivan, a rural and relatively isolated community on Maine's mid-coast with a population of 1,236 in 2010. The PreK-8 school has a total enrollment of 237 (2014-15 data) and a student eligibility rate of 69% for the free or reduced school lunch program. The community also has a small secondary school, Sumner Memorial High School, with 241 students.

ELT program. The after-school program at Mountain View has open-enrollment and serves nearly all students in the school, many of whom are low performing. In the 2014-15 school year, 191 of the school's 225 K-8 students (85%) participated in the after-school program at some point in the year. Of the 191 students participating, 65 were low-performing and attended the program regularly. The after-school program focuses on enrichment activities and time for homework support. Supporting healthy social/ emotional development, healthy lifestyles, and nutrition are also important goals of the after-school program. The program director explained how the after-school program incorporates snacks and nutrition education and helps to address the problem of food insecurity among its students:

Our snacks are provided through the school nutrition program. So we get reimbursement for them through the federal hot lunch program. But we try to incorporate a lot of cooking into our programs to provide extra food to kids without, you know, singling any kids out or whatever. So we do a lot of cooking where we can either send food home at the end, or the kids get to eat while they're there [at school].

The after-school program runs from 3-5 pm, Monday through Thursday. The school runs a late bus two of the four days per week. Students typically have an hour for homework or tutoring and then choose another activity for the second hour. For the current school year, students had about 30 activities or clubs from which to choose. The RSU24 district office provides a program director and each school has a site coordinator for their after-school program.

Schools communicate with parents and families through newsletters, calendars, parent or family events and direct communication. The after-school program conducts surveys of parents, students, and teachers.

Community partnerships. Partnerships with community organizations and businesses are integral to funding the after-school program and providing a wide range of enrichment experiences for students. In this isolated and low population region, the number of potential partners is much more limited than in urban centers. Some of the partnerships include:

- 4-H for curriculum activities
- Camp Beech Cliff for recreational and team-building activities
- Taunton Bay Association for environmental education about watersheds
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension and Healthy Acadia for nutritional education and cooking programs
- Modern Woodmen for life skills and ecology
- Robinson Ballet of Bangor for “Achieve” program focusing on nutrition and dance/movement
- Local fire and policy safety departments

ELT funding. The before-school, after-school, and summer programming for Mountain View School and one other elementary school, and after-school programming for the high school, are largely supported by a 21st CCLC grant that is currently in its second year of an initial five-year award. Students pay a one-time fee for the after-school program, and fees are waived for students who are eligible for the free or reduced school lunch subsidy. The grant provides a total of \$300,000 for ELT programming at these three schools, with the RSU24 district funding another \$55,496 in direct funding and in-kind donations totaling \$105,650 (partly from district support). Overall, staff salaries and benefits are the major expense, followed by supplies and late buses for two of the four days per week. The total cost for staffing ELT programs at the three schools is \$368,616, busing is \$30,000, and supplies are \$23,379. After subtracting the cost for

the summer program (approximately \$70,889), the average cost per student for the before- and after-school programs across the three schools is \$934.

Successful strategies. Significant successes of the after-school program at Mountain View School include the high level of student participation and the ability to include a broad mix of students in the program.

High student participation: There is a high level of student participation in the after-school program (85%) given the open enrollment policy. The school also identifies and enrolls students identified as needing extra academic support. Although the grant funding is relatively new for this school, parents and families value the program and are happy to have this opportunity for their children.

Mix of student ability levels: Given the open-enrollment policy, the after-school program attracts a mix of students who vary in their academic performance levels and needs and in their behavioral needs. The program director explained that the heterogeneous mix of kids has the positive impact of reducing student behavior problems. She shared,

Kids that might come with behaviors are now in a room with kids that don't have them. And so we have very few behavior problems at our drop-in sites.

As a result, the school rarely expels a child from the program. The after-school program uses Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) which provides continuity with the regular school day. The mix of different ability levels also provides opportunities for peer tutoring and homework assistance to occur.

Staff recruitment: The school has found it challenging to encourage regular and special education teachers to help staff the after-school program. In the interest of reducing barriers for teachers, the program has implemented a policy of allowing teachers to bring their school-aged children to the after-school program, and offers flexible work schedules if teachers cannot

commit to all four days per week. This strategy has helped to encourage higher teacher participation as a result.

Challenges. Concerns about program sustainability over the long-term, and the limited funding and partnerships available in the region are chief challenges for this program.

Sustaining the program: Uncertainty about the potential to renew 21st CCLC grant and long-term sustainability for the ELT programs is a major concern. The program director explained the challenge of obtaining grant funding for a program serving fewer students in a low population region, and the negative impacts for students and families if the grant funding were to end:

Even getting the grants is a little bit tricky because we are a smaller area, and so we can't serve as many students as you might be able to serve in a Portland program. . . . But I think that's the biggest barrier that we're always coming up against, is how will we keep these things going for these kids and these families? And families right now are in panic mode in these two schools because they're really concerned that this program, that these programs are going to be gone. And they just don't know what they're going to do. They're hoping it'll be renewed, but no assurance that it will be. . . . Our parents have said . . . that this program allows the second parent to work and not worry. Would they have to make that choice between the income of the second job and having their kids go home alone?

Limited opportunities for partnerships in region: Related to the problem of sustainability is the limited potential to find local businesses and organizations with which to partner. The small size of the RSU24 communities and geographic isolation makes partnerships much more of a challenge than for Portland, Bangor, or even Ellsworth. The geographic distance also means that it is too costly and time-consuming to bus kids longer distances for some activities (such as swimming at the YMCA pool in Ellsworth), which limits the diversity of program opportunities for students. The program director explained the impact of location on these programs:

I think it's more difficult also in the area of just finding volunteer staffing. When we go to our state meetings for 21st Century [CCLC grants], people who are in

the larger areas, you know, often have a university or a community college nearby that they can pull students from. And so they'll have all this access to college students who will come in and do free programming or mentoring or tutoring to fulfill a course or to, you know, have an internship or something that they can put on their resume, which we don't have access to here. But they also have access to all these other [community] groups. We have, you know, we have one YMCA in the area. And the only school that can really utilize it is Ellsworth, because they're within walking distance of it. For us to bus students to the Y, the closest is a half an hour. So by the time we get students there, you'd be turning around.

Staff recruitment: The program director indicated that recruiting regular and special education teachers to staff newer after-school programs is more difficult than for well-established programs. As a result, Mountain View has relied on a larger percentage of ed techs which reduces the level of staff expertise. The program director is hopeful that over time teachers will see the benefits for students and become more interested in participating in the after-school program. A related challenge is finding time for staff training, though the program does provide an orientation at the beginning of the year and other times during the school year.

Findings Across the Cases

In looking across the cases, it is possible to see the ways in which these successful ELT programs confront typical challenges faced by before- and after-school programs using unique and innovative strategies that allow them to deliver high-quality programming to students and their families. In this section, we examine the creative ways in which these programs address common issues around recruitment, staffing, transportation, high quality programming, developing and maintaining community partnerships, and their long-term sustainability, particularly with regard to funding.

Strategies to Address Recruitment

Recruitment into ELT programs is an issue that is intimately related to capacity. Programs across these six cases employed different enrollment strategies depending, in part, on

their capacity. These included both targeted enrollment strategies (selecting students based on specific criteria or referrals) and open enrollment strategies (accepting any student who applied to participate in the program). Program sites did not typically struggle to enroll sufficient numbers of students, with many programs resorting to waiting lists because of the high demand for their programming. This success across all of the sites is likely related to their ability to provide high-quality programming (a criteria for site recruitment).

Sites did take different approaches based on their capacity to serve certain numbers of students, however. The LearningWorks Program, the Kids Club program, and the Ellsworth Program all employed targeted enrollment strategies, which identified low-achieving youth eligible for the program through school-based referrals or identification using test-scores. In this way, these programs incorporated their limited capacity into their mission, using the space available to ensure services for students with high need for out-of-school intervention and additional academic support. Other sites, such as Fairmount, Skowhegan, and Mountain View, used open-enrollment strategies, taking all students that applied to the program. These programs were typically able to serve greater numbers of students given their structure, goals, staffing and funding.

Strategies to Address Staffing

Research on ELT programming, particularly in rural areas, suggests that these programs can be difficult to staff with experienced youth workers with sufficient training to meet student needs (Biddle & Mette, 2016). Many of the ELT sites profiled employed a combination of strategies to fully staff their programs, though many of the sites still struggled with recruiting adequately trained staff. Several of the ELT sites employed school-day teachers, substitute teachers, or ed techs as part or all of their after-school staff. An advantage of staffing their

programs in this way is that all of these staff had the credentials necessary to work in schools and had experience working effectively with youth. Additionally, when school day employees also worked in the after-school program, greater alignment between the program and the school could be achieved because of their intimate knowledge of in-school culture.

However, there were several challenges to successfully being able to employ school-based staff. Some teachers who may have been willing to work in an ELT program were unable to stay in the afternoons because of the need to pick up and care for their own children. The Mountain View School program addressed this challenge by allowing teachers to bring their school-aged program to their ELT program as participants, thus solving the conflicting needs of these teachers. Another specific challenge to involving teachers in ELT programming was the district and school schedule for professional development or Early Release Days. Teacher obligations to attend these events can make it tricky for some school staff to participate as regular staff in an ELT program.

Strategies to Address Transportation

Transportation home is often the linchpin for student participation in ELT programs. While programs in more densely populated areas with better public transportation infrastructure or schools within walking distance of home may find this less of a barrier, for rural ELT programs, the provision of transportation home is key to their enrollment. However, transportation costs in rural areas are often much higher given the longer distances that buses must travel to bring students home. Many of the programs represented in these cases were able to partner with the school district to provide late buses home for students in order to overcome the barrier of transportation.

However, even the structure of this arrangement had effects on enrollment. For example, in Skowhegan, bus stops for late buses could not take students directly to their homes, and some parents felt the stops were still too far from their homes to be safe for their children. In some cases, parents were willing to pick up their children so they could still enroll in the program; in other cases, parents opted for their child not to participate at all.

For several of the programs included, partial or full transportation costs represented an in-kind donation from the school district in support of the program. Transportation was among the largest expenses for these programs and varied depending on the location of the school, number of students, and number of days per week that transportation was provided. This type of support is critical for these services, in part because of the lowered cost for the services overall: it is more affordable for regular school buses to return to the school site for a second later run than to charter new buses on an independent contract.

Strategies to Ensure High-Quality Programming

ELT programs across the case sites employed several strategies to ensure that they were offering high quality programs that were supportive of both student learning and social and emotional skill improvement. Student voice in programming decisions, opportunities for student leadership in program activities and alignment with in-school culture and curriculum were all practices that supported positive outcomes for youth and enthusiasm amongst participating youth and their families for the programs. Several programs allowed students to co-lead or lead classes for other students in the program, with staff and program directors reporting increased ownership over the programming and investment by young people in the activities as a result.

A challenge for out of school time programs can be creating and maintaining behavior management systems that effectively redirect students in a less-structured environment. Several

sites used PBIS strategies or restorative justice strategies similar to those used in school in order to create a program culture that was aligned with the systems that were used to redirect student behavior during the day. Having staff who also worked at the school during the school day supported this alignment. Site directors often worked closely with school leadership, in-school leadership and parents to get needed information on individual student needs with regard to both learning and behavioral support, information not automatically made available to ELT program staff in the same way it would be to classroom teachers. Coordinating this in-school alignment, both of culture and academic support, required an investment of both time and relationship building, particularly in the early years of a program's existence, to build the trust necessary and to persuade in-school teachers and administrators of the value that ELT programming can provide as an additional academic support.

Strategies to Address Developing and Maintaining Community Partnerships

It was clear from all of the cases that cultivating and maintaining a diversity of community partnerships allowed programs to offer expanded opportunities for student learning through their programs, as well as to partially solve staffing issues by having community members or organizational leaders teach classes within their programs. However, again, location mattered to the ability of programs to cultivate and maintain robust community partnerships. Programs located in cities were able to maintain a greater number of active partnerships than programs located in more rural locations. Program staffing, too, affected each program's ability to maintain a large number of community partnerships. It was clear from these case studies that the number of partnerships often depended on the initiative of the program site coordinator to procure and maintain the relationships necessary for sustaining these partnerships, adding to the already long list of their responsibilities for administering a high-quality program.

Strategies to Address Long-Term Sustainability

All of the cases included in this report relied, in whole or in part, on funding through federal 21st CCLC grants. Some of the grants funded ELT programs in multiple schools within a district (Skowhegan, Ellsworth, and Mountain View in RSU24). Further, grants included funding for before-school, after-school and summer ELT programs where student participation rates also varied. These considerations made it difficult to compute the per pupil cost for only the after-school program in particular schools. For the Portland, Sanford, and Skowhegan cases, the per pupil cost for the academic year and summer ELT programs ranged from \$1,334 in Sanford to \$2,000 in Portland. For the Bangor, Ellsworth, and Mountain View (RSU24) cases, the per pupil cost for the academic year ELT programs (excluding summer programs) ranged from \$466 in Bangor to \$992 in Ellsworth.

In the context of limited staff capacity to seek external or alternate funding to these grants, the diminishing funding structure of these grants over time does make it difficult for programs to ensure that they have adequate plans for their own long-term fiscal sustainability. To address this, Mountain View School is part of a larger district-level partnership to procure funding that allows that program to take advantage of the resources available at the Central Office level, such as grant-writing capacity and other resources that would not be available otherwise. Smaller districts could benefit from the creation of similar regional partnerships that would allow them to pool their resources, as opposed to competing for them or having to reinvent the funding wheel on their own to achieve economies of scale.

Implications for Policy and ELT Practice

This report presented findings from six case studies of Maine schools that have extended learning time (ELT) programs. Across the varied sample of schools, we found both successes

and challenges. As the discussion of cross-case findings above suggests, the biggest concern for these programs is the question of how to sustain funding for ELT programs over time. The federal 21st CCLC grant program provides a substantial portion of funding currently for the before-school, after-school, and summer ELT programs. However, the grant funding declines over time and renewal is not assured. The implications of this are that schools will need to rely increasingly on other sources of funding to maintain programs, or reduce program hours or student participation.

We found some differences across the sample based on district size. Larger districts were able to make use of staff and expertise at the central office level, or contract out with another provider (in the case of Portland), to write grants and provide support for ELT programs. In addition, districts sometimes sought grants to fund multiple schools. The efficiencies of larger districts, or collaborative efforts across districts, holds promise as a strategy to maintain program funding for smaller schools and districts.

Schools used different strategies to meet the needs of program staffing, student transportation, and partnerships. The nature of some challenges varied across programs, based on the program size, length of program tenure, location, and funding resources. The successes of the schools described in this report provide ideas that can be used to improve similar programs elsewhere in the state. To conclude this report, we highlight some important lessons for policy and for practice that emerged from the six case studies.

- *Finding 1:* Larger school districts and collaborating school districts (e.g., RSU24 provided assistance to Ellsworth School District) are able to draw on the central office staff expertise and time to write grants and support ELT programs in schools. Smaller schools and districts have less staff capacity for grant writing and administration of ELT programs.

Implication: Greater collaboration across schools and districts in securing grant funding and developing community partnerships may reduce competition for grants and increase

the likelihood of continued funding for both larger and smaller school systems and programs.

- *Finding 2:* Community organizations, businesses, universities, and other groups provide valuable curriculum content (activities, materials) that broaden the enrichment opportunities for students and help schools deliver high quality programs. These are generally provided as in-kind donations, but are also sometimes provided by contract. In addition, some organizations support professional development for ELT program coordinators and staff. Developing community partnerships requires time and effort, and is generally the responsibility of the ELT program site coordinator, who may be a part-time employee.

Implication: More efficient strategies might be found to share the responsibility for recruitment of community partnerships. Support might come from the district central office, PTOs, or other groups. The state might find creative ways to encourage organizations to partner with schools, through tax credits or other incentives and recognition.

- *Finding 3:* Geographic location and urban density strongly determine the range and number of potential community partnerships available to support ELT costs, programs, and staffing.
- *Implication:* Programs in rural or isolated regions may require additional funding support through other types of grants or state funding when they lack community partners. Other creative ways to increase partnership support may be needed. For example, high schools, colleges and universities might create service learning courses or internships that provide students with credit for providing staff support to K-12 ELT programs. Private businesses might sponsor school or district programs with funding, volunteers, or material.
- *Finding 4:* Transportation is a major expense for ELT programs and costs vary by the size of the region served by the school, and number of students transported. Transportation costs can be higher in rural regions where buses travel greater distances between school and students' residences. School districts supported much of the transportation costs for ELT programs.

Implication: As grant funding decreases over time, schools will need to rely more on district funding or state subsidies to cover the cost of late buses for ELT programs. Other options are reducing the number of days per week that a bus is offered (e.g., as in Ellsworth and Mountain View schools), or requiring parents to pick children up from after-school programs, which may reduce participation rates.

- *Finding 5:* Recruitment of after-school staff can be challenging. Regular and special education teachers are preferred for their higher level of training and expertise, but are not always willing to work extended hours. Increased use of ed techs and volunteers to fill staffing needs reduces staffing costs, but also reduces the level of expertise.

Implication: Schools may need to initially offer incentives and/ or recognition to teachers to encourage greater participation in ELT programs, or require participation on a limited basis, to maintain an optimum balance between highly trained teachers and other support staff and volunteers. More time on publicizing the program and obtaining buy-in from teachers is needed in the earlier years of program implementation. One successful strategy we found at Mountain View School was allowing teachers and other staff to bring their own school-age children to the after-school program. This increased participation. Over time, as the ELT program becomes more established and valued, recruitment of teachers becomes less of a challenge.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Extended Learning Time Case Studies

1. Describe your program structure for the students who attend your extending learning program.
 - What are the goals of your extended learning program?
 - Describe enrollment of your program, and the typical student who attends.
 - What is the pedagogical philosophy for your extended learning program?
 - How would you describe the population of students that your program typically works with?
 - Please describe program costs, how the program is funded, what strategies you have used to meet these costs, and any concerns you have about sustaining funding.
 - For this estimate, please remember to consider staffing, supplies, rental of space, transportation, and any other costs needed to run the program.
 - Describe any grant writing activities you take part in to help fund your extended learning program.
 - May we request a copy of any grant proposals you have submitted?

2. Describe the changes have you seen in students who have attended the program regularly.
 - What kinds of academic changes have you observed, if any?
 - Have you collected any data on impacts of academic changes, such as improvement in grades, assessment scores, etc.? How and in what way?
 - What kinds of non-academic changes have you observed, if any?
 - Have you collected any data on impacts of non-academic changes, such as improvement in school attendance, reduction in behavior referrals, etc.? How and in what way?
 - Tell me about a student who you think has benefited from your program.

3. Describe the planning and work you put forth to help realize the goals of your program with your students.
 - Describe the coordinated efforts with the local school district to help support students.
 - Describe the coordinated efforts you have with community organizations to help support students
 - Describe your ability to recruit qualified staff.
 - Who typically staffs these positions?
 - How and to what extent do you provide training for your staff?
 - What are the types of academic services that have helped you deliver your programming?

- Describe the types of non-academic services you provide to students and their families.
 - How do you communicate with parents and gain buy-in for good participation, reduction of stigma, etc.?
- What barriers or challenges are there to reaching the goals of your program?
 - What supports have been helpful for overcoming these challenges and ensuring a sustainable program?

4. How and in what ways does your program support the expression of student voice?

- In what ways do students take on leadership in your program?
- To what extent are programming decisions made by adults vs. youth?
- What kind of systems are used to motivate students in your program?
- What kind of systems exist to manage student behavior in your program?