ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF REGULAR PARTICIPATION FROM AT-RISK STUDENTS ENROLLED IN A 21st CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING PROGRAM

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled:

ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF REGULAR PARTICIPATION FROM AT-RISK STUDENTS ENROLLED IN A 21st CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING PR0GRAM

Presented by Richard B. Leeker,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worth of acceptance.

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Dr. David Stader, Major Advisor

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Dr. Paul Watkins

Dedication

To my wife Tiffany, for her steadfast support and encouragement. You have always been my biggest supporter. I know that this would not have been possible without your encouragement and patience. To my children Lillian, William, and Kathryn, thank you for understanding when I was not able to always be there to support you at all your activities. I am truly blessed with the very best family and I look forward to spending more time with you now that this is completed.

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the impact of regular participation from at-risk students enrolled in a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) after-school tutoring program based on attendance and achievement. The program evaluation specifically identified at-risk students as regular program attendees or non-regular program attendees. Participant data for each of the five-years was collected on regular school day attendance and core course GPA. Study results found a statistically significant relationship between regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program and regular school day attendance for three of the five years. Study results found a statistically significant relationship between regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program and core course GPA for each of the five years. Implications for this research include the continuation of operating the 21st CCLC program and continuing to seek out at-risk students and encourage them to participate in the program.

SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION

Background

In 2011, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) noted that 20.2% of students did not graduate high school with their cohort (DESE "Four-year graduation rate", 2011). Furthermore, students who qualify for free and reduced lunch have a 73% chance of graduating compared to an overall state graduation rate of 79.8% (DESE "Four-year graduation rate", 2011). Students not graduating from high school are an especially serious problem, because those students who do not complete high school are less likely and less qualified to provide for their families (United State Census Bureau "Educational attainment in the United States: 2009", 2012). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, workers who are not high school graduates will earn $18,432 per year while those who are high school graduates will earn an average of $26,766 per year (Educational Attainment in the United States: 2009, 2012, table 3). According to the Missouri Afterschool Program, identifying at-risk students early in their high school careers and involving them in a high quality after-school program can greatly increase graduation rate (DESE "Overview", 2011).

In an effort to address this phenomenon, schools throughout Missouri and nationwide have implemented after-school programs. Kanter (2001) notes the impact of quality after-school programs on its participants by saying, "After-school programs for youth of all ages provide unique opportunities to link school learning with real-world experiences and peer association." (p. 19). Studies by (Chappell, 2006; Davies & Peltz, 2012; and Hartmann, Good, & Edmunds, 2011) indicate that students who are involved in high quality after-school programs are less likely to be truant from school, have lower discipline referral rates, and complete core classes (i.e. math, science, social studies, and language arts) as scheduled than similar students who do not attend an after-school program. Furthermore, at-risk students will be defined in this study as

a student who qualifies for the National School Lunch Program (United state Department of Agriculture, 2016). Evidence exists that at-risk students can benefit tremendously from attending a high-quality, after-school program; one that uses regular school day teachers who focus on developing quality relationships with the students they assist (Rothman & Henderson, 2011). This study will provide insight on the impact of regular attendance at a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) program by at-risk students as compared to at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program. The research will examine the two groups' regular school day attendance rates and core course GPA.   The study will perform independent sample t-tests for each research question on each test group regarding attendance rates and core course GPA.

In an effort to combat the rise of at-risk students and students who dropout of high school, DESE has utilized available monies from the US Department of Education's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), previously know at the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, to implement after-school programs across the state ("Every student succeeds act", 2016) . One of these programs is the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC). The 21st CCLC program is offered by completing a 21st CCLC program grant application through the U. S. Department of Education ("Grant applications", 2016). Many school districts have chosen to implement the federally funded, 21st CCLC after-school program model.   In 2002-2003 the US Department of Education began allocating money to each state to implement their 21st CCLC program and grant cycles. Since then, there have been numerous studies on the positive outcomes produced by offering 21st CCLC programs, however, there have been few empirical studies regarding the impact 21st CCLC programs provide students in the State of Missouri (Chappell, 2006; DESE "Overview", 2011; Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010). This

study will aim to substantiate empirical-based research concerning the impact of regular participation from at-risk students enrolled in a rural high school in southeast Missouri who participate in a 21st CCLC program. The study will focus on regular day attendance rates and core course GPA between at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program compared to at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

Statement of Problem

School districts throughout the State of Missouri are implementing programs to assist at-risk students. There are too few at-risk students who regularly attend available after-school programs. As a result, there are too few at-risk students who take advantage of the positive impacts these programs provide. Students who are at-risk of graduating high school can benefit by accessing additional assistance that is available during after-school programs. When these students do not regularly attend after-school programs, they are less likely to graduate on time. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2010-2011, Missouri's four-year high school graduation rate was 79.8% (DESE "Four-year graduation rate"). Students who do not graduate are less likely to become productive members in their community and struggle to support themselves and their families. Inasmuch, a study conducted by Vredeveld (2008) indicated that, "…dropouts are much less likely to participate in the workforce" (pg. 5).

There are several possible reasons why at-risk students do not attend after-school programs. At-risk students may not have the support from their families to attend after-school tutoring. The National Center for Education Statistics would substantiate this claim "…poor relationships with parents as contributors to students' risk for school failure" (1992, p. 27). Most after-school programs do not require at-risk students to attend after-school tutoring (Walker &

Arbreton, 2005). Many at-risk students are involved in other activities that keep them from

attending (Walker & Arbreton, 2005). Finally, at-risk students who do not attend an after-school

program demonstrate a lack of academic motivation due to what Schunk (1991) describes,

through the work of (Bandura, 1986) as, "one type of personal expectancy: self-efficacy, defined

as 'people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to

attain designated types of performances" (p. 207).

Problem of practice

School districts across the nation are examining the impact of after-school programs in

education. The percentage of public schools offering an after-school program has, "tripled from

thirteen percent to forty-seven percent between 1987 and 1999" (Dodd & Bowen, 2011, p.

12). Effective after-school programs incorporate recreation and enrichment opportunities,

provide a snack, homework time, and begin immediately after-school (Dodd & Bowen, 2011;

Chappell, 2006). Dodd and Bowen also note that nearly six million students participated in an

after-school program in 2011 (Dodd & Bowen, 2011). This would signify a substantial number

of students who regularly attend some form of after-school activities. Students who are

identified at-risk can greatly benefit from attending after-school programs. These students are

considered at-risk for several reasons; low family income, poor conditions at home, or lack of

parental support. Studies indicated that at-risk students who regularly participated in an after-

school program increased their achievement levels, reduced disciplinary incidents and increased

their own expectations of themselves (Chappell, 2006).

Existing Gap in the Literature

Studies have repeatedly presented empirical data detailing how at-risk benefit by

attending an after-school program and have increased odds of graduating from a four-year high

school and becoming productive members of society (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010; DESE "Missouri Afterschool Programs", 2011). While there is ample evidence that exists demonstrating the effectiveness of after-school programs on increasing regular school day attendance, increasing academic success, and in some instances, lowering disciplinary incidents (Finn & Rock, 1997; Davies & Peltz 2012; Walker & Arbreton, 2005; Kanter 2001; Gottfredson, Gerstenblith, Soule, Womer, & Lu, 2004) there have been few studies conducted on the effectiveness of Missouri's implementation of the 21st CCLC model, which many districts have recently implemented in Missouri. To clarify this further, there is evidence that establishes the effectiveness of after-school programs such as the 21st CCLC to increase regular school day attendance and increase core course GPA (Overview, 2011), however, research is limited on these relationships in rural public schools in Southeast Missouri.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to examine regular school day attendance rates and core course GPA for students who are identified as at-risk and who regularly attend a 21st CCLC after-school program at a rural school located in Southeast Missouri, compared to similarly identified students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC after-school program in the aforementioned rural school setting. The study will collect data from the past five years of the program's existence.

For the purpose of this study, the term "at-risk" will refer to high school students who have attended a 21st CCLC program and who qualify for the National School Lunch Program (United state Department of Agriculture, 2016). In addition, the term, "regularly attend" refers to a student who attends an after-school program at least thirty times in a school year (DESE "Application", 2016, p. 1). A school year will be defined by the district's school calendar for

each year: Each school year has approximately 165 days of instruction (Kennett #39 School Board, 2016, December).

As previously stated, past research indicates that at-risk students who regularly attend an after-school program exhibit higher rates of regular school day attendance and an increase in academic achievement (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010; DESE "Missouri Afterschool Programs", 2011; Gottfredson et al., 2004). Previous research has mainly been conducted in larger, urban area schools. With that being said, there is a gap in this knowledge as it pertains to schools located in the rural areas of Southeast Missouri. Therefore, the purpose of this study will be to analyze data collected from a rural school located in Southeast Missouri on the impact of at-risk students who regularly attend an after-school program compared to students who do not regularly attend the aforementioned 21st CCLC program. Results from the data collected will provide insight on the effectiveness of the program which could potentially provide implications for future grant applications for the 21st CCLC program.

Research Questions

The research questions that will be used for this study are quantitative in nature. Data will be collected from a student information system maintained by the school district. The research questions guiding this study are:

- Research question number 1: How do regular school day attendance rates of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program compare to at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program?

- Research question 2: How do regular school day core course GPA of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program compare to at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program?

Null Hypotheses

- Research question number 1: There is no statistical difference when comparing regular school day attendance rates of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program and at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

- Research question 2: There is no statistical difference when comparing regular school day core course GPA of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program and at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

Conceptual/Theoretical Frameworks

At the turn of the century, the United States government allocated $4.5 billion dollars to enhance after-school programs around the country (Chappell, 2006). This allocation signifies a commitment to enhance and strengthen school systems in the United States, especially those that are located in rural or urban high-poverty, low-performing areas. It also demonstrates a conceptual framework that schools are needed to assist students outside the regular school day; either for safety, due to parents working late or as a way to extend the education of the regular school day (Dodd & Bowen, 2011; DESE "Missouri Afterschool Programs", 2011). Since then, a report from the U.S. Department of Education indicates a gradual decrease in the number of students who drop out of high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Studies indicate that youth are most susceptible to involve themselves or be victims of crimes between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. (DESE "Missouri afterschool programs", 2011). More and more parents must work longer hours to support their families. In Missouri, 89% of adults agree that there should be, "a place for children and teens to go after-school every day that provides opportunities to learn" (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010, p. 1). 21st CCLC programs can serve as a safe place for students to go after the regular school day

to provide an extended learning opportunity and high quality activities which are linked to school day curriculum and additional after-school learning components.

Research indicates that after-school programs can have a significant impact on student attendance rates, achievement, and behaviors during the regular school day simply by attending an after-school program. Studies conducted by Davies & Peltz, (2012) have shown when students regularly attend a strong after-school program they have, "improved scores on standardized tests" (p. 12). Another study, conducted by the Afterschool Alliance (2013) found "significant increases in proficiency-level shifts among active participants compared to nonparticipants" (p. 3) in a two year span in mathematics. Regression model results conducted by Hartmann et al. (2011, table 1) have shown how at-risk students who regularly attend an after-school program are more likely to pass their math or language arts course and less likely to have attendance issues.

The purpose of providing after-school programs such as the 21st CCLC model is to provide scaffolding opportunities in a variety of areas for all students, especially for those students who are at-risk. The 21st CCLC model incorporates the following scaffolding opportunities: character education, homework assistance, athletic activities, or even extended learning opportunities. After-school programs have proven to be an effective measure to increase regular school day attendance rates and reduce the number of failing grades in at-risk students.

<div align="center">

Design of the Study

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Setting

A program evaluation approach will be utilized to examine the outputs of the two participant groups being studied. This will be a longitudinal study of the program starting with

its inception in the 2011-2012 school year. Five years of student data will be collected, ending with the 2015-2016 school year. It should be noted that the principal investigator is currently employed at school where the data originated. This school is in its sixth year of offering its 21st CCLC program. The organizational structure of the school utilizes a multi- framework methodology described by Bolman and Deal (2008); the school utilizes a Professional Learning Community based structure that values student input and encourages staff and students to voice their needs. This school advertises that it offers a high quality, challenging, and well-rounded education to its students. The school has a rich tradition of its students being successful post-graduation, as well as giving back to their school and community. Students at this school are encouraged to get involved in the plethora of activities offered throughout the year.

Students from this study will come from a rural high school in Southeast Missouri containing grades 9-12 with an overall student population of 550 (DESE "School report card, 2016). This high school is currently in its sixth year of providing their 21st CCLC program. The 21st CCLC program offers 15 hours of supervised activities, including before and after-school tutoring, character education one hour a week, and enrichment activities that are centered on student interests. The before school program operates every morning from 6:30am to 7:30 am with locations in the school's library and cafeteria. The after-school program begins in the cafeteria starting at 2:30 p.m. by providing students a snack. Tutoring and homework assistance is from 2:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Enrichment activities follow from 3:45 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. Supper is served each afternoon from 4:45 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The program ends each day by providing bus transportation home for each student. School Board Policy JED-R2 prohibits students from participating in after-school activities if they do not

attend the regular school day unless prior arrangements have been made with the building

principal ([Name of school district, Policy Manual, 2016).

Daily program attendance is uploaded to Kids Care Center (DESE "Kids care center",

2016) on a weekly basis. Kids Care Center is an informational program that is used to maintain

program information such as enrollment, gender, race, and activities offered by the after-school

program. It is maintained by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary

Education. In the past five years, average daily attendance rates have increased slightly. The

majority of the students are African American and qualify for the National School Lunch

Program (DESE "Student characteristics", 2016).

There is support for the program at all levels, including administration, staff, parents, and

students. The staff is compensated for their time and involvement with the program and placed in

positions within the program where their strengths are best utilized. About a fourth of the high

school's staff currently participate in the program. Administration participates in the day-to-day

operation of the program and is knowledgeable of all facets of the program. Student input on

enrichment activities is valued. Parents remain informed by email, phone calls, and a monthly

newsletter.

Participants

Participant samples will be collected in what Creswell (2014) describes as stratification

of the population. Participants will be identified initially by their attendance in the after-school

program. A subset of participants for the study will then be selected by determining if they

qualified for the National School Lunch Program.   This subset of the population will then be

divided by regular program attendees and non-regular program attendees. For the purpose of this

study, the term regular attendees will be used to identify those students who attend a 21st CCLC

program at least 30 days in a school year. This will allow the researcher to compare data

generated from the two groups.

Data Collection Tools

In order to obtain any data for this study it will be necessary to obtain permission from

the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from the University of Missouri-Columbia. No data

collection can begin without the consent of the University and the institution. Once the IRB is

approved, permission will be sought from the Superintendent's' Office of the participating school

district to collect data for each participant.   Only aggregate data will be used for this study,

therefore, no students will be identified.

Quantitative data from participants' attendance rates and core course GPA for each

school year will be used to compare data between the control group and participants who

regularly attended a 21st CCLC program. Participants' core courses will be combined into a

GPA format based on a 4.0 grading scale. Core courses are those courses in math, science,

social studies, and language arts. Table 1 shows the relationship between the letter grade and the

GPA associated to the letter grade.

Table 1

GPA Calculation for 4.0 Grading Scale

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
GPA	4.0	3.66	3.33	3.0	2.66	2.33	2.0	1.66	1.33	1.0	.66	0

Note. Grade = Letter grade that represents an achievement mark; GPA = Grade point average.
Adapted from "Name of school district" ("Student Handbook, 2016, p. 5).

Student attendance rates will be reported in total days of absence; including out-of-school

suspension days, verified, and general absences for the school year. All participant data will be

aggregated and will not identify students. The research will be made available to members of the district and all of its stakeholders.

Data Analysis

Student outcome data will be examined through quantitative analysis using IBM SPSS software. The research conducted and data collected will come from the attendance of the after-school tutoring and homework time provided Monday through Thursday from 2:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. It is the intention of the researcher to utilize an independent t-test for all research questions. The t-test will be used to compare the means between at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program regarding regular day attendance rates and core course GPA compared to at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

<center>**Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls**</center>

In order to ensure the legitimacy of data gathered, a sample size of 45 qualifying students from each population, evenly divided by gender and grade level, would be optimal for each year of the study. Statistical significance will be set at .05%. It should be noted that this study will measure data from independent t-tests for each research question to determine the relationship between the students who regularly attended an after-school program to those who did not regularly attend an after-school program based on regular school day attendance rates and core course GPA. Each of the independent t-tests will be performed for each of the five years of the program.

This study will be limited by the number of participants who qualify for the study. As previously stated, the study will look to examine at least 45 participants from each group. In the event that there are not enough participants, the data has the potential to not be as accurate. Other limitations would include students who have external barriers that after-school

programs are not equipped to deal with. Such barriers could include a lack of support from home to attend an after-school program, students who are not motivated to fully participate in the after-school program, or teachers and or administrators who work for the after-school program but do not fully implement the after-school program goals.

Reasoning for students who lack motivation and exhibit low self-efficacy would also be a limitation for this study. Further research may be needed to gain insight on this phenomenon. Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (2011) could provide further information as to why students may not be as motivated as others by conducting field notes of students during after-school tutoring and focusing on how they spend their time. Techniques described by McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn (2013), such as open coding, could bring information to light in a new way and assist with further analysis.

Definitions of Key Terms

The definition of key terms provides a clearer explanation of the terms as they are used in this study. Terms that are technical in nature or subject to multiple interpretations are defined below:

21st CCLC program

Refers to after-school programs that provide the following criteria: Academic enrichment that can help students meet state and local achievement (Afterschool Alliance, 2013), offers a broad array of additional services designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program (Afterschool Alliance, 2013; Dodd & Bowen, 2011; Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010). For this study, after-school program will refer to the 21st CCLC program that is offered from 2:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

At-Risk Students

There is an abundance of information available to define at-risk students (Ryan, 2011; Heppen & Therriault, 2008; Bruce, Bridgeland, Fox, & Balfanz, 2011; and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013). For this study, the term "at-risk" will be used to identify a student who qualifies for the National Free Lunch Program (United state Department of Agriculture, 2016).

Core Course

A core course is identified as a course in the following subjects: math, science, social studies, or language arts, as defined by DESE in the graduation handbook (DESE "Graduation handbook, 2015, p. 11).

Regular Participation

DESE refers to regular participation that is, "defined by the U.S. Department of Education: students who attend the 21st CCLC program 30 or more days (does not have to be consecutive) during the year" (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2016, p. 1). For this study, regular participation will be used to identify students who attend at least 30 days during a school year.

Low Socioeconomic Students

Students that qualify for the National School Lunch Program are classified as low socioeconomic students (United state Department of Agriculture, 2016).

Student Absences and Excuses

Board policy JED-R2 prohibits students from participating in after-school programs if they do not attend school during the regular school day ([name of school district], "Policy manual", 2016).

<center>**Significance of the Study**</center>

This study is a program evaluation of a 21st CCLC program. The significance of the study will contribute to the gap that exists regarding the effectiveness of 21st CCLC programs in rural schools. The study will also provide insight on the effectiveness of federally funded after-school programs. Finally, the study could provide insight on school policies regarding at-risk students attending quality after-school programs.

Scholarship

While there is ample evidence that exists which indicates the effectiveness of after-school programs in increasing regular school day attendance rates and decreasing failing grades in core classes, a gap still exists in this research regarding rural schools in southeast Missouri. Additional research is needed to gain a better understanding of past research. This study will seek to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of an after-school program as it relates to a rural high school in southeast Missouri. Thus, the data collected has potential to be used as evidence of the impact rural high schools that offer highly effective after-school programs can have on regular day school attendance rates and improvements in academic achievement among at-risk students.

Practice

This research will help to expand upon the existing knowledge of the effectiveness after-school programs have on rural students in Missouri. A national study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education indicated a record high for high school graduates for the 2012-2013 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Is this trend related to the U.S. Department of Education's investment of billions of dollars in School Improvement Grants (U.S. Department of Education, 2015); like 21st CCLC? Currently, there have been many studies about the

effectiveness of after-school programs (Davies & Peltz, 2012; Finn & Rock, 1997; Kanter, 2001; Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010, 2010; Rothman & Henderson, 2011, and Hirsh, 2014). These studies have also indicated the effectiveness of 21st CCLC programs. Despite these studies, there are few, if any, pertaining to high schools in Missouri that have implemented a 21st CCLC program in a rural setting. This study will seek to close the knowledge gap that exists regarding the implementation of 21st CCLC programs in Missouri in rural schools.

This research has the potential to advocate for more funding for after-school programs. Since there are many similar types of schools in the surrounding area, if data collected from this study indicates that students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program tend to have an increase in regular school day attendance rates and lower the number of core grades failed in high school, those schools may begin to develop similar programs. State and national funding may also increase. Local education agencies may even decide to make it mandatory for at-risk students to attend an after-school program. The study could also make a substantial contribution to members of the after-school community. It could reaffirm that after-school programs are effective and serve as a crucial piece to a quality education.

Summary

A model exists to combat the persistent flow of students who do not complete high school on time. This model is founded in belief and empirical data that shows just how effective after-school programs can be. Students who attend a high quality, value added (Hirsh, 2014), multifunctioning after-school program have a greater chance of earning a high school diploma and staying on track with their cohort. Students who regularly attend an after-school program have shown to be involved in less disciplinary incidents during the regular school day (Walker & Arbreton, 2005). These students have shown an increase in their overall self-esteem, feel safer

while attending school, and graduate more often than those who have the same at-risk factors and do not attend an after-school program. With more and more parents working after-school hours (Kanter 2001), the time is now to implement high quality after-school programs throughout the country to meet the needs of at-risk students.

Missouri's implementation of the 21st CCLC after-school program was designed to continue to reach the needs of at-risk, high poverty, low-performing schools. It does so by providing 15 additional hours of school related tutoring time and enrichment activities each week and utilizing highly effective teachers. Studies by Walker & Arbreton (2005) point to students doing better during the regular school day simply by providing additional time after-school. This, in turn, yields participants who perform at a higher success rate academically during the regular school day, earn higher attendance rates, involve themselves in less disciplinary incidents during the regular school day, and fosters a greater self-efficacy from its participants.

SECTION TWO:

PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

Empirical data exists that establishes the effectiveness of after-school programs to decrease the number of failing grades in a semester, and increase attendance rates during the regular school day for all at-risk students (Walker & Arbreton, 2005; Rothman & Henderson, 2011; Zuelke & Nelson, 2001; Zhang & Byrd, 2013). There is evidence that after-school programs can reduce disciplinary occurrences during the regular school day as well (Gottfredson et al., 2004). School districts considering the adoption of an after-school program must consider implementation strategies, goals for the program, and the culture of the school where they wish to implement an after-school program.

Leadership from all levels, including the building level, is essential for effective implementation of an after-school program. Northouse (2013), describes many types of leadership styles and theories. Building level administrators must possess what Northouse (2013) describes as a "skills approach style" of leadership when it comes to the implementation of an after-school program. This type of leadership is a three-skill approach that is based on the work of Katz (1955) as cited in Northouse, that requires the leader to possess three basic leadership skills: technical, human, and conceptual (Northouse, 2013, p. 44). The leader must be knowledgeable in the workings of an after-school program, have the skills to motivate staff members who are directly involved with the program, and develop and maintain the vision for implementing the after-school program. Each of these three skills will assist the leader, ensure that the after-school program is effective in achieving its goals, and make certain that the leadership is in place to address the needs of the after-school program as it evolves.

Organizations must also consider the culture of change when implementing an after-school program. Bolman & Deal describe culture within the Symbolic Framework (2008). In this frame they describe the definition of culture from Schein (1992):

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 269)

Trice & Beyer (1993) note in Shafritz, Ott, & Jang (2005) that, "Culture change involves a break with the past; cultural continuity is noticeably disrupted" (p. 383). A school's culture is vital to any successful implementation and it is important that the organizational culture can sustain the changes that are proposed. Those who have more experience and years of service with an organization tend to possess more of a capacity for shaping and maintaining an organization's culture. Those with less experience will look to them for guidance when implementing new programs.

Finally, organizations must develop clear goals that after-school programs are meant to achieve. McDavid et al. (2013) describe the importance of conducting needs assessments. Needs assessments, "examine potential unmet needs of people in a variety of sectors"… (p. 227). Furthermore, Altschuld & Kumar, (2010) define needs as, "the measurable gap between two conditions; 'what is' (the current status or state) and 'what should be' (the desired status or state" (p. 3). These goals must be evaluated annually by using performance measurements. This allows for the organization to have a better understanding of the effectiveness of the program based on its initial conception. More specifically, if one goal of the after-school program is to decrease the number of students failing a core course during the

semester, then it would be essential to utilize data to evaluate the success or failure of reaching that particular goal. The examination to follow will elaborate on the rich history of the school in this study, an analysis of its organization and leadership, and provide implications for future research regarding at-risk students who attend its after -school program.

History of Organization

Students who attend the study school will be the primary focus of this study. The school is located in southeast Missouri. The establishment and development of the school reflects a wonderful history of outstanding community support. "The origins of the school can be found in the utilization of a small pole hut for the purpose of a school by the residents of its community during the mid-1800's." (Billings, 2000, p. 1). Throughout the last 175 years, The school has changed locations and erected various types of structures on numerous occasions. One constant for the school is that its, "citizens of (name of town) have placed a tremendous value upon the importance of education and in doing so, have repeatedly demonstrated their support for the (name of public school), to include (name of high school)." (Billings, 2000, p. 5)

The school district has one high school that serves grades 9-12, with a growing student body nearing 550 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016). The district strives to provide challenging systems of support and enrichment opportunities for all its students. It is in its sixth year of implementing the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) after-school program. This program primarily serves students who are considered, at-risk. For this study, "at-risk" was previously defined as any student who qualifies for the National School Lunch Program.

The school is the largest high school in the county and the surrounding area. It employs the following faculty members; two administrators, an athletic director, a social worker, two

guidance counselors, thirty-eight professional teachers, and five non certified paraprofessionals. The principal is responsible for being the educational leader of the school. As the educational leader, one of his responsibilities includes implementing and evaluating programs designed to increase student performance. The school's administration and staff were involved minimally in the initial 21st CCLC grant application process. In 2010, a trend was discovered that the schools' students continued to report the following information to the Department of Elementary of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): lower graduation and attendance rates and lower academic achievement in End of Course Exams (EOC), compared to schools in the surrounding area with similar demographics. During that time, the school's administration and staff members identified needs in two areas of concern from its group of at-risk students; academic achievement and the need to incorporate after-school activities for at-risk students. The school's administration and staff felt that the 21st CCLC model provided the structure and tools necessary to address the needs and areas of concern previously identified.

The school is focused on maintaining its high standards of educational excellence. Each year the school participates in state mandated End-of-Year Assessments (EOC). Data collected from these assessments guide instructional practices and assist with yearly planning. The school is also accredited through the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA), and has been for over 100 years (North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 2000). The NCA is a peer review and evaluation organization with a primary goal to, "provide educational accreditation to schools within its jurisdiction by reviewing five criterion: Mission and Integrity, Preparing for the Future, Student Learning and Effective Teaching, Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge, and Engagement

and Service" (CollegeAtlas.org, 2014, p. 1). The school currently uses professional learning

communities on a biweekly basis as a means to collaborate with specific groups throughout the

campus as well as a way to disseminate information. There are faculty meetings scheduled each

month that take place after-school. These faculty meetings are used to distribute information to

the staff from previous administrator meetings and acknowledge individual and student

successes. The school is in its sixth year of providing before and after-school tutoring. The

school uses the 21st CCLC model of after-school tutoring. The tutoring program was designed

to allow students the opportunity to receive additional assistance from certified faculty members

for core courses, along with providing enrichment opportunities that enhance the social and

emotional growth and self-awareness. More than half of the staff at the high school contribute to

some facet of the before or after-school tutoring program. The before and after-school tutoring

program has seen success with increased enrollment each year.

Organizational Analysis

The school is a Missouri high school with approximately 550 students. The district

enrollment fluctuates around 2000 students each year. The district superintendent is entering his

seventh year, and has brought financial stability, a clear vision including expectations and goals,

and a passion for making decisions for what is in the best interest of its students. The

superintendent uses monthly meetings to disseminate information to the administrative team. He

is extremely transparent in nature and regularly seeks input from his building level

administration in the decision making process. As a result, he has a high level of support from

his administrative team, teachers, and staff. He utilized the following steps in Bolman & Deal's

(2008) four-framed approach with precision: (1) Human Resource Frame; He works diligently

to form relationships with his staff. (2) Political Frame; He understands the complexities of

power, conflict, and coalition. (3) Symbolic Frame; He values the tradition and rich history of the organization. (4) Structural Frame; He provides clear expectations, responsibilities, and goals for the members of his team (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The school's administrators strive to provide the staff with the tools necessary to offer the finest education for their students. Professional development is a part of the culture at the school and it is expected that each member of the school utilize proven practices of instruction. Teacher input and relationships among staff members are valued at the school. Staff participate monthly in Professional Learning Community meetings, faculty meetings, faculty lunches to celebrate birthdays, and annual get-togethers to foster relationships.

The school's departments are organized in a way that they have the opportunity to meet each day during their preparation time. Although times this can limit student scheduling opportunities, it creates more opportunities for staff members to collaborate on best practices, common assessments, and vertically aligning their curriculum. Administration meets with each department once a month to review the aforementioned items and address any concerns that arise. Each department has a department chair. The department chair is a direct representative to the administrative team and serves as the departmental representative. The administrative team at the school regularly meets with the department chairs to seek input on issues that arise throughout the school year.

Leadership Analysis

In order to have a better understanding of the current administration's leadership at the school, one must have a better understanding of the past administration. In the last seven years there have been three different principals at the school. The current principal was the previous assistant principal at the school for five years. During the last seven years there has been

different approaches to leadership from each principal at the school. The two previous principals

possessed vast differences in leadership philosophies. One was very much what Northouse

(2013) describes as Authority-Compliance. This style of leadership, "places heavy emphasis on

task and job requirements, and less emphasis on people, except to the extent that people are tools

for getting the job done" (pg. 79).   During this time, teachers and students were extremely

frustrated with not having an opportunity for input and felt like they were not valued.   The

principal that followed was employed at the school for four years. His administrative style could

be characterized as middle-of-the-road management (Northouse, 2013). He would often, "find a

balance between taking people into account and still emphasizing the work requirement"

(Northouse, 2013, p. 81). This style of leadership often left people feeling that their thoughts and

concerns were considered in the decision making process, but could also leave staff members

feeling like the principal was not willing to commit on a decision for fear of upsetting the

opposing side.

     The current administrative team at the school strives to be authentic leaders Northouse

(2013) outlines five key components of an authentic leader:

> It fulfills the need for trustworthy leadership…, provides broad guidelines for individuals
>
> who want to become authentic leaders…, has an explicit moral dimension…, emphasizes
>
> that authentic values and behaviors can be developed in leaders over time…, and
>
> authentic leadership can be measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire
>
> (ALQ). (Northouse, 2013, p. 267-268)

Current administration values feedback from all stakeholders, allows for staff members to shape

the vision, provides clear goals and expectations, and seeks out opportunities to meet with its

staff on an individual basis to get a better understanding of the needs and goals of its

staff. While the current administration has observed strides in staff moral and academic achievement, it does acknowledge that there are ample opportunities to grow in all areas. Current administrators attempt to foster a family-type atmosphere with staff and students.

The administrative team is cognizant of their role as the facilitator of change. The administrative team meets with its staff monthly to disseminate information from the district's office. The principal meets with counselors and the assistant principal each month to discuss student trends in regards to discipline, attendance rates, academics, and implementation of programs.

Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting

In Missouri, 32% of its "K-12 children are responsible for taking care of themselves after-school" (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010, p. 1).   Research documents that, "quality out-of-school opportunities are linked to on-time graduation" (United Way of Greater Kansas City, 2010, p. 9). Since 2003, more than 61,000 Missouri students have been served by 21st CCLC programs (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010). School districts throughout Missouri currently offer after-school programs. Still, there are many schools that do not currently offer after-school programs.

The school's administration and staff understand that at-risk students need additional support to overcome barriers. The school is evaluated each year by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by using the 5ᵗʰ cycle of the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 5). Each year DESE reviews the data from districts and assigns a score based on its performance. The report produced is termed the Annual Performance Report (APR), which is based on five categories. The five categories of accountability include;

academic achievement, subgroup achievement, college and career readiness, attendance, and graduation rate.

This research has the potential to shed light on the effectiveness of the after-school program at the school. Specifically, this program would provide information on academic achievement, attendance rates, and graduation rates based on MSIP 5's APR from the two groups of participants included in this study. Furthermore, the research will provide insight into the effectiveness of after-school programs in a rural setting. Schools who choose to implement an after-school program with similar demographics should be able to predict similar outcomes.

Academic Achievement

Research indicates that students who regularly attend after-school programs produce higher levels of achievement in their core courses (Finn & Rock, 1997; Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010; Afterschool Alliance, 2013; Kanter, Williams, Cohen, & Stonehill, 2000; and After School Alliance, 2006). Academic achievement is the first performance standard identified by MSIP 5 by which schools are evaluated. The four areas of assessment for high schools regarding academic achievement are as follows: Algebra I, Biology I, American Government, and Language Arts II. All but American Government can earn 16 points based the on academic achievement of combined student scores. American Government scores can earn 8 points for combined student scores.

The school failed to attain the maximum amount of points in American Government, Algebra I, and Language Arts II for the 2013-2014 school year (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MSIP5 Final APR], 2015). Consequently, students who do not regularly attend an after-school program could potentially benefit from attending and possibly increase their performance in these performance areas.

Attendance Rate

Attendance rates are reviewed by DESE annually. It is the fourth performance standard in MSIP 5. A satisfactory attendance rate is defined as, "the individual student's attendance rate and set the expectation that 90% of the students are in attendance 90% of the time" (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MSIP5 Manual], 2014). Current research finds a correlation to, "higher attendance from at-risk students who regularly participate in after-school programs compared to students with similar characteristics who do not regularly attend an after-school program" (Kremer, Maynard, Polanin, Vaughn, & Sarteschi, 2015). A review of the attendance rate for the school in the 2014-2015 school year based on its APR indicated that the school's attendance rate was slightly lower than the Missouri School average (MSIP5 Final APR, 2015).

Consequently, students who do not regularly attend an after-school program could potentially benefit from attending and possibly increase the school's rating in this performance area.

Graduation Rates

DESE evaluates high school graduation rates based on student cohorts in a 4, 5, or 6 year graduation average. It is the fifth performance standard for MSIP 5. In order to obtain the maximum of 30 points, districts must meet at a minimum, 92% of their students graduating with their cohort. The school did not receive the maximum allowable points for this performance area, (MSIP5 Manual, 2014).

Consequently, students who do not regularly attend an after-school program could potentially benefit from attending and could possibly increase the school's graduation rate performance area.

Summary

After-school programs have been in existence for over 100 years (Dodd & Bowen, 2011). Each year, the percentage of public schools offering after-school programs increases (Dynarski & Moore, 2004). Educational leaders for schools and districts must be prepared to utilize and implement available tools to assist students in their districts. One of these tools is the implementation of a comprehensive and well-balanced after-school program. In order for the program to be fully embraced, educational leaders must create a culture of change, construct a clear vision, provide ample opportunities for stakeholder input, and ensure opportunities for program evaluation.

Changing the culture of a school is complex and may "trigger two conflicting symbolic responses" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 390): People who are resistant to the changes and those that embrace the new opportunities. Bolman & Deal (2008) describe an 8-step change process outlined by Kotter & Cohen (2002):

(1) Creating a sense of urgency. (2) Pulling together a guiding team with the needed skills, credibility, connections, and authority to move things around. (3) Creating an uplifting vision and strategy. (4) Communicating the vision and strategy through a combination of works, deeds, and symbols. (5) Removing obstacles, or empowering people to move ahead. (6) Producing visible symbols of progress through short-term victories. (7) Sticking with the process and refusing to quit when things get tough. (8) Nurturing and shaping a new culture to support the emerging innovative ways. (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 394)

Comprehensive after-school programs have shown to impact the lives of at-risk students by increasing their academic scores and attendance rates during the regular school day, while

30

also lowering discipline rates. Effective after-school programs like the 21st CCLC program

model can assist school districts by increasing MSIP 5 performance standards 1, 3, and 5, as well

as increasing APR scores for the district.

SECTION THREE:

SCHOLARLY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

In the last two decades, the U.S. Department of Education has made advances throughout the country to combat the phenomenon of students who do not graduate from high schools with their cohort. As result, there has been a slight decrease in the number of students who drop out and do not complete high school; from 12% in 1990 to less than 7% in 2013 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). One such initiative, is the enactment of an after-school program called 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) model. The 21st CCLC model has the following three overarching resolves;

> (1) provide academic enrichment activities that can help students meet state and local achievement, (2) provide a broad array of additional services designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program, such as: drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, and character education, and (3) literacy and related educational development services to the families of children who are served in the program. (Afterschool Alliance, 2013, p. 1)

In 2002, as part of the No Child Left Behind Act, Congress reauthorized 21st CCLC allowing the States to allocate over 1 billion dollars to school districts in the form of competitive grants (Afterschool Alliance, 2013).   As a result of this program, there are now, "…4,165 grants funding afterschool programs for more than 1.6 million children and youth in 10,466 school-based and community-based centers across the country" (Afterschool Alliance, 2013, p. 1). This signifies a substantial effort to decrease the amount of students who do not graduate from high school and solidifies the connection between after-school and the regular school day.

In 2006, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) developed a set of program standards for after-school programs. It was designed as a resource for after-school professionals that highlights the elements of quality programming that lead to positive experiences for youth and families (Missouri Afterschool Network, 2007). These standards are divided into two sections; program content and program management. The program content area involves the physical environment, interpersonal relations, and curriculum and activities whereas the program management area focuses on family involvement, human resources, safety and health, and business administration. Having these common standards has allowed for a systematic approach to provide the best after-school programs possible.

In 2011, DESE noted that 20.2% of students did not graduate high school with their cohort (DESE Missouri Afterschool Programs, 2011). Furthermore, students who qualify for free and reduced lunch have only a 73% chance of graduating (DESE Missouri Afterschool Programs, 2011). Each year this trend continues. This is a huge problem because those students who do not graduate are less likely and or qualified to join the workforce, tend to receive fewer government assistance payments for housing, food stamps, health care, unemployment, and are more likely to be incarcerated during their lifetime (Vredeveld, 2008). Furthermore, Bruce et al. (2011) postulate that students who dropout create, "millions of dollars in lost income over their lifetimes" (p. 1) Areas with higher dropout rates also tend to have less favorable labor markets, which makes it difficult for people with little or no skills to gain employment (Bruce et al., 2011). Students who receive a high school diploma receive higher wages, contribute to the economic gain for their state and can expect to earn almost $500,000 in their lifetime more so than students who drop out of high school (Vredeveld, 2008).

In an effort to remedy the problem of students continuing to drop out of school or finish school later than their cohort members, schools throughout the state and nation have implemented after-school programs. Identifying these at-risk students early in their high school careers and involving them in a high quality after-school program can greatly increase Missouri's graduation rate. Studies by (Chappell, 2006; Davies & Peltz, 2-12; Hartmann et al., 2011) indicate that students who are involved in high quality after-school programs are less likely to be truant from school, have lower discipline referrals, and complete core classes on time. Furthermore, at-risk students can benefit tremendously from attending a high-quality after-school program, especially those that use regular school day teachers who focus on developing quality relationships and extend student learning beyond the regular school day with the students they assist (Rothman & Henderson, 2011).

Review of the Extant Scholarship

Highly effective after-school programs serve many purposes; they are an extension to the regular school day. They create a safe place for kids while their parents are working (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010). They have shown to cause a decrease in disciplinary incidents and an increase in attendance rates during the regular school day.   In the last two decades, more and more families have entered the workforce; this has created a situation where children are often times left unsupervised, which can lead to a variety of unwanted behaviors (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010).

Work from Davies & Peltz (2012) sites several positive outcomes from creating a successful after-school program for at-risk students in the following areas: academics, standardized testing, social competence, and motivation and confidence. Davis & Peltz (2012) postulate from a study conducted by Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl (2005) that at-risk students

showed a, "significant improvement in reading achievement for students who were involved in such programs compared with those who had alternate after-school arrangements" (p. 12).   After-school programs offer a variety of opportunities for students to gain social skills, as well as provide motivation and confidence to at-risk students who would not have that opportunity if the program did not exist. These "prosocial values" (Davies & Peltz, 2-12, p. 13), in turn transfer to the regular school day and lead to less disciplinary incidents and greater attendance rates.   Another study, located in Montgomery Alabama, conducted by Kanter, Williams, Cohen, & Stonehill (2000) concluded that students who regularly attended an after-school program showed a decrease in discipline problems, even though there was an increase in the disciplinary incidents for the school as a whole.

Numerous studies conducted by (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010; Kanter et al., 2000; Davies & Peltz, 2-12; & Kanter, 2001) note that more and more family members work outside the regular school day.   With this, comes the risk of our youth participating in behaviors that are less than desirable. After-school hours can be a time where youth engage in substance abuse, gang activity, and unprotected sex (Davies & Peltz). A study by Kanter et al. (2000) notes that each day when school is dismissed, there are over, "8 million children who are left alone and unsupervised" (p. 4). After-school programs such as the 21st CCLC model are designed to alleviate this dilemma by providing well-structured activities and assistance with homework, while extending the regular school day. In Missouri, over, "32% of their children are responsible for taking care of themselves after school" (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010, p. 1). In Missouri, 89% of the parents agree that there should be places for those youth to go so that they may have opportunities to extend learning time (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010).   This trend also exists nationally, "with more than 90 percent of adults

surveyed saying that they support after-school programs in the public schools" (Kanter, 2001, p. 12). Students who participate in quality after-school programs have better social and emotional relationships with their peers and adults in their lives. Doing this will allow at-risk students a safe place to stay after school during the hours they may otherwise be left unsupervised.

Effective after-school programs understand the importance of tying their program to the regular school day. Program development requires strong leadership, one that clearly identifies common goals, influence, cooperative planning, and utilizes an organized process (Northouse, 2013). Doing this has proven to increase academic performance and psychosocial development (Hirsh, 2014). This is exactly the goal that 21st CCLC programs strive to obtain by tying the regular school day activities to academic enrichment activities that meet state and local standards (Afterschool Alliance, 2013).

A study conducted by Dodd & Bowen (2011) concludes that, "successful after-school programs require a commitment from all stakeholders" (p. 14), especially from potential community partners. Community collaboration is essentially what Bolman & Deal refer to as the Human Resource Frame; "what organizations and people do to and for one another" (2008, p. 117). Therefore, the 21st CCLC model requires that program directors conduct annual stakeholder meetings so that information can be disseminated and new ideas can be brought up for discussion. Effective after-school programs must also remain cognizant of what McDavid, et al. (2013) refer to as a simplified performance management cycle; "needs assessment, program development, program implementation, program evaluation and performance measurement, and finally, program accountability" (p. 229). This cycle is designed to identify the needs of the organization or program by using a systematic method. Simply stated, this is where your program is evaluated methodically with input from all stakeholders.

Another goal of the 21st CCLC program is to provide a safe environment for students to socialize and develop social skills. Most after-school programs, "…attempt to provide safe havens that keep youth off the streets and offer them a variety of opportunities to enhance their experiences and skills" (Walker & Arbreton, 2005, p. 11). This is crucial since there is a growing number of youth who are unsupervised after school each day. This trend began in the 1970's and continues to grow. Zhang & Byrd (2013) note that a great need exists for after-school activities that provide, "appropriate youth supervision and involvement" (p. 3). To expand on this literature one could look to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943). Maslow postulated that basic needs have to be met in order for people to move on with more complex needs. Effective after-school programs understand this and model their programs to fill these needs by regularly offering counseling, a snack or hot meal, and a safe environment for those who attend.

At-Risk

While being labeled as at-risk definitely identifies an individual as needing additional resources to become successful in school, there are multiple reasons why students are labeled as at-risk; academic records, economic status, minority students, low attendance rates, frequent disciplinary occurrences, and location of school are just a few indicators that come to mind. Heppen & Therriault (2008) note that, "The high school dropout problem has been called a national crisis", and that course performance and attendance rates are two key predictors of whether or not a student will complete high school. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provides a list of risk factors that may contribute to a child becoming disengaged and becoming at-risk, including family and community factors, personal factors, and school-related factors (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development,

2013). Students who are at-risk are often plagued with multiple risk factors. More simply

stated, students become at-risk by being exposed to particular conditions (Finn & Rock,

1997). The literature to follow will focus on at-risk factors pertaining to academics, minority

status, poor attendance rates, as well as other specific indicators.

At-risk students tend to disconnect with their school or community. Offering after-school

programs allows students to get involved in school in a way that has purpose. After-school

tutoring offers a variety of opportunities for students to become involved in school, thus have

more opportunity to become successful during the regular school day. Daud & Carruthers found

that students who regularly attended an after-school program exhibited the following: "better

emotional adjustment, better peer relationships and social competence, fewer antisocial

behaviors, less likelihood of endorsing aggressive behaviors, better work habits, better school

performance, and better tests and grades in reading and math" (2008, p. 97)

A longitudinal study conducted by Hartmann et al. (2011) followed a predominantly

Hispanic group of high school students for four years, starting with these students in 9th

grade. The targeted students were identified their 8th grade year as having, "less than 80%

attendance rate, failing math, English, or having two or more suspensions in eighth grade or early

9th grade" (Hartmann et al., 2011, p. 22) The aforementioned students who subsequently attended

the after-school program on a regular basis showed promising outcomes; "participants were 1.6

percent less likely to fail math, 3.4 percent less likely to have attendance issues, and 3 percent

less likely to fail English than similar students who did not attend the after-school program"

(Hartmann et al., 2006, p. 23). Key factors for the success of the after-school program were its

attention to engaging and supporting at-risk students.

Finn & Rock (1997) have also documented the adverse consequences of at-risk student indicators. Finn and Rock note that students who are a minority, attend an inner city school, or come from a low income home are more at-risk of being unsuccessful at school than those who do not fit in these categories. Furthermore, Finn & Rock (1997) cite research from previous studies by (Finn, Folger, & Cox, 1991: Finn, Pannozzo, & Voelkl, 1995: Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1991: McClure, 1978: Trueba, 1983) that minority students, "participate less fully in learning-related activities in class", "exhibit more behavior problems in school", and have, "higher rates of absenteeism from class and school" (p. 21). However, their study focused on at-risk students who exhibited a sense of resilience, "successful adaptation to life tasks in the face of social disadvantage or highly adverse conditions" (Finn & Rock, 1997, p. 21). A key component to acquiring resiliency is for students to remain engaged in school. The 21ˢᵗ CCLC program seeks to engage at-risk students by expanding on academics from the regular school day and providing enrichment activities such as character education and other group related physical activities.

Research from Bruce et al. (2011) provides us with further insight on how to identify at-risk students and provides for a way to address those students. First, their research indicates that, "most students at risk of falling off track could graduate if they were provided with the appropriate supports early enough and those supports were sustained" (p. 1). Bruce et al. (2011), notes that the use of data has emerged as a valuable tool to identify students at risk and that the development of an Early Warning Indicator and Intervention System (EWS) has revolutionized the process of combating the phenomenon of students dropping out of school. Early indicators consist of the following factors: Attendance, "missing 20 days or being absent 10 percent of

school days" behavior; "two or more mild or more serious behavior infractions" (p. 3), and course performance:

> An inability to read at grade level by the end of third grad; failure in English or math in sixth through ninth grade; a GPA of less than 2.0; two or more failures in ninth grade courses; and failure to earn on-time promotion to the tenth grade. (Bruce et al., 2011, p. 3)

Nearly one-third of all states currently utilize and collect data with an EWS. The shortcomings are that there are currently no, one-size-fits-all approaches to collecting the data needed, which results in schools not using the information. Also, some states that do collect the data do not regularly disseminate the information in a timely and efficient manner.

Less Disciplinary Incidents

At-risk students have higher rates of disciplinary infractions than those who are not at-risk. Students who engage in disciplinary infractions at school are also less likely to succeed academically. A study conducted by Pastchal-Temple (2012) indicated that two schools who implemented character development into their after-school programs produced the following results:

> The program improved student achievement and behavior in both districts. One district showed a 16% increase in 48 students' achievement and a 78% reduction in discipline infractions. The second district improved student achievement by 52% and reduced discipline infractions by 85%. (Pastchal-Temple, 2012, p. 47).

Additionally, another school Pastchal-Temple studied showed a slight decrease in the number of disciplinary incidents from students who attended their after-school program at least 40 times in the semester than those students who did not. After-school programs have also shown that those

who regularly participate have a reduction in, "delinquent behavior" (Gottfredson et al., 2004, p. 253). However, there are conflicting reports that after-school activities reduce delinquency. Case in point is a study conducted by Hirschi (1969) reported in (Gottfredson et al., 2004). This social control theory initially predicted that youth who were involved in constructive activities would be less prone to divulge themselves in delinquent behaviors: The results indicated that there were no such connections. Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Summary

Current literature clearly displays the positive effects that after-school programs have on attendance rates and academics. However, there is conflicting knowledge on the impact after-school attendance has on at-risk students regarding student discipline. With that being said, after-school programs could also be utilized to impact other areas of concern. After-school programs could also be proven to be effective on other student outcomes; perhaps by implementing after-school programs that specifically direct their attention on decreasing student violence, bullying, or even cultural diversities. Schools today have a need for these types of programs as well. For that matter, after-school programs could be utilized for just about any issue that may arise. The key would be to cooperate with all stakeholders, identify those students who need the service, provide opportunities for those students to gain success, and utilize high qualified staff comparable to the 21st CCLC model.

For the purpose of this study, current literature suggests that for an after-school program to be successful, it is crucial to quickly identify at-risk students, encourage them to begin participating in the after-school program and provide opportunities for the students to become successful. Doing so should translate to those students who regularly attend to become more

successful in the regular school day academically, have higher attendance rates, and potentially, have lower instances of disciplinary infractions.

After reading a thorough review of the literature, there are several common themes that arise. First, there is a need to address and correct the epidemic of students who choose to drop out of high school. The US Department of Education has recognized this need and subsequently has identified after-school programs as a means to address this issue. After-school programs have been proven to be effective at increasing attendance rates during the regular school day, potentially lowering disciplinary infractions, and increasing academic scores for students who regularly attend; attendance, disciplinary infractions, and failing courses were recurring themes as an at-risk indicator. Second, after-school programs provide a safe and secure place for many students who would otherwise be left to supervise themselves. More and more families are forced to work hours that are outside the regular school day. This creates time that students are left home unsupervised and often a time that negative behaviors occur.

The literature from Heppen & Therriault (2008) was found to be especially intriguing. As previously mention, they postulate that two indicators are crucial in identifying students who potentially may drop out of high school: course performance and attendance. They warn that students who miss more than 10% of instructional time are in need of possible intervention. This seems fairly reasonable, however, there are other factors to consider, for instance, classroom rigor, grading schedule, or student knowledge are a few. Being able to identify at-risk indicators was something that was found to be extremely beneficial in combating the obstacles those students face. To synthesize the literature that was read as it pertains to early indicators of at-risk, work from (Hartmann et al., 2006; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013; Finn & Rock, 1997; Bruce et al., 2011;

Heppen & Therriault, 2008; Ryan, 2011; and Casey, 2013) all suggest that these students have a list of factors that make them susceptible of dropping out of school. These factors include: excessive truancy, multiple discipline infractions, failing core courses, and low socioeconomic states. Despite this information, there were slight variations on each of these indicators, however each author was fairly consistent to indicate the majority of the indicators.

Another overall arching theme was the importance of getting students involved. As more and more parents work later, children are left unsupervised. If students regularly participate in after-school programs they are less likely to engage in delinquent acts outside of school. This makes sense for several reasons. Students are expected to behave a certain way while they are at school. When students are not properly supervised they may tend to participate in inappropriate behaviors.

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SECTION FOUR:

CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Program Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of regular attendance of a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) program by comparing the mean scores of at-risk students' regular school day attendance and core course GPA to at-risk students who do not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Participants in this study came from two groups; regular attendees and non-regular attendees. The term, "regularly attendee" referred to a student who attended the after-school program at least thirty times in a school year (DESE "Application", 2016, p. 1). A school year is defined by the district's school calendar for each year: Each school year has approximately 165 days of instruction ([Name of school district], 2016, December). For the purpose of this study, the term "at-risk" referred to high school students who attended the 21st CCLC program who qualify for the National School Lunch Program (United state Department of Agriculture, 2016). The study collected data from the past five years of the programs existence.

Previous research indicates that at-risk students who regularly attend an after-school program exhibit higher rates of regular school day attendance and a decrease in grade retention (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010; DESE "Missouri Afterschool Programs", 2011; Gottfredson, Gerstenblith, Soule, Womer, & Lu , 2004). Previous research has mainly been conducted in larger, urban area schools. There is a gap in this knowledge as it pertains to schools located in the rural school in Southeast Missouri. Results from the data collected will provide insight on the effectiveness of the program which could potentially provide implications for future grant applications for the 21st CCLC program.

Overview of the 21st CCLC Program

The rural high school in which the research was conducted is located in Southeast Missouri. There is one high school in the district with approximately 550 students, of which 74.97% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch (DESE "District and school information", 2016). The district enrollment fluctuates around 2000 students each year (DESE "Student characteristics", 2016). In 2010, the school district noticed a trend of low performance in the number of graduates (DESE "AYP-Grid", 2011; DESE "Building 4 year graduation rate", 2016) and attendance rates (DESE "Building attendance rate", 2016). Central Office administration made the decision to apply for the 21st CCLC program which is offered through the U. S. Department of Education (US Department of Education, "21st CCLC grant application", 2016). The district identified eight goals it wished to address if it were approved for the 21st CCLC grant program. Two of those goals directly related to this study: "increase regular school day attendance for at-risk students" and "increase academic achievement in at-risk students" ([21st century community learning centers/afterschool program grant application], 2011).

The district's 21st CCLC grant application was approved and it implemented the 21st CCLC program starting in the 2011-2012 school year. The 21st CCLC program offers 15 hours of supervised activities including before and after-school tutoring, character education one hour a week, and enrichment activities that are centered on student interests. The before school program operates each morning from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. with locations in the school's Library and Cafeteria. The after-school program begins in the cafeteria with a snack starting at 2:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Tutoring and homework assistance is from 2:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. Enrichment activities follow tutoring and homework assistance from 3:45 p.m. to 4:45

p.m. Supper is served each afternoon from 4:45 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The program ends each day

by providing bus transportation home for each student. School Board Policy does not allow

students to participate in after-school activities if they do not attend the regular school day unless

prior arrangements have been made with the building principal ("Name of school district",

Policy Manuel, 2016).

Staff members who work at the high school also work for the 21st CCLC program. Staff

members meet once a month with the 21st CCLC site director to review goals, upcoming

enrichment activities, and expectations for program participants and staff members.

Research Questions

The goal of the program evaluation was to answer the following research questions:

- Research question number 1: How do regular school day attendance rates of at-risk

  students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program compare to at-risk students who do

  not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program?

- Research question 2: How do regular school day core course GPA of at-risk students

  who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program compare to at-risk students who do not

  regularly attend a 21st CCLC program?

Null Hypotheses

- Research question number 1: There is no statistical difference when comparing regular

  school day attendance rates of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC

  program and at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

- Research question 2: There is no statistical difference when comparing regular school

  day core course GPA of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program and

  at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

Method

The study was designed to evaluate empirical-based research concerning the impact of regular participation from at-risk students in the school's 21st CCLC program. The study focused on regular day attendance rates and core course GPA between the two groups of participants of the 21st CCLC program.

Approach

A program evaluation approach was utilized to examine the outputs of the two participant groups who attended the 21st CCLC program. The program evaluation was a longitudinal study starting with its inception in the 2011-2012 school year. Participants from this study came from a rural high school containing grades 9-12 located in southeast Missouri with an overall student population of 550 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), "Building attendance rate" 2015). Students were identified for this study based on their attendance of the 21st CCLC program after-school attendance during the tutoring and homework assistance time from 2:45 pm through 3:45 pm offered Monday through Thursday. Five years of student data was collected, ending with the 2015-2016 school year. It should be noted that the principal investigator is currently employed at the high school.

Daily program attendance is uploaded to Kids Care Center (DESE "Kids care center", 2016) on a weekly basis. Kids Care Center is an informational system that is used to maintain program information such as enrollment, gender, race, and activities offered by the after-school program. It is maintained by the DESE. Participant attendance data for the tutoring and homework assistance time from 2:45 pm through 3:45 pm was taken from Kids Care Center.

Data Sample

Participant samples were collected in what Creswell (2014) describes as stratification of the population. Participants from the tutoring and homework assistance time period were identified initially by their attendance from Kids Care Center. A subset of participants for the study was then selected by determining if they qualified for the National School Lunch Program. This subset of the population was then divided by regular program attendees and non-regular program attendees. For the purpose of this study, the term regular attendees was used to identify students who attended a 21st CCLC program at least 30 days in a school year as identified in the DESE 21st CCLC grant application ("Application", 2016, p. 1). This method was used to allow the researcher to identify participants so that their subsequent data could be compared.

Design

The research conducted and data collected came from the attendance of the after- school tutoring and homework time attended from Monday through Thursday from 2:45pm to 3:45pm for each school year. Data analysis was conducted by way of independent t-tests for all research questions. The t-test were used to compare the means between at-risk students who regularly attended a 21st CCLC program regarding attendance rates and core course GPA compared to at-risk students who did not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

Quantitative data from participant's attendance rates and core course GPA for the 2011-2012; 2012-2013; 2013-2014; 2014-2015; and 2015-2016 school years were used to compare data between the control group and participants who regularly attended a 21st CCLC program. Student attendance rates were reported in total days of absence; including out-of-suspension, verified and general absences for each school year. Each participants' core courses were combined into a GPA format based on a 4.0 grading scale. Core courses are those courses in

math, science, social studies, and language arts. All data acquired was coded in a way to ensure

confidentiality of the participants. Table 1 shows the relationship between the letter grade and

the GPA associated to the letter grade.

Table 1

GPA Calculation for 4.0 Grading Scale

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
GPA	4.0	3.66	3.33	3.0	2.66	2.33	2.0	1.66	1.33	1.0	.66	0

Note. Grade = Letter grade that represents an achievement mark; GPA = Grade point average. Adapted from "Name of school district" ("Student Handbook, 2016, p. 5).

Results of the Study

The results of the t-test conducted for each year of the study are reported below. In

addition, a discussion of the results is interpreted after each year of the study. Student outcome

data was examined through quantitative analysis using IMB SPSS 22 software. The researcher

used Field's Discovering Statistics Using IBM Statistics (2012, Chapter 9) to assist with

interpreting the results of each independent t-test.

Table 2

2011-2012 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
	Regular	45	6.75	7.73	2.67	75	.009
Program Attendance Status	Non-Regular	31	13.03	12.72			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 2 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 76 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a regular school day attendance mean that was 6.28 points lower than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 3

2011-2012 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
	Regular	45	2.02	.87	2.98	64	.004
Program Attendance Status	Non-Regular	31	1.40	.90			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 3 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 76 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .62 points higher than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 4

2012-2013 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	42	5.19	6.70	2.11	77	.037
	Non-Regular	37	8.92	8.83			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 4 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 79 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a regular school day attendance mean that was 3.73 points lower than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 5

2012-2013 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	42	2.63	.78	2.37	77	.020
	Non-Regular	37	1.94	.76			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the

21st CCLC program. Table 5 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 79 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .69 points higher than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 6

2013-2014 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	29	7.25	9.42	1.49	69	.139
	Non-Regular	49	11.14	11.74			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the t-test suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really did not have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 6 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. While the descriptive statistics of the 78 students' aggregate data suggest a positive relationship between regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program and lower rates of regular school day absences, t-test results found a significance level of .139.   Statistical significance for the study was set at the .05 level, resulting in the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Table 7

2013-2014 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	29	2.13	1.03	2.08	49	.043
	Non-Regular	49	1.66	.82			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 7 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 78 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .47 points higher than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 8

2014-2015 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	29	6.28	7.29	1.10	65	.273
	Non-Regular	42	8.36	8.46			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the t-test suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program did not have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly

attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 8 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent

sample t-test. While the descriptive statistics of the 71 students' aggregate data suggest a

positive relationship between regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program and lower rates of

regular school day absences, t-test results found a significance level of .273.   Statistical

significance for the study was set at the .05 level, resulting in the acceptance of the null

hypothesis.

Table 9

2014-2015 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	T	df	p
	Regular	29	2.53	.82	2.59	68	.012
Program Attendance Status	Non-Regular	42	1.97	1.01			

Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants.
The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really
*does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who

regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the

21st CCLC program. Table 9 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-

test. The analysis of 71 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at

the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the

21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .56 points higher than at-risk students

who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 10

2015-2016 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	T	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	31	2.84	2.80	2.26	58	.027
	Non-Regular	29	5.52	5.90			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 10 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 60 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a regular school day attendance mean that was 2.68 points lower than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 11

2015-2016 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	31	2.75	.76	2.83	57	.006
	Non-Regular	29	2.16	.84			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the

21st CCLC program. Table 11 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 60 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .59 points higher than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Discussion of the Results

The results of the study should serve as a resource for all members of the 21st CCLC program for the school district. School districts with similar demographics may also find this study useful as they apply for a 21st CCLC grant. Statistical significance was found in regular school day attendance in three of the five years of the program's existence. Statistical significance was found in core course GPA for all five years of the programs existence.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program by comparing the mean scores of at-risk students' regular school day attendance and core course GPA to at-risk students who do not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Results from the study indicate that both program goals identified are being met; increased regular school day attendance for at-risk students and increased academic achievement in at-risk students.

Previous research concluded that at-risk students who regularly attend 21st CCLC programs exhibit higher rates of regular school attendance than at-risk students who do not regularly attend 21st CCLC programs (Finn & Rock, 1997; Davies & Peltz 2012; Walker & Arbreton, 2005; Kanter 2001; Gottfredson, Gerstenblith, Soule, Womer, & Lu, 2004). The research conducted in this study found a statistical significance in regular school day attendance between at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program compared to at-risk

students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program for three of the five years of the study. In addition, the means of the t-test for each of the five years of the study indicated that students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program had a higher rate of absences compared to at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program.

Empirical data exists that establishes the effectiveness of after-school programs to decrease the number of failing grades in a semester, and increase attendance rates during the regular school day for all at-risk students (Walker & Arbreton, 2005; Rothman & Henderson, 2011; Zuelke & Nelson, 2001; Zhang & Byrd, 2013). This data was substantiated by the research conducted in this study. There was a statistical significance in core course GPA between at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program compared to at-risk students who did not regularly attend 21st CCLC program for all five years of the study.

Recommendations and Implications

Recommendations that are made below are based on the results of the two research questions as a result of the independence sample t-tests for each of the first five-years of the 21st CCLC program.

- Identify and encourage at-risk students to regularly attend the 21st CCLC program.

- Utilize school counselors to identify and work through barriers that at-risk students have that keep them from regular attending the 21st CCLC program.

- Develop incentives for at-risk students to regularly attend the 21st CCLC program.

- Provide highly qualified teachers during the tutoring and homework help time of the 21st CCLC program (2:45pm-3:45pm).

- Develop systems of communication between all stakeholders regarding the opportunities available through the 21st CCLC program.

Based on the results of the data collected, the researcher can make several implications for continuing to utilize the 21st CCLC program. These implications substantiate previous research regarding the impact 21st CCLC programs have relating to core courses and regular school day attendance.

- This study substantiates previous research that 21st CCLC programs are effective in increasing regular school day attendance for at-risk students.
- This study substantiates previous research that 21st CCLC programs are effective in increasing core course GPA for at-risk students.

Limitations

The study was limited by the number of participants who qualified for the study. The study sought to examine at least 45 participants from each group for each year of the program. There were no years of the study that had 45 participants for each group. Other factors are not accounted for when the researcher analyzed regular school day attendance and core course GPA. These factors include the schools disciplinary policy as it pertains to students who are absent and the school's philosophy on required core course schedule. Other limitations of the study included; students who had external barriers that after-school programs are not equipped to deal with. Such barriers included, lack of support from home to attend an after-school program, students who are not motivated to fully participate in the after-school program, or teachers and or administrators who work for the after-school program, but do not fully implement the after-school program goals.

Reasoning's for students who lack motivation and exhibit low self-efficacy would also be a limitation for this study. Further research is needed to gain insight on this phenomenon. Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (2011) could provide a more in-depth analysis as to why some students lack focus on how they spend their time while attending the 21st CCLC program. Techniques described by McDavid et al (2013) such as open coding could bring to light information in a new way and assist with further analysis.

Conclusion

The district identified eight goals it wished to address if it were approved for the 21st CCLC grant program. Two of those goals directly related to this study: "increase regular school day attendance for at-risk students" and "increase academic achievement in at-risk students" ([21st century community learning centers/afterschool program grant application], 2011).

The research sought to analyze the impact of regular participation from at-risk students enrolled in a 21st CCLC program based on regular school day attendance and achievement. Study results found that there was a statistical significance between regular 21st CCLC program attendees and non-regular 21st CCLC program attendees for three of the five school years regarding regular school day attendance. Finally, study results found that there was a statistical significance between regular 21st CCLC program attendees and non-regular 21st CCLC program attendees for all five-years of the 21st CCLC program investigated regarding regular core course GPA.

Evidence from the study suggests that the 21st CCLC program has been effective in increasing core course GPA and increasing attendance during the regular school day for at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program. In 2010, the high school had a building attendance rate of 92.5% (DESE "Building attendance rate", 2016). In 2016, the high

school had a building attendance rate of 94% (DESE "Building attendance rate", 2016). This is

an increase of 1.5%. In 2010, the high school had a graduation rate of 68.5% (DESE "Building 4

year graduation rate", 2016). In 2016, the high school had a graduation rate of 91.6% (DESE

"Building 4 year graduation rate", 2016). This is an increase of 23.1%. This is further evidence

that the implementation of the 21st CCLC program is meeting its two goals.

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SECTION FIVE:

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Target Journal

Journal of Youth Development (JOYD) – Established by the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents (NAE4-H).

Rationale for this Target

The "National Association of Extension 4-H Agents (NAE4-HA), in cooperation with several partners, established the *Journal of Youth Development"* (Journal of Youth Development [JOYD Journal History], 2005, p. 1). NAE4-HA workers focus on three key principles: "1) professional development, 2) creating an inclusive and supportive network, and 3) integration of scholarship, research & practice (JOYD Journal History, 2005, p. 1). The Journal of Youth Development was established in 2005.

The focus of the study is to examine the impact of a 21st CCLC program on regular school day attendance and core course GPA. The study aligns quite well with the mission of the Journal of Youth Development's emphasis.

The Journal of Youth Development is a refereed publication that seeks to enhance knowledge about matters of current interest to professionals in youth development. Published articles further the mission of the youth development profession by facilitating the transfer and application of research-based knowledge. (Journal of Youth Development [JOYD Home Page], 2005, p. 1)

Outline of Proposed Contents

The Journal of Youth Development provides specific items to be included in the submission of manuscripts via a submission preparation checklist (Journal of Youth Development [JOYD Submissions], 2005, p. 1):

1. The submission has not been previously published, nor is it before another journal for consideration (or an explanation has been provided in Comments to the Editor).
2. The submission file is in OpenOffice, Microsoft Word, RTF, or WordPerfect document file format.
3. Where available, URLs for the references have been provided.
4. The text is single-spaced; uses a 12-point font; employs italics, rather than underlining (except with URL addresses); and all illustrations, figures, and tables are placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end.
5. The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined in the Author Guidelines, which is found in About the Journal.
6. If submitting to a peer-reviewed section of the journal, the instructions in Ensuring a Blind Review have been followed.

The manuscript will conform to the above requirements and include crucial components from the study as well as information in this paper, including: statement of the problem; research questions and study design; review of the theoretical framework and current research; results of the study; and a discussion of the results.

Analyzing the Impact of Regular Participation from At-Risk Students Enrolled in a 21st Century

Community Learning Center After-School Tutoring Program

by

Richard B. Leeker

Journal of Youth Development (JOYD)

Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the impact of regular participation from at-risk students enrolled in a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) after-school tutoring program based on attendance and achievement. The program evaluation specifically identified at-risk students as regular program attendees or non-regular program attendees. Participant data for each of the five-years was collected on regular school day attendance and core course GPA. Study results found a statistically significant relationship between regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program and regular school day attendance for three of the five years. Study results found a statistically significant relationship between regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program and core course GPA for each of the five years. Implications for this research include the continuation of operating the 21st CCLC program and continuing to seek out at-risk students and encourage them to participate in the program.

Analyzing the Impact of Regular Participation from At-Risk Students Enrolled in a 21st Century Community Learning Center After-School Tutoring Program

Introduction

At the turn of the century, the United States government allocated $4.5 billion dollars to enhance after-school programs around the country (Chappell, 2006). This allocation signifies a commitment to enhance and strengthen school systems throughout the country, especially those that are located in rural or urban high-poverty, low-performing schools. It also demonstrates a conceptual framework that schools are needed to assist students outside the regular school day; either for safety due to parents working late or as a way to extend the education of the regular school day (Dodd & Bowen, 2011; DESE "Missouri Afterschool Programs", 2011). Since then, a report from the U.S. Department of Education indicates a gradual decrease in the number of students who drop out from high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Background

The rural high school in which the research was conducted is located in Southeast Missouri. There is one high school in the district with approximately 550 students, of which 74.97% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch (DESE "District and school information", 2016). The district enrollment fluctuates around 2000 students each year (DESE "Student characteristics", 2016). In 2010, the school district noticed a trend of low performance in the number of graduates (DESE "AYP-Grid", 2011; DESE "Building 4 year graduation rate", 2016) and attendance rates (DESE "Building attendance rate", 2016) at PHS. Central Office administration made the decision to apply for the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) program which is offered through the U. S. Department of Education (US

Department of Education, "21st CCLC grant application", 2016). The district identified eight

goals it wished to address if it were approved for the 21st CCLC grant program. Two of those

goals directly related to this study: "increase regular school day attendance for at-risk students"

and "increase academic achievement in at-risk students" ([21st century community learning

centers/afterschool program grant application], 2011).

The district's 21st CCLC grant application was approved and it implemented the 21st

CCLC program starting in the 2011-2012 school year. The 21st CCLC program offered 15 hours

of supervised activities including before and after-school tutoring, character education one hour a

week, and enrichment activities that were centered on student interests. The before school

program operated each morning from 6:30am to 7:30am with locations in the Library and

Cafeteria. The after-school program begins with a snack each afternoon in the cafeteria starting

at 2:30pm Monday through Thursday. Tutoring and homework assistance is from 2:45pm to

3:45pm. Enrichment activities follow tutoring and homework assistance from 3:45pm to

4:45pm. Supper is served each afternoon from 4:45pm to 5:00pm. The program ends each day

by providing bus transportation home for each student. School Board Policy does not allow

students to participate in after-school activities if they do not attend the regular school day unless

prior arrangements have been made with the building principal ([Name of school district],

Policy Manuel, 2016).

Many staff members who work at the high school also work for the 21st CCLC program.

Staff members meet once a month with the 21st CCLC site director to review program goals,

upcoming enrichment activities, and expectations for program participants and staff members.

Statement of the Problem

There are too few at-risk students who regularly attend available after-school programs. As a result, there are too few at-risk students who take advantage of the positive impacts after-school programs have proven to produce. Students who are at-risk of graduating high school can benefit by accessing additional assistance that is available during after-school programs. When these students do not regularly attend after-school programs, they are unlikely to graduate on time. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE Four Year Graduation Rate, 2011) in 2010-2011, Missouri's four-year high school graduation rate was 79.8%. Students who do not graduate are less likely to become productive members in their community, and struggle to support themselves and their family. Inasmuch, a study conducted by Vredeveld (2008) indicated that, "…dropouts are much less likely to participate in the workforce" (pg. 5).

Review of the Extant Scholarship

Highly effective after-school programs serve many purposes; they are an extension to the regular school day. They create a safe place for kids while their parents are working (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010). They have shown to cause a decrease in disciplinary incidents and an increase in attendance rates during the regular school day. In the last two decades, more and more families have entered the workforce; this has created a situation where children are often times left unsupervised, which can lead to a variety of unwanted behaviors (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010).

Work from Davies & Peltz (2012) sites several positive outcomes from creating a successful after-school program for at-risk students in the following areas: academics, standardized testing, social competence, and motivation and confidence. Davis & Peltz (2012)

postulate from a study conducted by Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl (2005) that at-risk students showed a, "significant improvement in reading achievement for students who were involved in such programs compared with those who had alternate after-school arrangements" (p. 12).   After-school programs offer a variety of opportunities for students to gain social skills, as well as provide motivation and confidence to at-risk students who would not have that opportunity if the program did not exist. These "prosocial values" (Davies & Peltz, 2012, p. 13), in turn transfer to the regular school day and lead to less disciplinary incidents and greater attendance rates.   Another study, located in Montgomery Alabama, conducted by Kanter, Williams, Cohen, & Stonehill (2000) concluded that students who regularly attended an after-school program showed a decrease in discipline problems, even though there was an increase in the disciplinary incidents for the school as a whole.

Numerous studies conducted by Office of Early and Extended Learning, (2010); Kanter et al., (2000); Davies & Peltz, (2012); & Kanter, (2001) note that more and more family members work outside the regular school day.   With this, comes the risk of our youth participating in behaviors that are less than desirable. After-school hours can be a time where youth engage in substance abuse, gang activity, and unprotected sex (Davies & Peltz). A study by Kanter et al. (2000) notes that each day when school is dismissed, there are over, "8 million children who are left alone and unsupervised" (p. 4). After-school programs such as the 21st CCLC model are designed to alleviate this dilemma by providing well-structured activities and assistance with homework, while extending the regular school day. In Missouri, over, "32% of their children are responsible for taking care of themselves after school" (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010, p. 1). In Missouri, 89% of the parents agree that there should be places for those youth to go so that they may have opportunities to extend learning time (Office

of Early and Extended Learning, 2010).   This trend also exists nationally, "with more than 90 percent of adults surveyed saying that they support after-school programs in the public schools" (Kanter, 2001, p. 12). Students who participate in quality after-school programs have better social and emotional relationships with their peers and adults in their lives.

Effective after-school programs understand the importance of tying their program to the regular school day. Program development requires strong leadership, one that clearly identifies common goals, influence, cooperative planning, and utilizes an organized process (Northouse, 2013). Programs that are implemented with fidelity have proven to increase academic performance and psychosocial development (Hirsh, 2014). This is exactly the goal that 21st CCLC programs strive to obtain by tying the regular school day activities to academic enrichment activities that meet state and local standards (Afterschool Alliance, 2013).

A study conducted by Dodd & Bowen (2011) concludes that, "successful after-school programs require a commitment from all stakeholders" (p. 14), especially from potential community partners. Community collaboration is what Bolman & Deal (2008) refer to as the Human Resource Frame; "what organizations and people do to and for one another" (p. 117). Therefore, the 21st CCLC model requires that program directors conduct annual stakeholder meetings so that information can be disseminated and new ideas can be brought up for discussion. Effective after-school programs must also remain cognizant of what McDavid, et al. (2013) refer to as a simplified performance management cycle; "needs assessment, program development, program implementation, program evaluation and performance measurement, and finally, program accountability" (p. 229). This cycle is designed to identify the needs of the organization or program by using a systematic method. Simply stated, this is where your program is evaluated methodically with input from all stakeholders.

Another goal of the 21st CCLC program model is to provide a safe environment for students to socialize and develop social skills. Most after-school programs, "…attempt to provide safe havens that keep youth off the streets and offer them a variety of opportunities to enhance their experiences and skills" (Walker & Arbreton, 2005, p. 11). This is crucial since there is a growing number of youth who are unsupervised after school each day. This trend began in the 1970's and continues to grow. Zhang & Byrd (2013) note that a great need exists for after-school activities that provide, "appropriate youth supervision and involvement" (p. 3). To expand on this literature one could look to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943). Maslow postulated that basic needs have to be met in order for people to move on with more complex needs. Effective after-school programs understand this and model their programs to fill these needs by regularly offering counseling, a snack or hot meal, and a safe environment for those who attend.

In 2011, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) noted that 20.2% of students did not graduate high school with their cohort (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE Four Year Graduation Rate]). Furthermore, students who qualify for free and reduced lunch have a 73% chance of graduating compared to an overall state graduation rate of 79.8% (DESE Four Year Graduation Rate, 2011). This is a huge problem that exists as those students who do not complete high school are less likely, and less qualified to provide for their families (United State Census Bureau [Educational Attainment in the United States: 2009], 2012). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, workers who are not high school graduates will earn $18,432 per year compared to high school graduates who will earn on average of $26,766 per year (Educational Attainment in the United States: 2009, 2012, table 3). According to the Missouri Afterschool Program, identifying these at-risk of graduating

students early in their high school careers and involving them in a high quality after-school program can greatly increase Missouri's graduation rate (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [Overview], 2011)

In an effort to address this phenomenon, schools throughout the state and nation have implemented after-school programs. Kanter (2001) notes the impact of quality after-school programs on its participants by saying, "After-school programs for youth of all ages provide unique opportunities to link school learning with real-world experiences and peer association." (p. 19). Studies by Chappell (2006); Davies & Peltz (2012); and Hartmann, Good, & Edmunds (2011) indicate that students who are involved in high quality after-school programs are less likely to be truant from school, have lower discipline referral rates, and complete core classes (i.e. math, science, social studies, and language arts) as scheduled than similar students who do not attend an after-school program. Furthermore, at-risk students will be defined in this study as a student who qualifies for free or reduced. Evidence exist that shows at-risk students can benefit tremendously from attending a high-quality, after-school program; one that uses regular school day teachers who focus on developing quality relationships with the students they assist (Rothman & Henderson, 2011). This study will aim to provide insight on the effects of at-risk students who regularly participate in a high-quality after-school program as it pertains to their academics and attendance rates during their regular school day. This study will seek to discover correlations in addition to scatter plots to evaluate patterns in after-school attendance and regular day attendance, discipline, and core academic grades. The study will perform simple t-tests on each test group regarding student attendance of an after-school program and their academics, attendance, and disciplinary infractions during the regular school day.

In an effort to combat the rise of at-risk students and dropouts, DESE has utilized available monies from the US Department of Education's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act of 2002-2003 by implementing after-school programs across the state. Many school districts have chosen to implement a federally funded, 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) after-school program model. In 2002-2003 the US Department of Education began allocating money to each state to implement their 21st CCLC program and grant cycles. Since then, there have been numerous studies on the positive outcomes produced by offering 21st CCLC programs (Chappell, 2006; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011; Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010). However, there have been few empirical studies about the impacts 21st CCLC programs provide students in the State of Missouri. This study will aim to substantiate empirical-based research about the effects of regular participation from at-risk students in an after-school tutoring program.

Gap in literature

Studies have repeatedly presented empirical data detailing how at-risk benefit by attending an after-school program and have increased odds of graduating from a four-year high school and becoming productive members of society (Office of Early and Extended Learning, 2010; DESE "Missouri Afterschool Programs", 2011). While there is ample evidence that exists demonstrating the effectiveness of after-school programs on increasing regular school day attendance, increasing academic success, and in some instances, lowering disciplinary incidents (Finn & Rock, 1997; Davies & Peltz 2012; Walker & Arbreton, 2005; Kanter 2001; Gottfredson, Gerstenblith, Soule, Womer, & Lu, 2004) there have been few studies conducted on the effectiveness of Missouri's implementation of the 21st CCLC model, which many districts have recently implemented in Missouri. To clarify this further, there is evidence that establishes the

effectiveness of after-school programs such as the 21st CCLC to increase regular school day attendance and increase core course GPA (Overview, 2011), however, research is limited on these relationships in rural public schools in Southeast Missouri.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

A quick web search of the term, "at-risk" will produce countless identifying factors that attempt to quantify an individual as being, at-risk. This in itself provides an overarching challenge for researchers when they begin to investigate at-risk students. Research from (Finn & Rock, 1997; Chappell, 2006; NCES, 1992) agree that students who are failing a core class, a minority, or those who have a low socioeconomic status (SES) are considered, at-risk. For the purpose of this study, the term, "at-risk" will include high school students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016).

Research indicates that after-school programs can have a significant impact on student attendance rates, achievement, and behaviors during the regular school day simply by attending an after-school program. Studies conducted by Davies & Peltz, (2012) have shown when students regularly attend a strong after-school program they have, "improved scores on standardized test" (p. 12). Another study, conducted by the Afterschool Alliance (2013) found "significant increases in proficiency-level shifts among active participants compared to nonparticipants" (p. 3) in a two year span in mathematics. Regression model results conducted by Hartmann et al. (2011, table 1) have shown how at-risk students who regularly attend an after-school program increase performance levels in the following areas: more likely to pass their math or language arts course and less likely to have attendance issues.

The purpose of providing after-school programs such as the 21st CCLC model is to provide scaffolding opportunities in a variety of areas for all students, especially for those

students who are at-risk. The 21st CCLC model incorporates the following scaffolding opportunities; character education, homework assistance, athletic activities, or even extended learning opportunities. After-school programs have proven to be an effective measure to decrease student discipline referrals, increase attendance rates in the regular school day, and reduce the number of failing grades in at-risk students.

Research Questions

The research questions that were used for this study are quantitative in nature. For these questions, data was collected from a student information system maintained by the school district. The research questions guiding this study are:

- Research question number 1: How do regular school day attendance rates of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program compare to at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program?

- Research question 2: How do regular school day core course GPA of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program compare to at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program?

Null Hypotheses

- Research question number 1: There is no statistical difference when comparing regular school day attendance rates of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program and at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

- Research question 2: There is no statistical difference when comparing regular school day core course GPA of at-risk students who regularly attend a 21st CCLC program and at-risk students who do not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

Method

   The study was designed to evaluate empirical-based research concerning the impact of regular participation from at-risk students in the school's 21st CCLC program. The study focused on regular day attendance rates and core course GPA between the two groups of participants of the 21st CCLC program.

Approach

   A program evaluation approach was utilized to examine the outputs of the two participant groups who attended the 21st CCLC program. The program evaluation was a longitudinal study starting with its inception in the 2011-2012 school year. Participants from this study came from a rural high school containing grades 9-12 located in southeast Missouri with an overall student population of 550 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), "Building attendance rate" 2015). Students were identified for this study based on their attendance of the 21st CCLC program after-school attendance during the tutoring and homework assistance time from 2:45 p.m. through 3:45 p.m. offered Monday through Thursday. Five years of student data was collected, ending with the 2015-2016 school year. It should be noted that the principal investigator is currently employed at the high school.

   Daily program attendance is uploaded to Kids Care Center (DESE "Kids care center", 2016) on a weekly basis. Kids Care Center is an informational system that is used to maintain program information such as enrollment, gender, race, and activities offered by the after-school program. It is maintained by the DESE. Participant attendance data for the tutoring and homework assistance time from 2:45 p.m. through 3:45 p.m. was taken from Kids Care Center.

Data Sample

Participant samples were collected in what Creswell (2014) describes as stratification of the population. Participants from the tutoring and homework assistance time period were identified initially by their attendance from Kids Care Center. A subset of participants for the study was then selected by determining if they qualified for the National School Lunch Program. This subset of the population was then divided by regular program attendees and non-regular program attendees. For the purpose of this study, the term regular attendees was used to identify students who attended a 21st CCLC program at least 30 days in a school year as identified in the DESE 21st CCLC grant application ("Application", 2016, p. 1). This method was used to allow the researcher to identify participants so that their subsequent data could be compared.

Design

Student outcome data was examined through quantitative analysis using IBM SPSS 22 software. The research conducted and data collected came from the attendance of the after-school tutoring and homework time attended from Monday through Thursday from 2:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. for each school year. Data analysis was conducted by way of independent t-tests for each research question. The t-tests were used to compare the means between at-risk students who regularly attended a 21st CCLC program regarding attendance rates and core course GPA compared to at-risk students who did not regularly attend a 21st CCLC program.

Quantitative data from participant's attendance rates and core course GPA for the 2011-2012; 2012-2013; 2013-2014; 2014-2015; and 2015-2016 school years were used to compare data between the control group and participants who regularly attended a 21st CCLC program. Student attendance rates were reported in total days of absence; including out-of-suspension, verified and general absences for each school year. Each participants' core courses were

combined into a GPA format based on a 4.0 grading scale. Core courses are those courses in

math, science, social studies, and language arts. All data acquired was coded in a way to ensure

confidentiality of the participants. Table 1 shows the relationship between the letter grade and

the GPA associated to the letter grade.

Table 1

GPA Calculation for 4.0 Grading Scale

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
GPA	4.0	3.66	3.33	3.0	2.66	2.33	2.0	1.66	1.33	1.0	.66	0

Note. Grade = Letter grade that represents an achievement mark; GPA = Grade point average.
Adapted from "Name of school district" ("Student Handbook, 2016, p. 5).

Results of the Study

The results of the t-test conducted for each year of the study are reported below. In

addition, a discussion of the results is interpreted after each year of the study. Student outcome

data was examined through quantitative analysis using IMB SPSS 22 software. The researcher

used Field's Discovering Statistics Using IBM Statistics (2012, Chapter 9) to assist with

interpreting the results of each independent t-test.

Table 2

2011-2012 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
	Regular	45	6.75	7.73	2.67	74	.009
Program Attendance Status	Non-Regular	31	13.03	12.72			

Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants.
The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really
*does have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 2 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 76 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a regular school day attendance mean that was 6.28 points lower than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 3

2011-2012 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
	Regular	45	2.02	.87	2.98	64	.004
Program Attendance Status	Non-Regular	31	1.40	.90			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 3 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 76 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .62 points higher than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 4

2012-2013 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	42	5.19	6.70	2.11	77	.037
	Non-Regular	37	8.92	8.83			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 4 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 79 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a regular school day attendance mean that was 3.73 points lower than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 5

2012-2013 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	42	2.63	.78	2.37	77	.020
	Non-Regular	37	1.94	.76			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the

21st CCLC program. Table 5 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 79 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .69 points higher than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 6

2013-2014 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	29	7.25	9.42	1.49	69	.139
	Non-Regular	49	11.14	11.74			

Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the t-test suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really did not have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 6 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. While the descriptive statistics of the 78 students' aggregate data suggest a positive relationship between regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program and lower rates of regular school day absences, t-test results found a significance level of .139.   Statistical significance for the study was set at the .05 level, resulting in the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Table 7

2013-2014 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	29	2.13	1.03	2.08	49	.043
	Non-Regular	49	1.66	.82			

Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st *CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 7 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 78 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .47 points higher than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 8

2014-2015 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	29	6.28	7.29	1.10	65	.273
	Non-Regular	42	8.36	8.46			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the t-test suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program did not have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly

attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 8 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent

sample t-test. While the descriptive statistics of the 71 students' aggregate data suggest a

positive relationship between regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program and lower rates of

regular school day absences, t-test results found a significance level of .273.   Statistical

significance for the study was set at the .05 level, resulting in the acceptance of the null

hypothesis.

Table 9

2014-2015 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	T	df	p
	Regular	29	2.53	.82	2.59	68	.012
Program Attendance Status	Non-Regular	42	1.97	1.01			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who

regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the

21st CCLC program. Table 9 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-

test. The analysis of 71 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at

the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the

21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .56 points higher than at-risk students

who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 10

2015-2016 Regular School Day Attendance

		N	M	SD	T	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	31	2.84	2.80	2.26	58	.027
	Non-Regular	29	5.52	5.90			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on regular school day attendance. * .05 level of significance*

The first research question compared the regular school day attendance means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Table 10 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 60 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a regular school day attendance mean that was 2.68 points lower than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Table 11

2015-2016 Core Course GPA

		N	M	SD	t	df	p
Program Attendance Status	Regular	31	2.75	.76	2.83	57	.006
	Non-Regular	29	2.16	.84			

*Note. The variation in sample size is due to the variation in the number of qualified participants. The results of the mean averages suggest that regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program really does have an effect on core course GPA. * .05 level of significance*

The second research question compared core course GPA means of at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program to at-risk students who did not regularly attend the

21st CCLC program. Table 11 contains descriptive statistics used in the independent sample t-test. The analysis of 60 students' aggregate data found the results to be statistically significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected as at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program had a core course GPA mean that was .59 points higher than at-risk students who were non-regular 21st CCLC participants.

Discussion of the Results

The results of the study should serve as a resource for all members of the 21st CCLC program for the school district. School districts with similar demographics may also find this study useful as they apply for a 21st CCLC grant. Statistical significance was found in regular school day attendance in three of the five years of the program's existence. Statistical significance was found in core course GPA for all five years of the programs existence.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of regular attendance of a 21st CCLC program by comparing the mean scores of at-risk students' regular school day attendance and core course GPA to at-risk students who do not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program. Results from the study indicate that both program goals identified are being met; increased regular school day attendance for at-risk students and increased academic achievement in at-risk students.

Previous research concluded that at-risk students who regularly attend 21st CCLC programs exhibit higher rates of regular school attendance than at-risk students who do not regularly attend 21st CCLC programs (Finn & Rock, 1997; Davies & Peltz 2012; Walker & Arbreton, 2005; Kanter 2001; Gottfredson, Gerstenblith, Soule, Womer, & Lu, 2004). The research conducted in this study found a statistical significance in regular school day attendance between at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program compared to at-risk

students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program for three of the five years of the study. In addition, the means of the t-test for each of the five years of the study indicated that students who did not regularly attend the 21st CCLC program had a higher rate of absences compared to at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program.

Empirical data exists that establishes the effectiveness of after-school programs to decrease the number of failing grades in a semester, and increase attendance rates during the regular school day for all at-risk students (Walker & Arbreton, 2005; Rothman & Henderson, 2011; Zuelke & Nelson, 2001; Zhang & Byrd, 2013). This data was substantiated by the research conducted in this study. There was a statistical significance in core course GPA between at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program compared to at-risk students who did not regularly attend 21st CCLC program for all five years of the study.

Limitations

The study was limited by the number of participants who qualified for the study. The study sought to examine at least 45 participants from each group for each year of the program. There were no years of the study that had 45 participants for each group. Other factors are not accounted for when the researcher analyzed regular school day attendance and core course GPA. These factors include the schools disciplinary policy as it pertains to students who are absent and the school's philosophy on required core course scheduling. Other limitations of the study included; students who had external barriers that after-school programs are not equipped to deal with. Such barriers included, lack of support from home to attend an after-school program, students who are not motivated to fully participate in the after-school program, or teachers and or administrators who work for the after-school program, but do not fully implement the after-school program goals.

Reasoning's for students who lack motivation and exhibit low self-efficacy would also be a limitation for this study. Further research is needed to gain insight on this phenomenon. Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (2011) could provide a more in-depth analysis as to why some students lack focus on how they spend their time while attending the 21st CCLC program. Techniques described by McDavid et al (2013) such as open coding could bring to light information in a new way and assist with further analysis.

Summary

The district identified eight goals it wished to address if it were approved for the 21st CCLC grant program. Two of those goals directly related to this study: "increase regular school day attendance for at-risk students" and "increase academic achievement in at-risk students" ([21st century community learning centers/afterschool program grant application], 2011).

The research sought to analyze the impact of regular participation from at-risk students enrolled in a 21st CCLC program based on regular school day attendance and achievement. Study results found that there was a statistical significance between regular 21st CCLC program attendees and non-regular 21st CCLC program attendees for three of the five school years regarding regular school day attendance. Finally, study results found that there was a statistical significance between regular 21st CCLC program attendees and non-regular 21st CCLC program attendees for all five-years of the 21st CCLC program investigated regarding regular core course GPA.

Evidence from the study suggests that the 21st CCLC program has been effective in increasing core course GPA and increasing attendance during the regular school day for at-risk students who regularly attended the 21st CCLC program. In 2010, the high school had a building attendance rate of 92.5% (DESE "Building attendance rate", 2016). In 2016, the high

school had a building attendance rate of 94% (DESE "Building attendance rate", 2016). This is

an increase of 1.5%. In 2010, the high school had a graduation rate of 68.5% (DESE "Building 4

year graduation rate", 2016). In 2016, the high school had a graduation rate of 91.6% (DESE

"Building 4 year graduation rate", 2016). This is an increase of 23.1%. This is further evidence

that the implementation of the 21st CCLC program is meeting its two goals.

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SECTION SIX:

SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

Introduction

I remember during the first day of our first summer session in 2013, how Dr. Cynthia MacGregor explained that we were about to embark on a journey that would forever change our lives. Her enthusiasm and sincerity really captured the essence of what this experience was all about; transforming educators to become the future leaders in education. She and many other instructors were passionate about how their experiences in their own cohorts from the ELPA program had directed them to where they are now. I was in awe and intrigued, and to be completely honest, a little skeptical about how a blended mix of cohort students could be changed by an Educational Doctoral program. What resonated with me most throughout this experience was what Northouse (2013) describes as, transformational leadership; "the process of how certain leaders are able to inspire followers to accomplish great things" (p. 214). While there is no, one-size-fits-all recipe for accomplishing great things, the coursework I experienced as a student in the University of Missouri Doctoral Cohort has given me insight on a plethora of strategies, proven methods, and other empirical evidence on how to create and sustain an educational culture that cultivates and fosters transformational learning. In addition, this dissertation has allowed me the opportunity to apply my understanding of the coursework to conduct my study.

How has the dissertation influenced My Practice as an Education Leader?

I feel the dissertation process has influenced my practice as an educational leader in many ways. First, it has shown me that reflection is a key element for educational leaders. Secondly, it has provided me the ability to understand organizations by using frameworks. Finally, I have a better understanding of leadership.

"Reflection is the process of finding useful meaning in the answers." (Gill, 2010, p. 55). To reflect on one as a learner and leader requires great time and critical analysis of one's own self. I know who I want to be, but is the person in the mirror what others think I am? Merriam and Bierema (2014) postulate that to think critically one must begin, "…with an examination of your assumptions" (pg.223). By completing my dissertation, I can say that I have a better understanding of myself as a learner, leader, and change agent. I am able to analyze the data, and then reflect on the impact the data has on the decisions made.

The dissertation process also allowed me to analyze my organization. Bolman & Deal (2008) describe organizations by using four frames. Each frame has advantages and disadvantages. As the educational leader, it is important to identify the best framework to utilize to accomplish the task. In the past, I was inclined to utilize the structural framework more often. I was comfortable at establishing goals and objectives.   After completing the dissertation process, I have a better understanding of the importance of utilizing multiple frameworks to complete task, establishing goals, and objectives.

During the dissertation process, I chose to reflect on the different leadership styles of the administrative team. I noted that during certain activities, individuals that had specific knowledge or experience in that activity would take charge. This is what Levi (2014) shaped as, "situational leadership" (p. 189). Situational leadership is being able to use one of the four basic styles of leadership in any circumstance; coaching, directing, supporting, or delegating. Each member of the administrative team at times had to allow others to be the leader depending on the task at hand. As the instructional leader of a High School, I understand that I need to be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of my staff members so that I can allow my staff to be as effective as possible.

As an educational leader, the dissertation process has truly been a transformational experience for me and I am proud to say that I have a genuine passion for education more so now than I did when I started my dissertation. I will forever be grateful to those who shared their experiences with me, took the time to see my vantage point, shared with me their experiences, and valued my contribution to the process.

How has the Dissertation Process Influenced me as a Scholar?

Several themes of the coursework offered throughout my doctoral experience and the work on my dissertation have influenced me as a scholar. Two have specifically resonated with me throughout this process: Organizational Analysis and Culture. The ability to analyze an organization through the lens of Boleman & Deal's (2008) frameworks is crucial. Establishing a culture where change is embraced for the goodness of the organization is vital when implementing new programs.

Throughout the dissertation process and coursework I have gained a better understanding of how organizations operate, by utilizing the works of Bolman & Deal (2008). Their work analyzes organizations into four frames: political, human resource, symbolic, and structural. By having an understanding of the frameworks provided by Bolman & Deal (2008) I now find myself asking, "What is the author's purpose for writing this information?" Now, I look critically at information in an attempt to uncover bias.

As a high school principal, I have a better understanding on how to effectively implement new programs or change existing programs by completing my coursework and dissertation from the ELPA program. This year, I plan to implement old programs and attempt to reestablish a culture of transparency and collaboration by setting new precedents (Levi 2014). Levi states that: "Changing an organizational culture requires a consistent effort on the part of management

to show that employee involvement and teamwork will be valued and rewarded." (p. 268).   Levi (2014) also identifies the importance of not succumbing to "groupthink" when making decisions. Having this understanding I plan organize a diverse group of staff members as an advisory council when making decisions.   In order to achieve this goal, I must regularly value input from my staff regarding our vision and mission at our school and celebrate when we reach our goals. I must be able to step outside of my comfort zone and challenge myself and staff to work together to meet the needs of our students.

In education, there seems to always be change: Changes in philosophy, procedures, and best practices are just a few to mention. As an educational leader of a school, I feel it is the responsibility of the building administrator to facilitate a learning culture for the staff. Gill (2010) notes that, "a learning culture is created by the way an organization is led, the style and frequency of communication, how incentives are linked to learning" (pg. 14). Communication and relationships are keys to an organizations learning culture.

I welcome change. Change is a natural part of life. I understand that change is a barrier to a learning culture. Gill (2010) notes that, "…employees tend to approach the change in terms of how it will affect them personally" (pg. 20). Knowing this I attempt to capture that point when the questioned is asked, "Why are we doing this?" My Strengths Finder shows that I like to use data and numbers and that I am good at finding common ground. In schools, we often make changes based on data and gathering a consensus. These strengths work well with my current leadership position. True change requires an organization to go through a process; if it wants to be lasting. Charan (2013) notes that effective decision making should consist of dialogue, action, candor, informality, and closure: Dialogue consists of being able to view things

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from multiple perspectives. Take action only after considering how your choices affect others.

Closure allows the leader to reflect back on the action and evaluate its effectiveness.

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VITA

Richard Leeker has been a life-long Missouri resident. He graduated high school and served four years in the United States Marine Corps. He is currently serving as a building level principal in charge of instructional leadership. He obtained a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Southeast Missouri State University. Following graduation, Richard taught Kindergarten, second, and fifth grades for a total of five years and obtained his Master of Arts in Elementary and Secondary Education from William Woods University. He served as a high school assistant principal for five years prior to accepting his current position. Richard recently finished coursework for his Doctor of Education from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is entering his 13th year in public education, all served within the same district. He feels strongly that building relationships is essential to maintaining a positive culture in his building. He strives hard to build relationships with his staff, students, and community members.