

2016-17 Statewide Evaluation Summary



In 2016, the Nebraska Legislature appropriated \$250,000 to be awarded through competition to partnerships of schools districts and community-based organizations, and to be administered by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). This was a one-time appropriation to provide expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) through programming and other support activities and services in existing 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs). The term ELO describes an array of safe and structured programs that offer

healthy growth, development and academic opportunities for youth. In Nebraska, 21st CCLCs are ELOs that provide educational and enrichment opportunities for K-12 youth when they are not in school (afterschool, during the summer and/or days when school is not in session).

Programs funded had varied project focus areas including STEM, health and wellness, career exploration, community engagement and agriculture. For most sites, the focus was on student experiences, however, one project's specific focus was around building staff capacity in providing engaging programming.

Eleven projects serving 40 sites were funded. Of the sites funded, 27 were elementary and 13 were in middle/high school buildings. Statewide, 2,132 students participated with 92% being regular attenders (those attending 30 days or more during a school year). Of the regular attenders, 87% qualified for free/reduced lunch status, 15% were English Learners, 74% identified as an ethnic minority and 19% qualified for special education services.

As a 1:1 match was required, multiple partners were involved in the ELOs. A benefit to the programming was an increased involvement and engagement with partners, both local and statewide. Partners provided support in a number of ways: programming, time, materials and additional funds.

Results

Each ELO grant recipient was required to submit an evaluation of their program. The evaluation was not standardized, as the programs differed in respect to goals and students served. As part of the evaluation process, programs were encouraged to use a project-based evaluation mindset. The focus was more on process, engagement and student production of artifacts than on collecting additional survey data. To demonstrate learning, ELO programs set up websites, had students create vlogs, journal experiences and other artifacts. Data from the student surveys indicated high levels of belonging and engagement, while data from programs indicated skills gained by students and staff. Some examples included: 1) increased knowledge of nutrition and activity levels; 2) increased knowledge and skills involving outdoor activities; 3) increased knowledge and interest in animals and zoology; 4) increased staff capacity to deliver engaging lessons through aquaponics, art and technology; and 5) increased community participation through sports with students.

Individual project summaries are available at <https://www.education.ne.gov/elo/one-year-opportunity-grant/>.