



Iowa 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program Local Evaluation Report 2012-2013 School Year

St. Mark Youth Enrichment's (formerly St. Mark Community Center) 21st Century Community Learning Centers focus on meeting identified needs to achieve on-going goals for students in grades K-5 related to 1) improving academic achievement in the areas of math, reading, and homework completion; 2) ensuring that all students are healthy and socially competent; 3) ensuring that all students enrolled in Moving Up are well prepared for the transition to middle school; and 4) providing access and opportunities for students and their families to participate in a variety of literacy activities.

Data

In 2013, St. Mark conducted end of year surveys with Before and After School Program students, staff, teachers, parents, and partners. Quantitative and open-ended questions provided the means to collect qualitative data as well.

Rachel Daack, an independent Program Evaluator, reviewed the questions and helped to analyze the information reported in the surveys. Her full report, *SMCC Before/After School Program Surveys: Executive Summary and Findings 2013*, is available on-site at St. Mark.

Findings

Objectives: To improve reading comprehension and increase proficiency in basic math skills of all students enrolled in SMCC programs so that they succeed in school.

Teacher reporting indicates:

- improvements in being attentive in class, behaving well in class, academic performance, getting along well with other students, demonstrating respect for adults, and demonstrating respect for peers.
- that from 16% to 59% of students made some improvement in these areas during the school year. Areas with teachers indicating the highest incidence of student improvement (slight, moderate, or significant) include
 - academic performance (59%)
 - class participation (53%)
 - enjoying discussing activities from program (49%)

Staff reporting indicates:

- seventy-four percent or more of staff indicated that, overall, students in program improved somewhat or notably during program. Prompts that did not elicit ratings suggesting improvement indicated that no change took place except for one instance. One staff member indicated that students worsened in their respectfulness towards others. This was the only indicator of decline.

Community Partner reporting indicates:

- the programs do a nice job of structuring time for students in the after-school programs and supporting their learning, both academically and socially.
- resourceful collaboration with classroom teachers to assure that learning goals are met.
- an excellent job keeping updated on Math and Reading programs in the schools.

Objective: Positively affect student learning and engage all students through character development and promote healthy life styles so that they will be healthy and socially competent.

Overall reporting indicates:

- all adults who offered feedback suggest that overall students improved their behaviors in relation to St. Mark's goals. However, a higher percentage of students indicate struggles than staff, teachers, and parents report.

Teacher reporting indicates:

- from 0% to 11% of students made some decline in these areas during the school year. Teachers indicated the highest incidence of student decline (slight, moderate, or significant) in
 - getting along well with other students (11%)
 - demonstrating respect for peers in action and words (11%)
 - behaving well in class (10%)
- thirty percent clearly saw a positive relationship between a child's growth and their participation in St. Mark's program. No participants indicated a negative relationship between child performance and St. Mark's. Many teachers used the space to indicate more clearly how the child's performance changed. Of those who targeted a decline in student performance, they often cited other factors that contributed to the decline. For example, one mentioned a student's struggles with ADHD, and another mentioned a student's challenges at home as being key factors in student decline.

Parent reporting indicates:

- students were learning about having good relationships. Parents cited the importance of children meeting friends at program, having a good attitude, playing well with others, and learning about respect.
- active play and other activities were strengths of the program.

Objective: Strengthen positive connection to school and enhance motivation in the classroom by providing fun enrichment activities for students.

Overall reporting indicates:

- participants appreciate the well-designed lessons, including differentiation, stations, and connections to school curriculum.

Student reporting indicates:

- clear preferences for arts and culture activities and science, technology, and logic.
- a desire to explore many different interests through a variety of choices.

Objective: Students in Moving Up program will be better prepared for the transition to middle school by participating in community experiences that enhance learning and by strengthening positive decision making skills around academics and social interactions.

Overall reporting indicates:

- Student, parent, and staff responses about club were parallel in terms of their diversity. The student survey implies choices among certain categories (arts, STEM, fitness, service, etc.) and this fits the range of ideas offered by adults. Ensuring diversity and quality may be more important than offering a specific sport or cultural experience.

Objective: Increase the number of families participating in literacy activities by providing access to a variety of these activities.

Overall reporting indicates:

- With the low turn-out at family nights, one might consider additional ways to plan for or to require attendance at these programs. One staff member suggested holding them at pick up time since some families arrive early to watch their children during program. Staff may have other ideas to improve attendance since families are reporting time conflict as their main obstacle.

Objective: Increase literacy curriculum within the programs.

Efforts to incorporate themes and collaborate with community partners include:

- Read Across America Day
- Theatre Productions
- Shakespeare Units with local college English class

Objective: Students enrolled in SMCC Moving Up program will be better prepared for the transition to middle school by developing attitudes and behaviors that lead to successful learning including time management, goal-setting, and communication skills.

This objective is really built into all of the others. Therefore, success in achieving the other objectives would equate to students who have developed attitudes and behaviors that lead to successful learning in middle school.

Program Suggestions

Suggestions for change that result from the surveys indicate that those who are invested in the program want to make excellent what they currently see as very good. This follows from the fact that groups offered very high ratings in the rating scales yet also offered ways to improve areas they rated highly. This is a luxurious position to be in since it affirms the quality of the programs and indicates a high level of investment by those participating in or affected by the programs. The one exception to these consistently and overwhelmingly positive results are the responses from volunteers.

Recommendation: Reframe stated objectives to align with outcomes-based S.M.A.R.T. criteria.

- The current objectives provide a big picture outlook as to what the program intends to accomplish. It is necessary to drill each down further to specific and measurable goals that will inform whether or not outcomes are being met.
- It may be a good idea to set up benchmarks or desired performance levels with which to compare actual performance.

Recommendation: Develop communication tools and expectations to share information with and receive information from school staff and parents/guardians.

- Program staff, school staff, and parents/guardians all indicate a desire to share and receive updates on student academic performance, home work, behavior, and social-emotional needs.

Recommendation: Provide family engagement opportunities that meet the needs and desires of families in program.

- Families reported time conflict as their main obstacle. It would be beneficial to reach out to parents to find out what days of the week and times of day are best for them. Also, to find out what types of family engagement they are interested in.

Recommendation: Integrate volunteer engagement more fully into program staff orientation.

- Staff indicated that they used personnel and volunteers well, but 49% of volunteers felt they were well utilized only sometimes and a few said they were not well utilized. The differences in perception suggest that there is a gap to bridge. The gap may be in expectations or it may be in actually utilization. Sharing expectations with both program staff and volunteers is crucial, as each plays an important role in determining their level of engagement.