

Washington State Community Learning Center Program

Preliminary Report to the
Legislature



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November 2008

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Washington State Community Learning Center Program

Preliminary Report to the Legislature

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
I. Introduction	4
II. Process: Overview of Implementation Activities	5
A. Washington Community Learning Center Grants.....	5
B. WCLC Program Evaluation Process.....	7
C. Training and Professional Development.....	8
D. Public Awareness and Support for Statewide Afterschool Intermediary Organizations.....	8
III. Preliminary Evaluation Findings	9
IV. Recommendations	10

Executive Summary

The Washington State Community Learning Center Program, Preliminary Report to the Legislature provides information regarding the context and rationale for the program, an overview of the program legislation, the implementation activities to date, preliminary evaluation results, and recommendations for the future.

The executive summary highlights the key elements of the legislation, accomplishments to date, preliminary evaluation findings, and recommendations for the future.

Background

In 2007, the Legislature passed Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5841, which authorized the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to implement and administer the Washington Community Learning Centers (WCLC) Program.

The legislation directs OSPI to provide Community Learning Center grants to public or private organizations that meet the eligibility criteria for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Program and align the WCLC program elements and requirements with that of the 21st CCLC program. The legislation allows for five-year grant awards and authorizes WCLC programs to carry out a broad array of out-of-school activities that support and enhance academic achievement.

The legislation calls for an evaluation of the program and a report to the Legislature including outcomes of grants and recommendations regarding program modification, sustainability, and possible expansion. The preliminary report is due November 1, 2008. The final report is due December 1, 2009.

Objectives of the Program

The objectives of the program are to:

1. Support the creation or expansion of community learning centers that provide students with tutoring and educational enrichment when school is not in session.
2. Provide training and professional development for community learning center program staff.
3. Increase public awareness regarding the availability and benefits of afterschool programs.
4. Support statewide afterschool intermediary organizations in their efforts to provide leadership, coordination, technical assistance, advocacy, and programmatic support to afterschool programs throughout the state.

Major Accomplishments

OSPI successfully implemented all key elements of the WCLC Program as authorized in ESSB 5841, section 5:

Washington Community Learning Center Grants—

OSPI expanded the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center Program by funding four WCLC Programs in Nooksack, Everett, Seattle, and Grand Coulee, providing \$1,097,000 in funding for community learning centers that provide students with tutoring and educational enrichment when school is not in session.

Professional Development—

OSPI provided a full range of professional development activities to support the implementation of WCLC programs that provide high quality extended learning opportunities. Professional development activities include the development of an OSPI Community Learning Center Web site; ongoing training for direct service providers, program administrators, and evaluators; onsite program reviews; and additional technical assistance as needed.

Public Awareness and Engagement—

OSPI partnered with Schools Out Washington (SOWA) to promote increased public awareness regarding the availability and benefits of before-school and afterschool programs. Activities focused on the goal of engaging, supporting, and convening key constituencies and building public goodwill with school principals across the state.

Support Statewide Afterschool Intermediary Organizations—

OSPI provided \$250,000 of support to SOWA in their efforts to provide leadership, coordination, technical assistance, advocacy, and programmatic support to afterschool programs throughout the state. Activities focused on expanding the capacity of the Washington Regional Afterschool Program (WRAP); promoting quality standards and accountability; brokering and leveraging additional resources to fund before-school and afterschool programs; and promoting effective policy.

Preliminary Evaluation Findings

OSPI is conducting data collection and evaluation activities that parallel the federal 21st CCLC Program. Final evaluation results will be available in December 2009. In general, preliminary results demonstrate that the WCLC projects are comparable to the federal 21st CCLC projects, both in terms of operation and performance. Specific findings for WCLC include the following:

1. Four programs, including sixteen centers, provided services to 3,274 students.
2. All centers provided mathematics and reading support. Activities included academic enrichment, homework help, recreation, mentoring, tutoring, and family literacy services.
3. Students who participated regularly in the WCLC program demonstrated improved classroom behaviors such as homework completion, participation in class, being attentive in class, increased motivation to learn, and increased academic performance.
4. Baseline WASL performance data was collected for participating students.

Recommendations for the Future:

WCLC grant awards are funded for five years under the current legislation. It is recommended that the program continue to be funded to further program evaluation efforts, measure effectiveness, and provide continued support to the current grantees.

I. Introduction

The Washington State Community Learning Center Program, Preliminary Report to the Legislature provides information regarding the context and rationale for the program, an overview of the program legislation, the implementation activities to date, preliminary evaluation results, and recommendations for the future.

Students come to school from a variety of different backgrounds and experiences. Students from low-income households often enter kindergarten less prepared than their peers, who have had more advantages, and often lag behind in school throughout adolescence. For students who need extra support to be successful academically, what happens before and after school can be as important as what happens during the school day.

The children who could benefit the most from extended learning opportunities, however, typically have fewer opportunities to participate in high quality, affordable programs. When school-age children and teens do not have access to such programs and are left unsupervised after school, they are more likely to receive poor grades, drop out of school, and engage in more high-risk behaviors than children who participate in constructive activities supervised by responsible adults.

Research suggests that regular participation in extended learning programs that provide academic and social activities has a positive impact on students' grades, academic achievement, and self-esteem, especially for children in poverty.

In 2007, the Washington Learns committee acknowledged the research on extended learning and made recommendations for implementing extended learning opportunities in Washington State as a strategy for closing the achievement gap and personalizing education.

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II. Process: Overview of Implementation Activities

A. Washington Community Learning Center Grants

OSPI developed the grant criteria for the WCLC Program based on the criteria for the federal 21st CCLC. A Request for Proposals was released through the OSPI iGrants system. A conference for bidders was held, via video conferencing, at each of the nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs). In addition, many school districts used their own video conferencing capabilities to view the conference.

Eligible entities included local education agencies, community-based or faith-based organizations, other public or private entities, or a consortium of two or more entities that proposed to serve students who primarily attended:

1. Schools eligible for school-wide programs under Section 1114 of Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; or
2. Schools that serve a high percentage of students from low-income families (40 percent or higher free meal participation) and the family members of students that attend the afterschool programs.

The funding period for the WCLC grants is five years (contingent on continued funding from the legislature). The selection criteria for the grants include need for the project, quality of project design, adequacy of resources (including transportation), quality of the management plan, quality of the project evaluation, and feasibility of the budget request.

Grant Review Process—

A panel of reviewers composed of educators, afterschool advocates, community members, and afterschool program directors reviewed all eligible grants and made funding recommendations. Reviewers were selected based on their knowledge of afterschool, education, and community resources. Applications were scored using a rubric developed by OSPI staff and afterschool advocates. Total scores were averaged to determine the priority for funding.

Grant Awards—

OSPI received thirty grant applications proposing to serve students at 137 sites. The total amount of funding requested was \$10,786,053. Based on the available funding, four grant applications, serving 16 sites, were awarded for a total of \$1,096,752. The four communities funded include Everett, Nooksack, Grand Coulee, and Seattle.

Transportation—

As required in the legislation, all of the selected grantees have a transportation plan that addresses the needs of the students attending the afterschool programs.

Everett School District

Sites: Hawthorne Elementary School and North Middle School

Annual Funding: \$75,000

Program Description: Everett School District schools have focused on creating a strong partnership with the Snohomish Boys and Girls Club to provide an effective afterschool program. This partnership will focus on:

1. Engaging students with a computer-based mathematics program that will track progress, teach basic skills, and enhance and support classroom work.
2. Building connections in the community with colleges and other local stakeholders to recruit tutors and other volunteers.
3. Developing confident students who make better choices about their personal behavior and recognize the connection between their personal choices and their future.

Grand Coulee School District

Sites: Center Elementary, Grand Coulee Dam Middle School, Lake Roosevelt High School, and Nespalem/Colville Reservation Agency

Annual Funding: \$268,000

Program Description: Grand Coulee Dam School District (GCDS) is continuing to develop their afterschool program—SHARP Kids. SHARP is an acronym for Safe, Honest, Aware, Respectful, and Present. This partnership will focus on:

1. Improving mathematics achievement in middle school students.
2. Facilitating communications among home, school, and students.
3. Developing individualized support and transition plans to carry students from grade-to-grade and into a post-high school plan.
4. Providing intensive academic coaching programs.
5. Providing job shadowing, apprenticeships, service learning, and volunteer activities.

Nooksack School District

Sites: Everson Elementary, Nooksack Elementary, and Nooksack Valley Middle School

Annual Funding: \$153,752

Program Description: Nooksack Valley School District's mission is to ensure the success of all students. This project, NV P.A.C.E. (Pursuing Academic and Community Excellence) provides extended day and extended year opportunities for students not at grade level. This partnership focuses on:

1. Providing support in reading, writing, and most specifically, math.
2. Supporting students with English as their second language.
3. Developing partnerships for enrichment opportunities to meet needs in the community including family literacy, recreation, and mentoring activities.

Seattle School District

Sites: African American Academy, Concord, Emerson, Gatzert, Hawthorne, Denny, Rainier Beach, and Sealth

Annual Funding: \$600,000

Program Description: Working collaboratively with the schools in which they operate, Seattle Public Schools Community Learning Centers focuses on:

1. Providing afterschool homework help and academic support, especially for middle school mathematics.
2. Providing family involvement activities and workshops to prepare families to assist students in successfully transitioning from elementary to middle and high school grades.
3. Providing credit retrieval and WASL preparation.
4. Providing parent trainings and workshops on a variety of topics.

B. WCLC Program Evaluation Process

OSPI is conducting data collection and evaluation activities that parallel the federal 21st CCLC Program. With the desire to maintain consistency and comparability between the evaluation process for the 21st CCLC and WCLC projects and to reduce cost, the decision was made to require the same evaluation requirements for the new WCLC Program. Evaluation activities for 2007–08 are currently in process. Final evaluation results will be available December 2009.

The statewide evaluation process in Washington consists of two components. The first component is a local independent evaluation, and the second requires project data entry into the Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS), a Web based data collection system developed and managed by Learning Point Associates (LPA).

A contract for \$15,000 is now in place between OSPI and LPA to collect and report WCLC data through PPICS. The work for this is in process and will be completed soon. For this report, the four WCLC projects funded in 2007 were asked to complete a paper copy of the PPICS data collection forms and teacher survey.

PPICS information includes data about partners, operation, activities, feeder schools, attendance, and demographics of the participants. In addition, PPICS collects project achievement and behavioral outcome data and progress information toward meeting project objectives.

Outcome data includes state mandated WASL scores and information collected from teachers (via teacher survey) about achievement and behavior of participating students observed by the regular classroom teacher. The survey consists of items dealing with homework completion, attendance, and in-class behavior. Preliminary findings for 2007–08 are reported in Section III of this report.

C. Training and Professional Development

Professional development needs were identified by aggregating information from multiple sources, including focus groups with grantees, site visits, results from evaluations, and results from onsite monitoring.

Washington Community Learning Center staff received the following professional development opportunities:

- January 2008; SeaTac, Directors Meeting
- February 2008; Pasco and Renton, *Recruitment and Retention of Middle School Customers* by Steve Amuck
- April 2008; SeaTac, Director and Evaluator Training
- June 2008; Wenatchee, *Math and Afterschool: Making the Connection*. Two day Summer Math Institute focused on research-based practices
- July 2008; Dallas, Texas, *21st CCLC Summer Conference*
- September 2008; Ellensburg and Renton, *Essentials of Staff Development* by the Center for Afterschool

D. Public Awareness and Support for Statewide Afterschool Intermediary Organizations

A sole source contract was awarded to Schools Out Washington in the amount of \$250,000 for 2008 and \$250,000 for 2009. The general objectives of the contract with Schools Out Washington include:

1. Engaging, Convening, and Supporting Key Constituencies:
 - Expand the Washington Afterschool Network (WAN).
 - Assist WAN Steering Committee members to develop and implement an annual work plan.
 - Plan and implement approximately nine events to build public-will with school principals across the state.
2. Establishing Quality Standards and Promoting Accountability:
 - Convene a forum to highlight exemplary programs.
 - Convene a forum on program evaluation and accountability measures.
 - Support the Bridge to Afterschool and Back Conference to provide professional development to afterschool providers.

- Promote statewide standards for program quality assessment.
 - Develop and implement professional development activities.
3. Brokering and Leveraging Resources:
 - Plan and implement a forum on financing strategies for afterschool programs.
 - Plan and implement a forum on sustainability, grant writing, and provide technical assistance to those that attend the forum, as needed.
 - Work with funders and policy makers to increase funding for afterschool efforts.
 4. Promoting Effective Policy:
 - Support WAN members in remaining engaged at multiple levels to influence policy.
 - Develop fact sheets to keep stakeholders informed regarding emerging issues at both the state and national level.
 - Analyze the supply and demand study and provide a mapping of the supply and demand study results.

III. Preliminary Evaluation Findings

Findings are organized and summarized with the following sections: objectives, partners, operation, activities, attendance, teacher survey, and WASL performance. Below is a description of each.

Objectives: Each project maintains 3–7 objectives. These objectives focus on improving positive student behavioral choices, confidence in mathematics and reading, and increased WASL performance. All projects stated that they either met a particular objective or are making progress toward meeting objectives.

Partners: The number of partner organizations that projects reported ranges from 1–26. All partners listed are active with many subcontracting services to the project. Partners include local churches, banks, schools, YMCAs, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, parks and recreation, and community volunteers. Many partners contribute monetarily to the project.

Operation: There are 16 centers across the four projects. The average number of hours per week these centers were in operation during the school year was 9.4 hours; during the summer, the average was 2.3 hours per week. All schools ran afterschool programs during the regular school year. Three centers held programs before school, two offered summer school programs, and one offered a weekend program.

Activities: Mathematics and reading were offered at all 16 centers. Fifteen centers provided academic enrichment and parenting or family services. Thirteen centers offered homework help, 12 centers recreation, 8 centers mentoring, 7 centers tutoring, and 5 centers drug and violence prevention. Arts and music and

health/nutrition were offered at 12 centers. Science and cultural activities/social studies were offered at 9 centers.

Attendance: Across projects, there were 3,273 total attendees. All grade levels were represented in this total, with the largest representation from the elementary school level. There were 1,812 (55.4 percent) students reported as economically disadvantaged (as measured by free/reduced meals), 499 (15.2 percent) were reported as Limited English Proficient, and 290 (8.9 percent) disabled students participated. White students were the most highly represented ethnic/racial group with 1,294 (39.5 percent) students in WCLC. This was followed by African American students with 709 (21.7 percent), Hispanic/Latino students with 616 (18.8 percent), Asian/Pacific Islander students with 362 (11.0 percent), and American Indian students with 292 (8.9 percent).

Teacher Survey: Teachers provided a variety of responses to behaviors listed on the 10-item teacher survey. The survey responses indicated that 20-40 percent of students made moderate or significant improvement across items. The highest percentage of teachers reporting significant improvement of students was for changed behavior in academic performance.

WASL Performance: The percentage of students that passed the WASL in reading was relatively high, ranging from 55.4 percent in the 7th grade to a high of 80.8 percent in the 9th grade. In mathematics the range was a low of 29.1 percent for the 10th grade to 56.2 percent in the 3rd grade. White students had the highest pass rate in both reading and mathematics at 79.1 percent and 59.3 percent, respectively. The percentage of students passing in other demographic categories in reading and mathematics are as follows: American Indian (50.3 percent, 24.7 percent); Asian/Pacific Islander (65.5 percent, 51.7 percent); African American (48.0 percent, 22.3 percent); Hispanic/Latino (52.0 percent, 37.3 percent); Economically Disadvantaged – free/reduced meals (52.4 percent, 31.6 percent); and Limited English Proficient (28.9 percent, 24.4 percent).

IV. Recommendations

The WCLC Program has been fully implemented as authorized in ESSB 5841. The four major purposes have been addressed, and the WCLC program is making progress in meeting its objectives and desired outcomes. OSPI recommends continued funding to support the current grantees and to provide ongoing evaluation activities that demonstrate the effectiveness of the program.