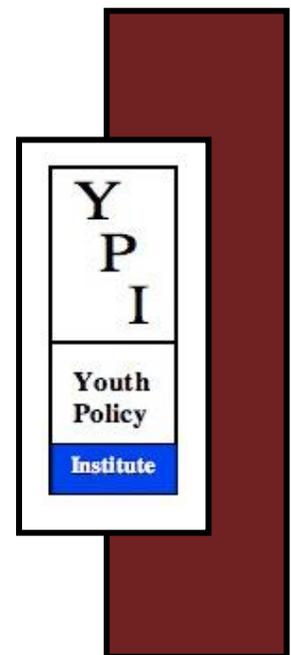**QUAD A FOR KIDS**
21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS PROGRAM
SERVING STUDENTS FROM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 8TH GRADE
IN SCHOOLS #2 AND #16 OF ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Interim Evaluation Report: 2017-2018 Academic Year

April 3, 2018

QUAD A FOR KIDS
21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS INITIATIVE

Interim Evaluation Report

First Year Implementation in Two Buildings in the Rochester City School District: SY 2017 - 2018

This Report was prepared by:

Youth Policy Institute, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

In October 2017, Quad A for Kids ("Quad A") initiated activities to establish 21st Community Learning Centers (21stCCLCs) at two schools of the Rochester City School District – Clara Barton School No. 2 (Grades K-6) and John Walton Spencer School No. 16 (Grades K-8) – with funding from the New York State Education Department. The goal is to serve a total of 230 students, providing them with a wide range of programming including STEM-oriented Project Based Learning ("PBL") activities, action-based learning labs to develop reading and literacy skills, nutritional education and daily meals, and other arts, cultural, and recreational enrichment activities. The program also provides parent/caregiver programming to improve engagement of families in the education of their children.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The evaluation is being conducted by the Youth Policy Institute, Inc. (YPI), a not-for-profit evaluation and research agency based in central New York. YPI is conducting both a formative study and an impact study of the 21st CCLC programs at the two Rochester sites. Evaluation activities will include examining the extent to which the Out of School Time (OST) program is providing services as planned, creating an environment that supports academic growth and pro-social behaviors, and adhering to established OST strategies and practices supported by research in the field. YPI is also tracking the extent to which the Quad A 21st CCLC programs have had a positive impact on various indicators of academic growth (such as grades, standardized test scores, and school engagement), as well as on student behavior and attendance. YPI will also examine the extent to which the programs have had an impact on parent and caregiver engagement with their children's education.

To provide a multifaceted view of this initiative, YPI will collect and analyze data from a range of sources including: program information stored in Quad A databases; school archival data; surveys of program staff, school-day teachers, participating students, and parents; administration of the NYS Afterschool Network Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool; interviews with school administrators and key staff; and periodic site visits. As of this writing, all of the survey instruments planned for implementation have been developed and, along with the QSA Tool, have been prepared for online administration.

This Interim Report provides an update on key program activities since October 2017, including program enrollment status and initial Quality Self-Assessment results for both campuses. This report could not have been completed without the support of Quad A staff, who facilitated evaluator access to the schools and to Advisory Committee meetings, supplied key data, and supported the administration of the QSA Tool.

ENROLLMENT

Programs at both participating schools are near full enrollment. As of mid-March 2018, School 2 had 114 students enrolled and School 16 had 109 students. The Quad A project is at 97% of its goal of full enrollment. Site observations and reports from Site Coordinators indicate that attendance levels are exceptionally high, running at approximately 75% of enrolled students. Given this participation rate, the Quad A 21stCCLC program, as it continues to enroll students, should easily meet its attendance goals (such as having 100 students in School No. 2 and 110 students in School No. 16 attending PBL activities for 30 or more days during the school year).

The grade distribution of enrolled students is shown in **Table 1**. Both schools have a roughly even distribution across grades. The sole exception is Kindergarteners in School No. 16, who are relatively few in number. Among the 223 participating students, there are slightly more females (57.4%, 128 students) than males (42.6%, 95 students).

Table 1: Grade Distribution of Quad A 21st CCLC Participants (% of Total)

	K	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
School No. 2	7%	22%	15%	9%	15%	15%	16%	n/a	n/a
School No. 16	1%	7%	9%	17%	23%	15%	11%	10%	7%
Both schools	4%	15%	12%	13%	19%	15%	14%	5%	4%

ALIGNMENT WITH EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

OST Practices. Quad A designed the 21stCCLC project to be in alignment with best practices in the field of out-of-school time (OST) programming. The programs are school-based, with an active working relationship between the school administrators and the implementing agency, including quarterly meetings of an Advisory Committee at each school (which currently include school administrators, teachers, parents, and Quad A staff). Each site meets high standards for safety, having been accorded a School-Age Child Care (SACC) operating certificate from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). All teachers at each site are drawn from the building's instructional staff, enabling ongoing coordination between the school day and after-school educational enrichment activities. Based on site visits and QSA data (see below), there is little doubt that Quad A staff are implementing a high level of security at the sites. Community-based organizations are a part of the creative and recreational programming. It is evident, at both sites, that employees have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities. On the days when YPI staff conducted site observations (twice at School 16 and once at School 2), the program was maintaining sufficient staff for a 10:1 ratio. At both sites, teachers and staff work together to support student learning, and their involvement, particularly during PBL activities, is clearly a creative extension of the school day that involves new forms of learning for the students and collaborative educational activities.

Literacy Practices. Afterschool program staff at Schools No. 2 and No. 16 are responsible for literacy enhancement activities. Staff at School No. 2 were observed using "Big Book" resources (e.g., Kaplan Early Learning, Lakeshore Learning, Scholastic, etc.) for K-1 students to conduct a read aloud activity, with individual students selected by teachers to read a 4-6 word sentence. While a small number of students can read the sentences, the majority of students currently lack

the necessary word attack skills, and thus are struggling to read sentences successfully, even with coaching from the staff. A more effective approach is for a staff person to read aloud from recognized, age-appropriate, high-quality literature. Reading aloud to children for 15-minutes per day has been proven to be a highly-effective and impactful strategy to promote literacy skills. The web-site **Read Aloud 15 Minutes** (www.readaloud.org) is an oft-cited source of tips, book recommendations, resources and free, downloadable materials.

At School No. 16, DEAR literacy work, particularly for younger students (K-2), is engaging, clearly calibrated to student needs, and based in research-based strategies and techniques. For other students, however, some refinements are recommended. Students in 3rd Grade were not observed in a DEAR activity, but they had just completed a poetry activity related to the Peace PBL project. From a review of the written work and readings by the young authors, it is clear that spelling, composition, and reading are areas in which the students need ongoing supports. Older students (5th-8th grade) were observed involved in independent reading during the site visits. The books provided by Quad A were selected after consulting with students regarding their reading interests, but additional active supports are also needed. One effective approach is to select passages for staff and students to read aloud for the purposes of an open-ended discussion that permits students to summarize what they hear (listening comprehension skills) and to articulate differing predictions and opinions about the passage (oral fluency skills).

PBL Standards. PBL programming is being provided twice weekly at both sites as planned. In most sessions observed there was clear evidence of student input and initiative and collaborative planning and execution, all hallmarks of high-quality PBL. Of particular note was the Soap Box Derby session at School No. 16, where students were observed learning to use manual and power tools, and where there was an intersection of multiple STEM fields, including geometry, engineering, and physics. Other PBL sessions, such as the cooking PBL at School No. 2 (3rd-5th grade) and food and nutrition at School No. 16 (4th grade) are developmentally appropriate and engaging. Both Step Dancing at School No. 2 and self-esteem/self-care at School No. 16 (both 5th grade and up) combine physical and recreational activity with active learning, and students are enthusiastic participants.

During the site visits, YPI noted highly positive and supportive relationships between staff and students. Quad A staff and participating RCSD teachers are clearly able to maintain student focus on the activities at hand, and they allow students to have a voice in the programming. Staff also display a clear capacity to manage student conduct in a way that reinforces pro-social behaviors. Observations of and conversations with students indicated that they had a respectful yet playful relationship with staff and that they appreciated the programming provided by Quad A. There is little doubt that students are happy to be involved in this 21stCCLC program, and they were quite willing to say so.

NYSAN QSA standards. Involving 21stCCLC staff in monitoring program compliance with research-based practices is an intrinsic part of the project. To gauge the extent of alignment with research-based OST protocols and practices, YPI and Quad A administrators requested that project site coordinators and staff at both buildings complete a New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) twice annually. A total of 23 staff from both sites collaborated on the completion of the first round of QSAs in late March 2018. The results of this administration are provided in **Table 2** below.

Each of the 10 QSA Scales had 7 to 18 Quality Indicators, which are scored on a four-point scale:
- 1 – Standard Not Met
- 2 – Approaching Standard
- 3 – Meets Standard
- 4 – Exceeds Standard

Each average Scale score is the average of all the Quality Indicators for that QSA Scale. **Table 2** provides average Scale scores for each school and for both schools combined. In addition, **Table 2** includes, for each Scale, the range of average Quality Indicators for that scale.

Table 2: Quality Self-Assessment Results: March 2018

Quality Self-Assessment Scales (and examples of Quality Indicators)	Average Scale Score, School No.2 (N=11)	Average Scale Score, School No.16 (N=12)	Average Scale Score, Both Schools (N=23)	Range (Min-Max) of Average Indicators Scores (Both Schools)
1. Environment/Climate: (supportive, safe & clean, safety plans & procedures, adequate security, dismissal plans, nutritious food, awareness of special needs)	3.33	3.69	3.52	3.35-3.83
2. Administration/Organization: (clear attendance & participation expectations, adequate documentation, employee handbook, clear salary structure, well-defined communication between school and Quad A, developed plan for family involvement, documentation of participant location)	3.28	3.78	3.54	3.09-3.83
3. Relationships: (staff show mutual respect & model positive relationships, respectful interactions with families and participants, sensitive to culture of participants)	3.30	3.77	3.54	3.26-3.74
4. Staffing/Professional Development: (program director committed to his/her professional development, staff who reflects diversity of community, staff has competence in core academic areas, maintain appropriate staff to participant ratio, positive working conditions for staff)	3.23	3.90	3.58	3.43-3.74
5. Programming/Activities: (activities that reflect the program's mission and are age and skill appropriate; project-based experiential activities that promote creativity and self-expression; enrichment in core academic areas and arts, technology, recreation, and health; incorporate culture and language of participants; develop a schedule known to staff, participants, and families)	2.92	3.70	3.32	2.83-3.57
6. Linkages Between Day & After-School: (commitment of resources from school principal; strong linkages to school day and programming that complements it)	2.94	3.67	3.32	2.78-3.61
7. Youth Participation/Engagement: (a variety of engagement activities; participants take ownership of program selection and development; participants have opportunities to develop life skills, resiliency and self-esteem; promote consistent participation)	2.90	3.76	3.34	3.23-3.48

Quality Self-Assessment Scales (and examples of Quality Indicators)	Average Scale Score, School No.2 (N=11)	Average Scale Score, School No.16 (N=12)	Average Scale Score, Both Schools (N=23)	Range (Min-Max) of Average Indicators Scores (Both Schools)
8. Parent/Family/Community Partnerships: (families involved in decision making & planning; communication with families regarding the well-being of children; opportunities for literacy and other educational experiences for the families of participants)	2.76	3.67	3.24	2.70-3.52
9. Program Sustainability/Growth: (written statement of mission and goals; employs staff who understand the mission and goals; develops a long-term sustainability plan; effective marketing strategy)	2.69	3.68	3.20	3.04-3.45
10. Measuring Outcomes/Evaluation: (plans for program evaluation, including gathering qualitative and quantitative data; use objective data to measure participants' academic progress; identifies and shares promising practices; uses evaluation findings for continuous program improvement)	2.92	3.69	3.32	3.09-3.57
Grand Mean	3.03	3.73	3.39	

It is clear that the staff from School No. 16 are confident that their 21stCCLC site is more than meeting the research-based standards of effective programming and is actually exceeding those standards in each of the 10 QSA Scales. The average scale scores at School No. 16 range between 3.67 and 3.90 on the 4-point scale discussed above, with an average score of 3.73 for all Scales.

By contrast, average Scale scores are consistently lower at School No. 2. While the average Scale score at School No. 2 of 3.03 reflects a staff conviction that they are, overall, meeting the QSA's research-based standard, School No. 16 staff scores are on average more than 20% higher.

As noted above, the Quality Indicators are the components of QSA scales. For all 116 Quality Indicators across the 10 Scales, the average Indicator score among School No. 16 respondents is above 3.40 on a 4-point scale. However, among School No. 2 staff, there are certain Quality Indicators that average between 1.90 and 2.75, a sign that staff at that school are concerned that in these regards the site is approaching QSA standards but not yet meeting them. In particular:

- For the Scale involving *programming and activities,* staff are School No. 2 see room for improvement in providing academic supports for students (average Indicator score of 2.27) and in the quality of activities that serve to develop global competencies and 21st Century skills (such as digital literacy and cross-cultural skills) that will help prepare participants for college, career, and citizenship (average score of 2.45).
- For the Scale regarding *linkages between the school day and after-school program,* School No. 2 staff report that the after-school program needs to be better represented on the school's curriculum planning committee (average Indicator score of 2.36).
- For the scale related to *youth participation and engagement in the 21stCCLC program* at School No. 2, staff see room for improvement in encouraging participants to recruit their peers to enroll in the program (average Indicator score of 2.55), would like to see more student involvement in program planning and

implementation (average score of 2.63), and would like to see more effort devoted to promoting consistent and active participation by students (average of 2.81).

- For the scale involving *parent, family, and community partnerships,* staff are particularly concerned that families be more involved in program planning and decision making (average Indicator score of 1.91), that families and the community be more involved in program events (average score of 2.64), and that more be done to find opportunities to share community resources with families (average score of 2.64).

SUMMARY

Site observations of the Quad A initiatives at both sites indicate that the after-school programs are on solid ground in their first year of operations. It is evident that staff are well-prepared and work positively and supportively with students. The program is meeting research-based and state standards in a variety of areas, although some additional literacy supports are recommended. All participants showed every sign of being engaged with their activities and pleased with program overall. QSA results show a distinct difference in the extent to which staff at the sites rate their 21stCCLC according to evidence-based standards. However, these differences should not obscure the fact that, on average, staff at School No. 2 and No. 16 see that they are either meeting or exceeding QSA standards.