Guiding Principles for 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs in Wisconsin

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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Our 12 Guiding Principles

The federal 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grant funds out-of-school time programs for students in urban, rural, and suburban communities across the state of Wisconsin. The more than 200 21st CCLC programs operating in Wisconsin serve tens of thousands of students every week, providing them with a diverse array of high-quality academic supports and enrichment activities. These programs are dynamic and complex environments that require innovative approaches to achieving the most impact for youth. No one setting is the same and there are many ways for programs to achieve excellence. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has developed a set of principles to help guide programs in that work. These guiding principles are meant to serve as a foundation for programs, but are also flexible enough to be adapted to local situations. It is our hope that the principles will both inspire and provide direction to Wisconsin's 21st CCLC programs as they strive to provide high quality out-of-school time experiences to students across the state.

Vision, Mission, and Goals

Principle

Program has clear youth-centered vision, mission, and goals developed in partnership with important stakeholders

Description

Program works with important stakeholders to create a vision, mission, and goals that reflect the needs of youth and foster a feeling of responsibility to or kinship with the program. Program vision, mission, and goals are explicit, understood by stakeholders, and are used to guide program activities and continuous quality improvement efforts.

Leadership and Staff

Principle

Program has strong leadership and a team of qualified staff in place

Description

Program has stable, strong leadership and qualified staff, each of whom support and engage youth in positive ways. Program is adequately staffed based on the ages and needs of youth. Staff are highly involved in decision making and participate in on-going professional development that aligns with program needs. Program coordinators are deeply involved in the day-to-day operations of the program and provide staff with the support and time needed to fulfill job responsibilities and meet professional development goals.

Financial Management and Sustainability

Principle

Program manages funding sources appropriately and plans for sustainability

Description

Sound fiscal and administrative policies and procedures are in place to ensure that funds are spent appropriately. Program has developed and implemented a long-term sustainability plan that includes the regular re-examination of program needs and goals, monitoring of fiscal stability, anticipation of upcoming challenges, and identification of new funding sources. Program continually forms new relationships with the community while nurturing existing ones to ensure continued resource sharing.

Program Improvement

Principle
Program gathers and reviews high-quality data for decision making and continuous quality improvement

Description
The program regularly collects and reviews data to highlight strengths, identify areas in need of improvement, and develop improvement strategies. In the best cases, schools, families, students, and other stakeholders are invited into conversations to help explore the reasons behind weaker data points, celebrate areas of success, and make suggestions for additional types of data or information which could portray a deeper sense of how the program is performing for its students and their families.

Diversity of Programming

Principle
Program offers a broad array of programming and employs multiple methods of instruction

Description
Program provides youth with opportunities to participate in a wide range of programming, including activities that are academic, arts-based, civically-oriented, health and wellness-related, and recreational. Additionally, multiple methods of instruction are used that allow youth a range of learning experiences. Programming is intentionally designed to promote the academic growth and physical and social well-being of youth. Program offerings both reflect the interests of youth and enable them to explore new areas of interest.

Academic Enrichment

Principle
Academic enrichment activities complement, but do not replicate, the school day

Description
All youth have access to academic enrichment activities that allow them to develop grade-level appropriate career and college readiness skills in ways that are engaging and personally meaningful. Academic activities are standards-based, developmentally appropriate, intentional, and build skills in a sequential way. At the same time, academic programming is distinctly and intentionally different from that of the school day and often engages students in active learning and/or provides opportunities to apply learning to real world problems.

Social and Emotional Learning

Principle
Social and emotional learning is integrated across all areas of the program

Description
Program intentionally embeds opportunities for youth to develop and practice social and emotional competencies, such as self-discovery, self-direction, focus, confidence, teamwork, and help-seeking, across program activities and settings in order to enhance the academic achievement and general well-being of youth.

Voice, Choice, and Leadership

Principle
Youth have a voice in programming and have genuine opportunities for choice and leadership

Description
Program intentionally provides youth with opportunities to express opinions and ideas, work cooperatively with and mentor each other, make genuine choices, provide input into program decisions, and take on leadership roles.

Program Environment

Principle
Program ensures youth feel safe, supported, and welcomed

Description
Program provides youth with a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment. Youth have the "safety" of a structure, yet also have opportunities to explore, experiment, and learn by making mistakes. Persons of all backgrounds are welcome, which is reflected through the promotion of respectful interactions and the explicit discussion and support of diversity and difference throughout the program. Program staff form genuine caring relationships with youth and encourage positive peer-to-peer relationships between youth.

Community Collaboration

Principle
Program engages and collaborates with community stakeholders

Description
Program joins existing coalitions or forms strategic partnerships that allow it to draw on the resources of a wide range of community stakeholders, including nonprofits, schools, businesses, and public agencies. These partnerships enable the program to provide a wider variety of activities to youth and their families and contribute to the financial sustainability of the program.

Partnership with School

Principle
Partnership between program and school is characterized by active collaboration and communication

Description
Program is proactive in forming a close partnership with the schools it serves. The partnership includes data sharing, program planning and goal-setting, student recruitment, and resource sharing. There is an established method of communication between the school and program that facilitates the regular sharing of information and enables the program to better coordinate supports and opportunities for youth and their families.

Family Engagement

Principle
Families are treated as essential partners in program's efforts to support youth

Description
Partnering with families is a primary focus of the program. Activities are regularly offered that address the specific needs of youth and their families and that empower families to be actively involved in supporting their students' education. Staff routinely discuss students' progress with families, both formally and informally. Program regularly seeks family input regarding program structure and activities.