



Findings Highlights



- Respondents to the site coordinator survey were asked to choose their top-three program goals from a predefined list. The most selected goal was to “raise the academic performance levels of all participating students” (62%), followed by “support the social and emotional development of students” (61%).
- Site coordinators were also asked to indicate what they thought their school principal’s top-three goals were for the program. Seventy-three percent said “raising the academic performance levels of all participating students” was a top goal, whereas 46% said “supporting the social and emotional development of students” was a top goal.
- Two-thirds of survey respondents said that they focused recruitment efforts “a lot” on students in need of support in mathematics or reading language arts (RLA). About the same proportion said that they focused recruitment on students in need of “a safe place to be after school” (64%), whereas 53% said that they focused “a lot” on students needing support for “developing social and emotional skills.”
- In terms of how programs recruit, 62% said that they rely “a lot” on students, whereas 56% said that they rely “a lot” on school-day teachers. Activity leaders were also commonly cited (52% “a lot”), followed by parents or adult family members at 39%.
- About half of survey respondents (51%) said that half or more of their program’s activities were led by a school-day teacher. Among coordinators reporting less than half of activities led by a school-day teacher, 36% said that they did not have procedures in place for program staff to meet regularly with school-day staff to review the academic progress of individual students.
- Most of the interviewed site coordinators (14) reported having access to the needed school-day data. They mentioned primarily accessing disciplinary, academic, and positive behavioral intervention and support data.
- Nearly all site coordinators responding to the survey (96%) said that feedback from students was “very important” for developing content for activities. About 95% said that program staff discussion was also “very important.”
- Site coordinators associated with suburban programs were more likely than coordinators associated with other locales to say that the use of the results of a program quality assessment tool (e.g., Youth Program Quality Assessment) was “very important” for activity design (82%, compared with 69% for city, 58% for town, and 65% for rural site coordinators).
- A majority of site coordinators responding to the survey indicated that the school district supports their program through the provision of building space (81%). The next highest supports reported were staffing (62%), data analysis or analytic support (62%), and transportation (60%). The least-reported type of district-provided support was funding, with only 33% of site coordinators saying they receive this support.
- Compared with site coordinators associated with school-district grants, coordinators associated with non-school-district grants were less likely to report district supports in terms of curricula provision (30% vs. 54%), supplies (33% vs. 55%), funding (17% vs. 42%), technical assistance (TA) and professional development (36% vs. 69%), transportation (48% vs. 66%), data provision (47% vs. 56%), data analyses or analytic support (50% vs. 68%), or staffing (50% vs. 68%).

Recommended Next Steps



1. It may be useful for Texas Education Agency (TEA) program staff to discuss the best practices material provided in this report with a broader audience of Texas ACE grant- or center-level staff (e.g., project directors and frontline staff). Discussions may confirm, clarify, correct, or otherwise detail specific best practices, as outlined in this report, and foster the sharing of best practices among centers.
2. TEA may want to investigate the extent to which centers not associated with school-district grants have difficulty obtaining school-district support, as well as the extent to which these centers have access to alternative resources not asked about as part of the survey or interview.
3. In keeping with previous reports submitted to TEA by the American Institutes for Research® (AIR), staffing challenges emerged as a theme. TEA may want to continue exploring solutions to frontline staff-related challenges to help programs identify workable solutions.



The **Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program** addresses the needs of students who attend schools struggling in their efforts to fully support students, located largely in

Student Recruitment and Retention

Two-thirds of survey respondents said that they focused recruitment efforts “a lot” on students in need of support in mathematics or RLA. About the same proportion said that they focused recruitment on students in need of “a safe place to be after school” (64%), whereas 53% said that they focused “a lot” on students needing support in “developing social and emotional skills.” In terms of how programs recruit, 62% said that they rely “a lot” on students, whereas 56% said that they rely “a lot” on school-day teachers. Activity leaders were also commonly cited (52% “a lot”), with parents/ adult family members at 39%. See Exhibit ES2.

Exhibit ES2. Recruitment at Texas ACE Programs

Q5. How much did your program rely on each of the following groups to help with recruiting students for the 2022–23 school year?

4% relied on students not at all, 9% relied on students a little, 26% relied on students some and 62% relied on students a lot.

4% relied on school day teachers not at all, 11% relied on school day teachers a little, 26% relied on school day teachers some and 59% relied on school day teachers a lot.

community and belonging. Specifically, they work to provide students with opportunities to make choices and give feedback on their programs using student “voice and choice” (nine site coordinators) and by offering interesting enrichment activities aligned with student interests (six site coordinators). Five site coordinators stated that providing social-emotional learning programming and support to students helped them feel more welcome in the program and created a sense of belonging. Four site coordinators mentioned actively building relationships with the students by greeting them at the door and checking in to see how they’re doing, whereas four site coordinators noted that hosting family and community events helped students stay engaged and committed to the program. A majority of site coordinators (12) specifically mentioned using student feedback surveys to help increase engagement (and thereby retention), whereas eight mentioned using caregiver surveys for a similar purpose.

Linkages to the School Day

About half of survey respondents (51%) said that half or more of their program’s activities were led by a school-day teacher. Respondents who indicated that less than half of their activities are led by a school-day teacher were asked follow-up questions concerning school-day linkages. Of note, **more than a third of these respondents (36%, or about 17% of all respondents) said that they do not have procedures for program staff to meet regularly with school-day staff to review the academic progress of individual students.**

Site coordinators who were interviewed described using formal and informal communication strategies to discuss student academic and social progress with school-day staff, specifically mentioning communication

with administrators, teachers, counselors, leadership teams, and front office staff. Sixteen site coordinators described formally communicating with school-day staff through **regular meetings**, although the frequency of these meetings varied from daily or weekly to monthly or bimonthly. Regardless of meeting frequency, site coordinators use these meetings to provide programming updates and schedule changes to school staff and to discuss student needs around attendance, discipline, and academic progress. Additionally, site coordinators said they use these meetings to better understand student communication preferences, engagement, and family or home life. Several site coordinators noted that these discussions provide needed context to ensure that programming is meeting student needs and to identify emerging needs.

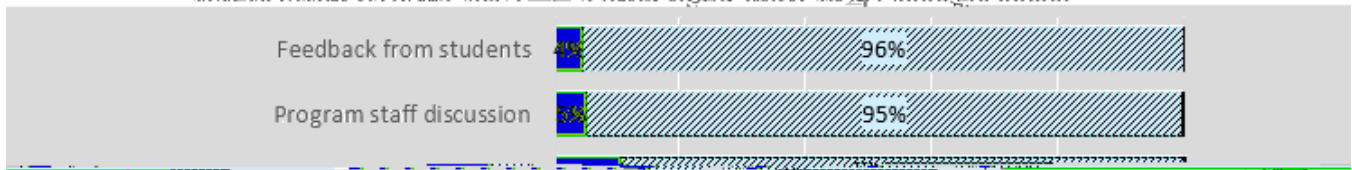
Finally, most of the interviewed site coordinators (14) reported having access to the **school-day data** needed. They mentioned primarily accessing disciplinary data, academic data, and positive behavioral intervention and support data. Site coordinators said they gain access to these types of data through a data management system the school or district uses or by requesting specific reports run by school administrators, data clerks, or other staff who manage data at the school. Accessing data can be challenging, especially if the site coordinator must ask a school staff to pull it or run a report. On the other hand, three site coordinators mentioned that working with school staff on data requests has helped them improve their data literacy skills.

Activity Provision

Survey respondents were asked to indicate what information they consider when developing the content for activity sessions. The most selected option was “feedback from students” with 96% of site coordinators saying this was “very important.” About 95% of respondents also said that program staff discussion was very important and about 89% said specific learning goals were very important. Interestingly, only 42% of respondents said that copies of lessons from the school day were very important. See Exhibitom

Exhibit ES3. Activity Development in Texas ACE Programs

Q14. Thinking generally about all the activities offered in your program, what information or approaches are used to develop the content of specific activity sessions? Please indicate how important each of the following is for activity planning:

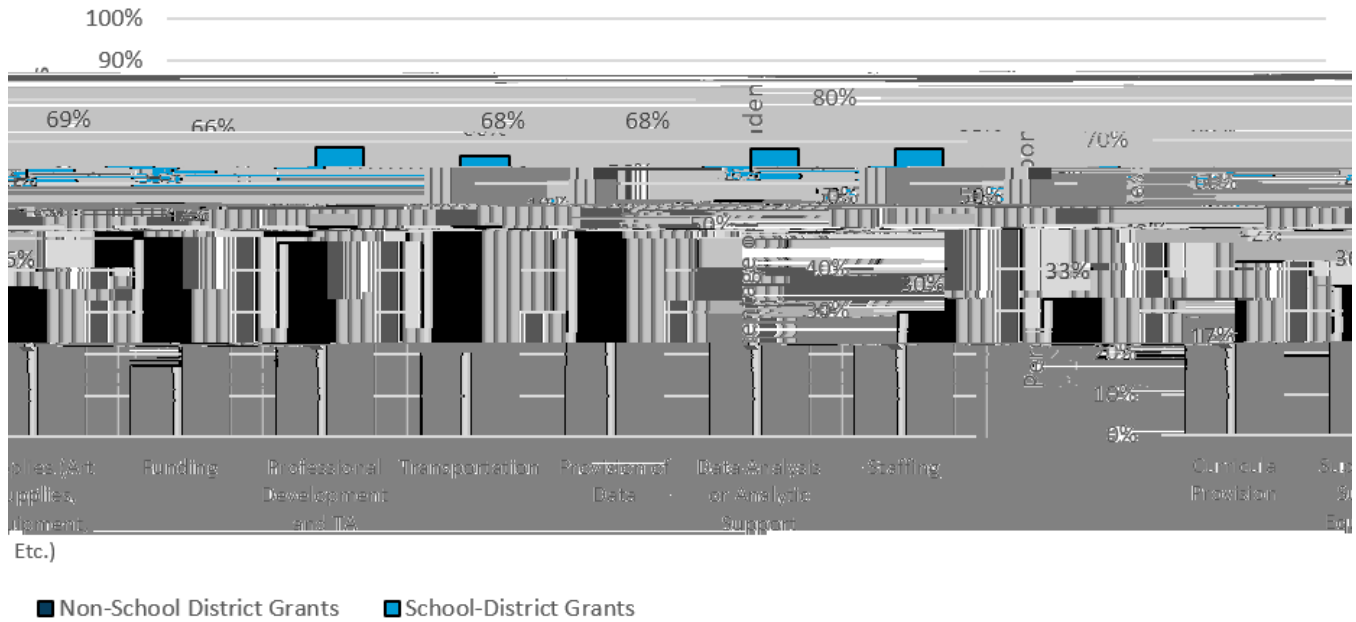


Source. Texas ACE Site Coordinator Survey, Spring 2023.

Note. N ranged from 618 to 624 for this set of items. TCLAS – Texas COVID Learning Acceleration Supports, TEA, Texas ACE, YPOA – Youth Program Quality Assessment.

Exhibit ES4. District Support for Texas ACE Programs, by School-District Grant Status

Q21. How has the district supported your program? Please select all that apply.



Source. Texas ACE Site Coordinator Survey, Spring 2023.

Note. N = 220 for non-school-district grants, N = 391 for school-district grants. Only statistically significant differences are shown (p < .05). TA – technical assistance, Texas ACE.

Perhaps of relevance to programs not associated with school-district grants, site coordinators who were interviewed said that they worked to overcome challenges in obtaining district support by establishing a presence outside of program time. They did this by attending district meetings and/or setting up virtual meetings with the superintendent. They also said that clearly communicating program

goals and showing the alignment between Texas ACE and district goals helps establish buy-in, as does periodically sharing program data and outcomes to demonstrate the benefits of the program.

Texas COVID Learning Acceleration Supports (TCLAS) Decision 11

Only 20% of respondents said that their program is receiving funding for TCLAS Decision 11 High-Quality Afterschool supports, but more than half of the respondents were not sure (55%). Respondents who said their program received funding from TCLAS Decision 11 were presented with two additional questions. First, they were asked whether they were using the high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) provided through TCLAS Decision 11 in Texas ACE tutoring supports. The majority of respondents said that they were (80%), whereas 13% said that they were not sure.

Only 7% said "no." Second, respondents who said that they were funded by TCLAS Decision 11 were asked how effective HQIM have been in terms of accelerating learning for students. Most respondents indicated that HQIM were at least moderately effective (82%) and that tools or assessments included with HQIM designed to monitor student progress were moderately effective (72%). Respondents also indicated that professional development and training related to using HQIM was moderately effective (73%).

Discussion

Several themes emerge from these findings. First, **program alignment with stakeholder interests** is very important. Within the broader goals of 21st CCLC statewide and nationally, program goals must align with school and district goals, while program services must be aligned with individual student and community interests and needs. Aligning the program in these ways is essential to building stakeholder buy-in, which is important for ensuring materi

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Communication with community stakeholders is also necessary, including with partners and parent and family members. It is essential for assessing community strengths and needs, setting student development goals, and telling stories of program success. Enabling caregivers to provide feedback on an ongoing basis is also important; such opportunities need to be designed to enable adults to provide sincere, fully articulated feedback (e.g., using anonymous suggestion boxes in addition to formal and informal information-gathering approaches). Communication with students, especially allowing them a voice and choice, is also a highlight: Students who have a say in activities (what they are or how they go about them) helps to keep them engaged.

Finally, the third theme, implicit in the previous two, is **effective data use**. Close review of school-day data is extraordinarily important for planning activities because using school-day data to identify areas of student need helps keep the program focused and relevant. Survey

data can also be helpful during planning, for staff interest (what enrichment activities are possible) and participant interest (whether