

St. Anthony School of Milwaukee
St. Anthony School
21st Century Community Learning Centers Program
Site Monitoring Report
March 2018

Background

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) awarded a grant to the St. Anthony School of Milwaukee to operate a 21st Century Community Learning Center (CLC) for the 2017-18 school year. The \$100,000 grant that funds the after-school program serving students in grades K-5 at St. Anthony School has allowed the center to continue program operations for the fourth consecutive year of its first five-year cycle, under the state-administered CLC program.

The DPI selected 17 centers to receive monitoring visits during the spring semester of the 2017-2018 school year. Sites were selected for review based upon a variety of factors including maturity of the program, geographical distribution, and uniqueness of program services. Department of Public Instruction staff Tanya Morin and Sue Werley served as reviewers for the monitoring visit to St. Anthony School on March 13 and 14, 2018.

Project coordinators in each selected site were contacted after notice of intent was sent to the school/district administrator or organization director. Dates of the visit were established and coordinators were asked to complete a self-assessment of their program in advance of the on-site review. The completed self-assessments were returned to DPI and helped facilitate discussions with school and program administrative staff, site coordinators, building principals, and program instructors. An entrance interview was conducted with Vice President of Academic Affairs Jennifer Lopez; Elementary School Principals Brandy Hart and Teresa Reilly; Grants Coordinator Ellen Wilkinson; CLC Coordinators Kaitlin Gebhard, Nathaly Salazar, and Marina Perez; and program instructors Maria Garcia-Contreras, Liz Jimenez, and Christina Espinoza. The entrance interview was followed by direct observations by the reviewers of program services offered to students at the two St. Anthony elementary school campuses. Following thorough observations and discussions on-site, the reviewers examined documents compiled by program staff to verify compliance with program requirements and best practices. Further interviews and an exit conference were held the day after the on-site review. Preliminary findings in the form of program strengths and areas for improvement were shared at that time with Jennifer Lopez, Brandy Hart, Teresa Reilly, Ellen Wilkinson, Kaitlin Gebhard, Nathaly Salazar, and Marina Perez. The following represents a summary of those findings.

Program Organization

St. Anthony School of Milwaukee is a private Catholic school that serves approximately 1,800 students in pre-school through grade 12. It participates in the Milwaukee School Choice program and 99 percent of students use vouchers to attend. Ninety-nine percent of students at St. Anthony School are eligible for free and/or reduced lunch. Ninety-nine percent of students are Latino and many come from immigrant families. The school operates in five buildings, or campuses, each of

which houses students of different grade levels. School administration sees the CLC program as a way of providing students with academic support and access to other enrichment activities, as well as a safe place for them to be while parents are working. Although the CLC program originally intended to serve students in grades 3K-12, it now only serves students in grades 4K-5. The CLC is run at two of the five school buildings, the 5th Street campus (grades 4K-2) and the 9th Street campus (grades 3-5). This report is based on the CLC program that was observed on March 13, 2018, at the 5th Street and 9th Street locations.

The 2016-17 renewal application indicates that there were 272 students who regularly attended the CLC after-school program that year, well above the minimum required by the CLC grant, which is 50. This year, the program serves approximately 260 students per night and most students attend three to four times per week. Students are recruited for the program through open invitation and parent and teacher referral. A registration form is sent home with all students at the beginning of the year and one is also included in the school's "Welcome Back" packet. While there is no formal process in place for targeting students for recruitment, teachers do reach out to CLC staff if they have a student they believe would benefit from participation in the program.

The program coordinator is Kaitlin Gebhard, who is employed as a full-time teacher at the 9th Street School. Although she provides some support for the 5th Street program, she primarily oversees day-to-day operations at the 9th Street site and plans all activities for that program. Kaitlin also does the required end-of-year reporting for the grant. She has been with the CLC program for two years and has worked as the program coordinator for 1.5 years. Nathaly Salazar and Marina Perez are co-coordinators at the 5th Street program. Together they plan program activities and oversee day-to-day operations at that site. Nathaly has been with the CLC program since it began four years ago. In addition to the coordinators, there are nine total staff at the 5th Street site every night, including a front desk person who checks students out. Many of the frontline staff at this site work as Educational Assistants (EAs) at the school during the day. The 9th Street site has three frontline staff members who are there for the full program day. There are also three classroom teachers who provide support during the first hour of programming. Although it varies daily, the staff-to-student ratio is approximately 1:30 at the 9th Street campus and 1:22 at the 5th Street campus, which is above the recommended ratio of 1:15.

The St. Anthony School CLC program is open 140 days during the school year and operates Monday through Friday. The 9th Street program operates from 3:25-6:00 p.m. At the 5th Street campus, the program operates from 2:45-6:00 p.m. four days a week and from 2:00-6:00 p.m. on Thursday. At both sites, the last hour of programming (5:00-6:00 p.m.) is extended care for students whose parents are unable to pick them up by 5:00 p.m. The 9th Street program operates for a total of 10.3 hours per week and the 5th Street program operates for a total of 17 hours per week. Both totals are above the minimum number of weekly hours required by the grant, which is 10.

The daily schedules for the two sites are as follows:

9th Street Campus

- **3:25 p.m.** – Students meet CLC staff in the main hallway and go to recess.

- At approximately **3:35 p.m.** – Students are divided into grade level groups (3rd, 4th and 5th) and are taken to classrooms where they are checked in, eat snack, and do homework.
- At approximately **4:05 p.m.** – Students are brought to the cafeteria where they work on enrichment activities, including ones related to Math, Literacy, STEM, and SEL. Students remain in grade level groups for enrichment activities.
- **5:00-6:00 p.m.** – Extended care option for families unable to pick up students by 5:00. Free choice activities are offered for any remaining students.

5th Street Campus

- **2:45 p.m.** – Students are met by CLC staff in their classrooms and are escorted to program activities.
 - 4K and 5K students eat snack in the cafeteria, then go outside for recess. They then go to their classrooms for hands-on academic enrichment activities.
 - Students in grades 1 and 2 are divided into grade level groups and are brought to their classrooms, where they work on homework.
- Between **3:15 p.m. and 3:35 p.m.** – Students in grades 1 and 2 are brought to the cafeteria for snack, which lasts for 20 minutes. This is followed by a 20 minute recess.
- Between **4:10 p.m. and 4:20 p.m.** – First and second grade students return to their classrooms to work on enrichment activities, which vary according to the day (Monday – Reading, Tuesday – Writing, etc.).
- **5:00-6:00 p.m.** – Extended care option for families unable to pick students up by 5:00. Free choice activities are offered for any remaining students.

The program does not have a set dismissal time, *per se*. Families are allowed to pick up students at any point during the program day. At both campuses, family members are required to pick up their students. No alternative forms of transportation are offered.

Strengths

- School administration and staff consider the CLC program to be an extension of the school day and see the program as an asset for students and families. The school is supportive of the program in a variety of ways. For example, there is a close relationship between the coordinators and principals. Additionally, many school staff are involved in the program.
- All three program coordinators are dedicated and enthusiastic. They have a vision for the program and are obviously striving to make improvements. It is obvious they have good relationships with students, CLC staff, and school staff. The fact that two of the coordinators, Kaitlin and Nathaly, are trained as teachers means that they are able to draw on their professional knowledge to plan activities that address academic standards in ways that are appropriate to the ages/grade levels of the students being served.
- The involvement of day school teachers at the 9th Street site is a positive as it enables the program to provide targeted academic support to students.
- Many CLC staff members are day school employees. This strengthens the connection with the day school and means that program staff have an understanding of day school instruction and can build on existing positive relationships with students and families.
- Staff was respectful of students and had good classroom management skills.

- Some staff were bilingual and program materials were available in Spanish. This ensures that language is not a barrier to participation in the program.
- There is a good understanding on the part of the school and program staff of the needs of families and barriers that families face (immigration status, work schedules).
- The CLC program serves a large number of students every night, which is a testament to the fact that families need and value the program.
- Students appeared engaged in program activities and treated peers, teachers, and the space respectfully.
- Program coordinators attempt to incorporate academic skills to the majority of enrichment activities being offered. Additionally, some project-based, hands-on activities (Makerspace, STEM, etc.) are available to students. At the 5th Street site, students are given opportunities for leadership via the Leadership Council. The program may want to explore project-based learning more in depth using resources developed specifically for after-school programs, like those available on the You for Youth (Y4Y) website.

Areas Identified for Improvement

- Coordinators are only paid to work the time that the program is in operation. A dedicated coordinator who works at least 20 hours per week could help prepare activities, find community partners, and plan family events, among other things.
- Staff are not currently paid for planning or prep time and there is no evidence of ongoing professional development for CLC staff. It is recommended that the program provide time for staff to prepare materials on a daily basis, perhaps 15-30 minutes before the program starts. It is also suggested that the program build in days for staff training and long term planning. This can be accomplished by setting aside a day for these efforts once every eight weeks and not having student programming that day. If families are given enough advance notice, they will have time to find alternative child care arrangements.
- At the 9th Street site, supplies are not stored in a place that is easily accessible. This made it difficult for staff to get needed materials. Consider using carts that can be moved to different locations to store supplies so that they are more accessible to frontline staff.
- Transition times at the 9th Street site were quite long. Students were taken across the street to the cafeteria for enrichment activities, which took a long time. Once there, staff had to prepare materials, which added additional wait time for students. It is recommended that the program look for additional spaces in the 9th Street building to use for enrichment activities, such as the large hallways. It is also recommended that staff have materials ready prior to the start of the program.
- The parent activities offered by the program are limited. It is recommended that the program look for additional ways to offer parents opportunities for meaningful engagement in their students' education, as is required by the grant. One idea is to hold a showcase event at the end of the year so that students can share the projects they have been working on with their family members.
- Parent input is limited. It was mentioned that the program is planning to seek parent input using an end-of-year parent survey for the first time this year. We would also encourage the program to consider distributing parent surveys at the beginning of year to assist in planning parent activities, student activities, and the program schedule.

- Currently, students in grades 1-5 have 40-50 minutes of homework time, which is too long for elementary school students. Consider reducing the amount of homework time to no more than 20-30 minutes. Additionally, the large number of students in each group made it hard for staff to provide assistance to students who needed it. It is recommended the program look for ways to get additional staff/volunteers to help during this time. Another option is to have students who have homework sit at a table with a staff member so they can get help as needed.
- Students have recess every day, but only for a short time. This is particularly true for the students at the 9th Street campus. It is recommended the program build in more opportunities for movement (e.g. longer recess time, brain breaks, more physically active enrichment activities).
- Communication between day school teachers and CLC staff primarily takes place on an informal basis. The program should look for ways to formalize communication between program staff and day school staff, particularly with regards to student referrals and student needs. For example, CLC staff could attend grade level meetings periodically and CLC coordinators could have standing weekly or monthly meetings with the school principals.
- The program has limited partnerships. The program should explore partnership opportunities with organizations in the community that can provide instruction and enrichment for students and families. For example, the existing partnership with St. Norbert College, which provides student volunteers during the college's breaks, helps to reduce staff-to-student ratio numbers. Establishing similar partnerships with nearby colleges and universities could provide a more regular source of volunteers throughout the school year.
- There is no targeted recruitment of students to the CLC program. Given the demographics of the school (99 percent FRL) and the work schedules of the students' families, staff are confident they are serving students in need of CLC services. However, there may be students who would benefit from the academic support provided by the program who are not participating. For that reason, it is recommended that the program establish a process for identifying students who would benefit from the program and actively recruit them to attend. Using day school teachers to help identify these students and reach out to families can be very effective.
- The decision to not serve middle school students was made for the 2017-18 school year. This changes the scope of the program. Over the years, other significant changes have been made to the program that was proposed in the original grant application (e.g. partners, dedicated coordinator position, transportation, grades served). In the future, program modifications like these should be approved by DPI prior to making the change.

Items for Corrective Action

- Currently, students must be picked up by a family member. No other forms of transportation are provided. According to grant requirements, transportation cannot be a barrier to participation in the CLC. **The program is directed to develop a plan for ensuring that students who want to attend the program have access to transportation home, if needed, and to submit the plan to DPI.**
- The program charges a \$75 fee per semester for participating students. While fees are allowed, inability to pay cannot be a barrier to participation. School and program staff

report that scholarships are given to families that need them, but this is not communicated in a formal way to parents. **The program is directed to revise registration materials to make it clear that scholarships—including full waivers—are available if needed and to submit the revised materials to DPI.**

- Safety at the 9th Street campus was very lax. Parents entered the building and walked to classrooms to pick up their children without any supervision. **The program is directed to develop a plan for making sure the 9th Street campus is secure during program hours and that students are checked out in an orderly way. This plan should be submitted to DPI.** One suggestion is to hire a staff person to monitor the door and check students out, as is done at the 5th Street campus.
- Parents are free to pick up their children at any time point during the program day and many students leave early. On the day of our observation, we saw parents arriving almost as soon as the program began. Approximately 50 percent of the eighteen 3rd graders were gone by 4:20 p.m. Only two 3rd graders and three 4th graders remained at 4:30 p.m. As a result, there is no guarantee that students are receiving academic enrichment on a regular basis, which is a requirement of the grant. **The program is directed to develop a plan for ensuring that all students regularly participate in academic enrichment activities and to submit that plan to DPI.** This plan may include establishing expectations regarding pick up time and/or changing the schedule of the program so that academic enrichment activities are done before students leave.

Conclusion

The department applauds the commitment to quality programming and enthusiasm exhibited by all those involved with this program. Much credit should go to the program coordinators, frontline staff, and day school administration. The St. Anthony CLC should be proud of its service to students and should embrace the items jointly identified for improvement and corrective action as a means of providing an even higher level of programming.