

21st Century Community Learning Center Evaluation – Cohort 9

Prepared for the Neighborhood Learning Alliance

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Contents

- Evaluation Team 3
- Executive Summary..... 4
- Background 7
- Methodology..... 7
- Findings 9
 - Population Served..... 9
 - Academic Impact..... 10
 - Report Card Grades..... 11
 - PSSA Scores..... 15
 - Attendance..... 16
 - Teacher Perceptions 19
 - Engagement & Academic Outcomes by Site 20
 - Questions for Further Exploration 26

Evaluation Team

MG Consulting & Training, LLC is contracted to provide the Neighborhood Learning Alliance (NLA) with an independent evaluation for its 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs. Megan Good, principal of MG Consulting & Training, serves as the lead evaluator. Megan Good provides capacity-building technical assistance to organizations across a wide array of topics, including program design, program evaluation, workplace inclusion, and staff development. Megan previously served as a Manager of Analytics at the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, where she led project teams and supervised staff on a wide variety of analytic, evaluation, programmatic, and technology implementation projects.

MG Consulting & Training began evaluating NLA's 21st CCLC programming in September 2017 with Cohort 8. To maximize the utility of evaluation results, the tools and methods of the previous teams who evaluated Cohorts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6A, and 8 were used in this quantitative evaluation for Cohort 9.

Executive Summary

The Neighborhood Learning Alliance (NLA) partnered with Pittsburgh Public Schools to operate Little Learning Warriors, an after-school program that is made possible through a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grant. Cohort 9 of Little Learning Warriors served 206 students in 2017-18 who were most in need of support in reading, math, and science in five schools across Pittsburgh. This report describes the population served and their short-term academic and behavioral outcomes.

Performance Targets

Students demonstrated progress on all academic and behavioral indicators, but targets for established performance measures were met for only 5 of the 15 indicators – one related to academic gains, one related to school attendance, and three related to behavioral changes. The full list of indicators and actual performance levels benchmarked against the targets is provided below in Table 1.

Additional Findings

Data were evaluated to assess student outcomes and progress beyond the performance targets. There are numerous limitations to the data evaluated in this report. There are incomplete data, small sample sizes by program site, and a limited exposure period for many students since some sites started programming mid-year. This creates a context in which results should be reviewed with caution. 2017-18 should be regarded a baseline year for understanding student strengths and needs – a baseline against which future progress may be compared.

- Cohort 9 sites had excellent student retention in 2017-18: 98% of students participating in the fall term continued to attend programming in the spring.
- Regularly participating students achieved letter grade improvements in reading at four times the rate of their peers, and 1.7 times the rate of their peers in math. These data suggest the program had a positive impact on academic performance, and that it most strongly impacted students' reading ability.
- Program participation had a stronger influence on academic achievement for the lowest performing students (the lower the grade in the fall, the more likely they were to improve).
- Student gains in reading and science are correlated with higher levels of program attendance. Students attending the program 90 days or more increased their grades more often than other students.
- The dosage of program involvement for regularly attending students does not appear to have impacted how likely students were to improve their math grades. However, this may be because students attending 90 or more days had less room to improve in math: 81% already had an A or B in math in the fall.
- Higher levels of program participation are *not* correlated with better school attendance, and the academic performance of the group of students with both eleven or more absences and eleven or more tardies does *not* differ from that of program participants as a whole.

Questions for Further Exploration

In addition to questions identified by program staff, potential items for further exploration include:

- **Math:** Students made classroom gains in math in 2017-18, but PSSA scores remain low. Do any sites have success in moving students up PSSA levels in 2018-19? If so, which strategies are they employing?
- **Science:** Sample sizes were too low in 2017-18 to effectively assess the program's impact on student performance in science, but the preliminary data show no or little effect. The role and impact of STEM programming is worth examining more closely in 2018-19 for Cohort 9 sites.
- **Program Involvement and School Attendance:** Students with high levels of absences and tardies performed on par with their peers academically. A question for further exploration in the next program year is how effectively program involvement helps students with absences keep up rather than falling behind, and whether these outcomes vary by site.
- **Teacher Surveys:** Only one site had surveys returned for more than seven students. What strategies are needed to increase the response rates in the next program year?

Table 1. Student Outcomes vs. Performance Targets

Description of Measure	Actual	Target	Met Target
Performance Measure #1: Students regularly participating in the program (attending 30 or more days) will meet or exceed state and local academic achievement standards in reading and math.			
Participants will improve their mathematics grades.	39%	48.5%	No
Participants will improve their reading/English grades.	47%	48.5%	No
Participants will improve their science grades.	42%	50%	No
Grade 4-5 program participants will improve from not proficient to proficient or above in reading state PSSA assessments.	14%	45%	No
Grade 4-5 program participants will improve from not proficient to proficient or above in math state PSSA assessments.	3%	45%	No
Grade 4 students will score proficient on the science PSSA assessment.	48%	45%	Yes
Participants will make achievement level gains in reading based on pre/post DIBELS scores.	NA	70%	NA
Performance Measure #2: Students regularly participating in the program (who needed to improve) will show improvement in performance measures of school attendance, classroom performance and/or reduced disciplinary referrals.			
Participants will have teacher-reported improvement in homework completion and class participation (of students needing to improve).	60%	90%	No
Participants will improve their school attendance/behavior by reducing their number of days absent from the prior school year to the current year (of students needing to improve).	82%	70%	Yes
Participants will improve their school attendance/behavior by reducing their number of days tardy from the prior school year to the current year (of students needing to improve).	41%	70%	No
Participants will improve their school attendance/behavior by reducing their number of behavior incidents from the prior school year to the current year (of students needing to improve).	90%	70%	Yes
Participants will improve their class participation.	78%	60%	Yes
Performance Measure #3: Participants in 21st Century program (who needed to improve) will demonstrate additional positive educational, social, and behavioral changes.			
Participants will have teacher-reported improvements in student behavior.	70%	75%	No
Participants will improve their volunteering in class.	64%	60%	Yes
Participants will improve their motivation to learn.	57%	60%	No

* See Methodology for detailed descriptions of which students are included and excluded from each measure.

Background

The federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program supports academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for students living in areas of high-poverty with low-performing schools. CCLC recommends its grantees implement a range of activities to improve student performance, including reading, math, science after-school education activities and tutoring.

Wireless Neighborhoods, dba Neighborhood Learning Alliance (NLA), has partnered with Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) to implement several CCLC cohorts, including Cohort 9, known as the Little Learning Warriors program. Through analysis of school data and crime statistics, and discussions with PPS, community leaders, and families, NLA identified five elementary schools to operate the Little Learning Warriors after-school program: Concord, Manchester, Roosevelt, Sunnyside, and West Liberty.

The Little Learning Warriors program specifically targets students who are not proficient in math, reading, and science. NLA worked with school leadership to identify the most academically struggling children based on assessments, grades, behavior, and attendance data. In the 2017-18 school year, Little Learning Warriors served 206 students who met these criteria.

The program's curriculum helps students master foundational math and reading skills, gives students opportunities to participate in STEM activities, and engages students in service learning by completing projects in their community. All the Little Learning Warrior Centers operate 15 hours of after-school programming per week, with at least two hours per day focused on academic enrichment. Program staff are provided with professional development to ensure high-quality programming.

Methodology

Findings in this report are based on analyses of program attendance data, student outcome data and teacher surveys. Each of the sections below describe common definitions or calculations utilized in the preparation and analysis of the findings detailed in the report.

Program Participation

Source: Little Learning Warriors Program Staff

Students' participation levels are determined by the number of days the student attended Little Learning Warriors during the fall, spring, and summer of the program year. The four categories of participation levels are fewer than 30 days, 30-59 days, 60-89 days, and 90 days or more. Students who attended 30 days or more are considered "regularly participating" students. Many of the performance measures are calculated using regularly participating students only, because students who participated less than 30 days did not receive adequate exposure to the program.

Report Card Grades

Source: Pittsburgh Public Schools

Report card grades are one method used to determine student outcomes. All grade levels, except for Kindergarten, use an A through F grading scale. Evaluators compared grades for Quarter 1 and Quarter 4 to determine changes in student outcomes from the beginning to the end of the school year. Students' report card outcomes are reported as Improved, No Change, Declined, or Did Not Need to Improve based upon a full letter grade change. Students earning an A in Quarter 1 are categorized as Did Not Need to Improve, because they could not improve their letter grade from Quarter 1 to Quarter 4.

PSSA Scores

Source: Pittsburgh Public Schools

PSSA scores are another method used to determine student outcomes. PSSA scores are categorized as Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Evaluators compared PSSA scores for the current year and the prior year to determine changes in student outcomes. Students' PSSA score outcomes are reported as Improved, No Change, Declined, or Did Not Need to Improve. Students which earned a Proficient or Advanced score in the prior year were categorized as Did Not Need to Improve for the current year.

Attendance & Behavior Incidents

Source: Pittsburgh Public Schools

Evaluators used school data to determine attendance and behavior outcomes, which were categorized as Improved, Declined, No Change, or Did Not Need to Improve. For school attendance, students who were absent 10 days or fewer in the prior school year were categorized as Did Not Need to Improve. For school tardiness, students who were tardy 10 days or fewer in the prior school year were categorized as Did Not Need to Improve. And for behavior incidents, students who did not have any suspensions in the prior school year were categorized as Did Not Need to Improve.

Teacher Surveys

Source: Pittsburgh Public Schools Teachers

NLA provided teachers at Little Learning Warrior schools with a ten-question survey about their students' behavior. Some students had multiple teachers who completed surveys about them. In those cases, the evaluator selected the survey which indicated the student had the most room for improvement.

DIBELS

Source: Pittsburgh Public Schools or NLA program staff

NLA staff were unable to obtain 2017-18 DIBELS data from Pittsburgh Public Schools or the program sites for students in this cohort. Therefore, the performance metric related to DIBELS level improvements is not evaluated in this report.

Data Limitations

There are numerous limitations to the data evaluated in this report. The volume of incomplete data, small sample sizes by site, and the limited exposure some students had to the program (due to some sites starting mid-year) create a context in which results should be reviewed with caution. 2017-18 should be regarded as a baseline year for understanding student strengths and needs at each site, against which future progress may be compared.

Outcome data are not consistently available for the full cohort of 206 program participants, and child demographics are missing for 17% of students. To assist with the interpretation of the findings throughout the report, the total population for whom data are available and/or relevant for a given measure is provided to give context to the data.

Findings

Population Served

206 students were served across five sites in the 2017-18 program year, and 72% (148) participated on a regular basis (30 or more program days). Demographics of the student population served in the 2017-18 program year include:

- 50% female
- 72% students of color: 56% of total were African American
- 87% eligible for free/reduced lunch
- 20% received special education services
- 1% had limited English proficiency

Students ranged from kindergarteners to fifth graders at each site, with a higher concentration of children in grades 1-2. Sites began operating during different months, but each served 40 to 41 unique students over the course of the year (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Total Students Served by Grade by Center, 2017-18

Center	Grade level							Total	Target Number	First Month of Program
	K	1	2	3	4	5	Unknown			
Concord	3	2	10	9	6	4	10	44	40	Sept
Manchester	6	6	5	10	6	5	3	41	40	Nov
Roosevelt	3	11	7	4	2	2	11	40	40	Feb
Sunnyside	8	8	9	3	8	3	2	41	40	Oct
West Liberty	2	4	7	2	6	10	9	40	40	Mar
Total	22	31	38	28	28	24	35	206	200	

Three of the five sites opened in the fall, and the other two began operating in the spring. Retention from one term to the next was excellent for this cohort: 98% of students participating in the fall term continued to attend programming in the spring. Most students who attended the program over more than one term also attended a higher number of days (Table 4).

Table 3. Number of Total Student Participants, by Site and Term, 2017-18

Site	Participants Each Term			Total Unique Students	Students Retained from Fall to Spring	
	Summer	Fall	Spring		Number	Percent
Concord	21*	30	44	44	30	100%
Manchester		32	41	41	32	100%
Roosevelt			40	40		
Sunnyside	2*	38	39	41	36	95%
West Liberty			40	40		
Total	23*	100	204	206	98	98%

* Students attending summer programming attended a different site over the summer. Their outcomes are attributed to their school year sites throughout this report.

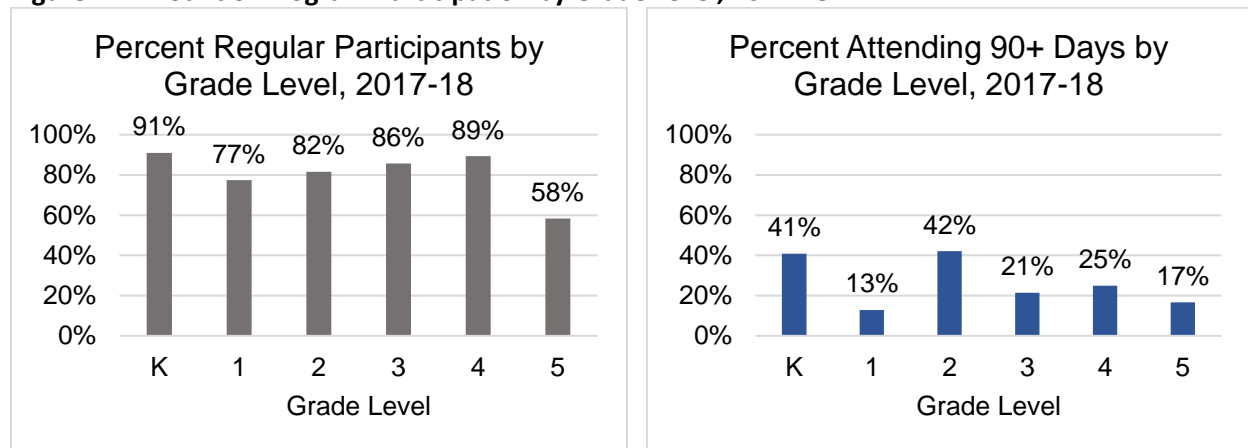
Table 4. Total Program Days Attended by Terms Attended, 2017-18

Program Days Attended	Length of Program Involvement			Total
	1 term	2 terms	3 terms*	
Fewer than 30 days	54	4	0	58
30-59 days	32	11	0	43
60-89 days	22	37	0	59
90+ days	0	23	23	46
Total	108	75	23	206

* Students attending three terms participated in programming at a different site over the summer.

The amount and duration of student engagement in programming differed slightly by student age. Fifth graders attended least consistently. Kindergarten and second grade students were most likely to attend for 90 days or more.

Figure A. Amount of Program Participation by Grade Level, 2017-18



Academic Impact

The Little Learning Warriors program includes focused attention on math and reading fundamentals, STEM activities, soft skills development, and service learning. Serving some of the most at-risk children in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the program is designed for students scoring at the Below Basic or Basic level of the DIBELS or PSSAs and/or students experiencing chronic absenteeism. Program goals include: developing students' skills so they are reading on grade level; mastering fundamental math skills; attending at least 90% of school days; demonstrating an increased interest in STEM; and, practicing soft skills that are vital to their future success.

Many program participants did improve test scores and grades over the course of the 2017-18 program year, but the program only met one of the seven targets set for improvements in academic performance. Almost half of grade 4 students scored Proficient on their science PSSAs (48%). Students narrowly missed the goals set for grade improvements. They made the greatest gains in reading, followed by science and then math. Students who'd previously scored below the Proficient level on the PSSA tests struggled to bring up their test scores to the Proficient level. The targets and actual performance are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Academic Progress of Regularly Attending Program Participants vs. Performance Targets

Description of Measure	Actual	Target	Eligible Number of Students*
Participants will improve their mathematics grades.	39%	48.5%	80
Participants will improve their reading/English grades.	47%	48.5%	96
Participants will improve their science grades.	42%	50%	24
Grade 4-5 program participants will improve from not proficient to proficient or above in reading state PSSA assessments.	14%	45%	22
Grade 4-5 program participants will improve from not proficient to proficient or above in math state PSSA assessments.	3%	45%	30
Grade 4 students will score proficient on the science PSSA assessment.	48%	45%	25
Participants will make achievement level gains in reading based on pre/post DIBELS scores.	NA	70%	NA ¹

* See Methodology for detailed descriptions of which students are included and excluded from each measure.

¹ DIBELS data is not available for Cohort 9 students, so this measure is unevaluable.

This section explores the academic progress of students more deeply, examining performance dynamics and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Report Card Grades

At least partial report card grades were provided for 118 (80%) of the 148 students who regularly participated in the program. While the program performance targets were not met, two-thirds of students did achieve gains in academic performance during the year. Academic improvement for report card grades is measured by letter grade improvement. 66% of students with room to improve their grades did so in at least one subject: 39% improved in math, 47% in reading, and 42% in science (Figure B). Students most consistently maintained or improved their grades in reading - only 13 percent experienced a drop in their letter grade. Gains were not as consistent in math and science. Just as many students experienced a drop in their science grade as there were students who improved.

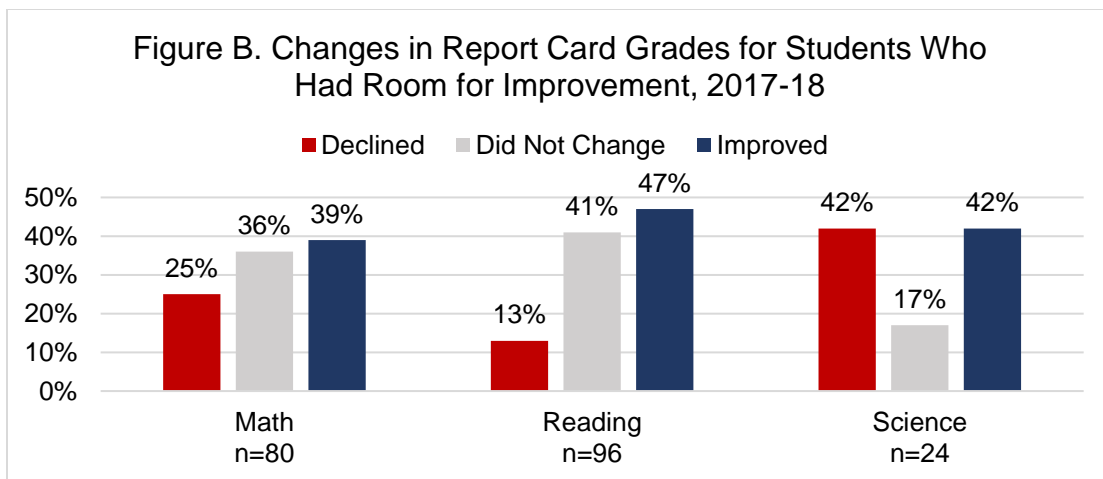


Table 6 lists the information displayed in Figure B and adds the fourth quarter grade outcomes for students who started the year with an A. Students entering the year with an A maintained that grade most frequently in math (75%), followed by reading (64%).

Table 6. Letter Grades Changes, by Subject and Grade in the First Quarter, 2017-18

Subject	Grade in First Quarter (Q1)	Total Students	Change in Grade		
			Declined	Did Not Change	Improved
Math	A in Q1	28	25%	75%	
	Room for improvement	80	25%	36%	39%
Reading	A in Q1	14	36%	64%	
	Room for improvement	96	13%	41%	47%
Science	A in Q1	24	46%	54%	
	Room for improvement	24	42%	17%	42%

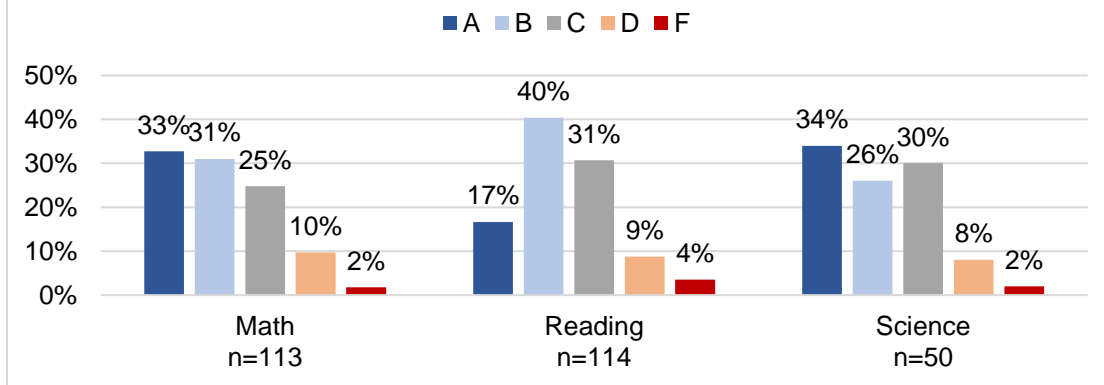
Among students with room to improve (did not have an A in the fall), the greatest gains were made by the students with the lowest grades (Table 7). Students with a C or lower improved their grades at higher rates than students starting the year with a B. About two-thirds of student grades that were Ds and Fs in the first quarter were improved by the end of the year.

Table 7. Grade Level Improvements, by Grade in the First Quarter, 2017-18

Grade in Q1	Math		Reading		Science	
	Total Students	Percent Improved	Total Students	Percent Improved	Total Students	Percent Improved
F	2	100%	3	67%	0	NA
D	14	43%	17	71%	3	100%
C	22	50%	45	51%	7	43%
B	46	26%	31	26%	14	21%

Figure C displays the report card grades of regularly participating students at the end of the program year. Student grades are strongest in math and science. Of all program participants, 2% were failing math, and 4% failing reading. As a whole, this cohort of at-risk students improved their performance in reading and maintained their performance in math rather than falling further behind.

Figure C. Fourth Quarter Grades for All Regularly Participating Students, 2017-18



Students who attended the program but did not participate regularly may serve as a control group for assessing the impact of programming on student progress. They had a very small ‘dosage’ of programming, so their experience is a proxy for how students in the program may have progressed without the intervention. Figure D displays the percentage of students in each group who improved their letter grade in math and reading (science is excluded due to insufficient data). Regularly participating students achieved letter grade improvements in reading at four times the rate of their peers, and 1.7 times the rate of their peers in math. These data suggest the program had a positive impact on academic performance, and that it most strongly impacted students’ reading ability.

Figure D. Grade Improvement by Student Participation Level, 2017-18

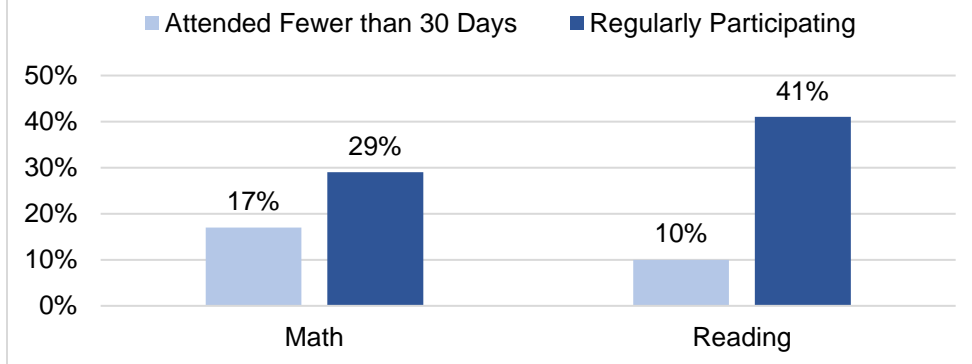
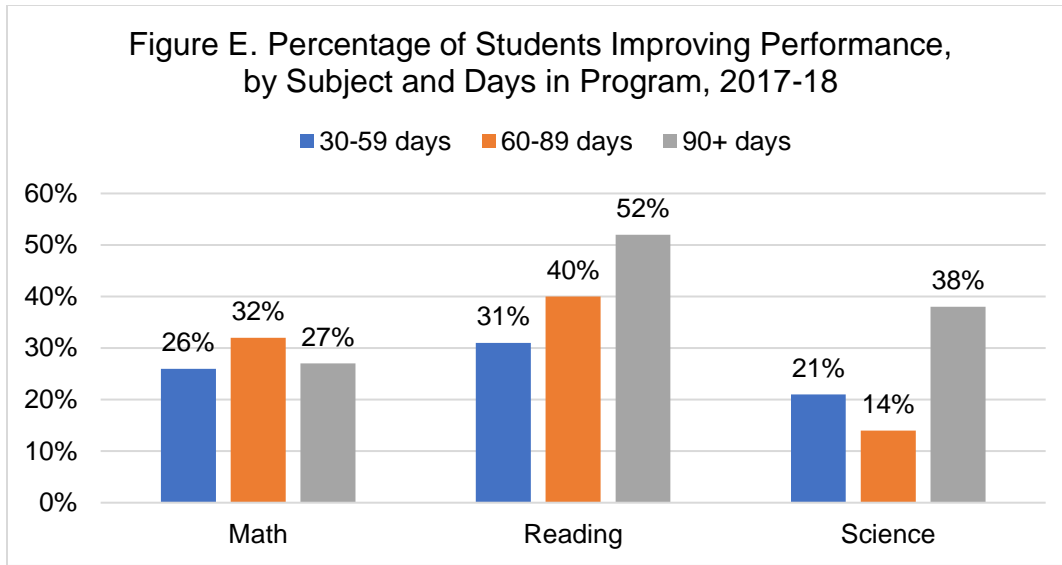
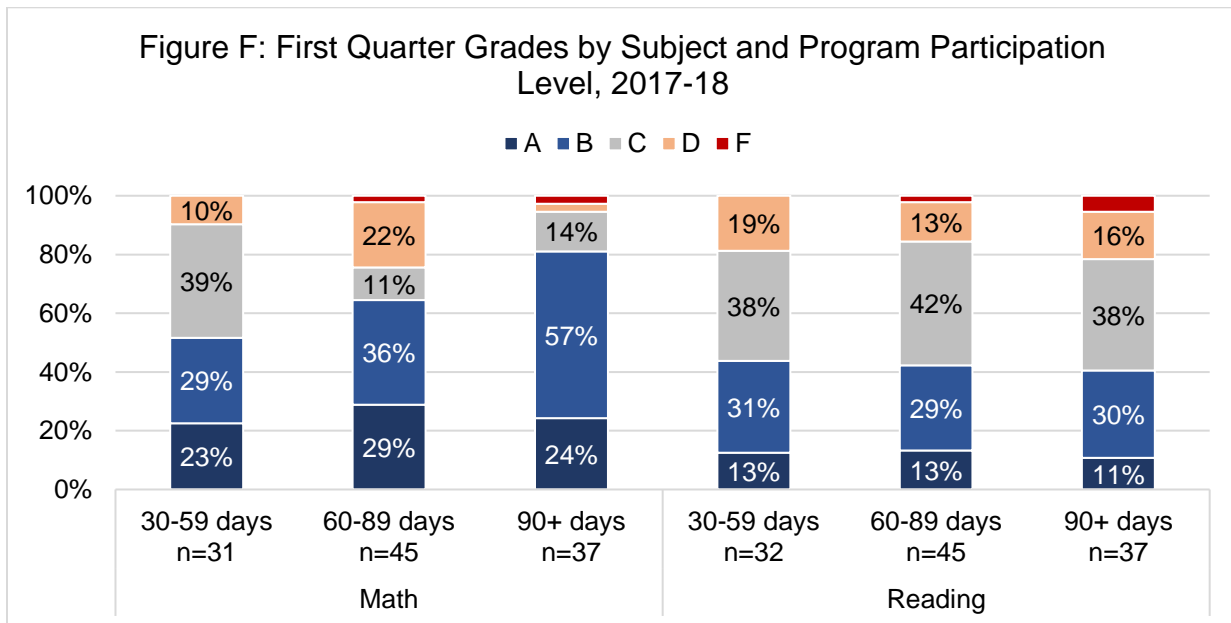


Figure E displays student achievement crossed with program participation to assess how much of an impact the dosage of programming influenced outcomes for regularly participating students. Student gains in reading and science are correlated with higher levels of program attendance, as demonstrated by the grey bars. Students attending the program 90 days or more increased their grades more often than other students. However, the dosage of program involvement does not appear to have impacted how likely students were to improve their math grades. Rates of improvement in math remained consistent across all attendance categories.



One question this raises is whether students who attended more frequently started with higher grades and had less room to improve. A comparison of math and reading grades in the fall (Figure F) reveals that students in these groupings began the year with very different levels of performance in math, but not in reading. 80% of students who attended the program 90 or more days during the year started the year with an A or B in math, whereas only 41% began the year with an A or B in reading.

This finding explains why program dosage appears to have less of an impact on math performance – frequently attending students had the least amount of room to improve, and outcome data for the Little Learning Warriors program consistently demonstrate stronger gains in academic performance (as measured by grade level increases) for the lowest performing students. The positive impact of the program is more readily apparent by examining changes in reading grades because students within each attendance group had the same distribution of letter grades at the start of the 2017-18 school year.



PSSA Scores

As indicated previously in Table 5, very few students who scored Basic or Below Basic on the PSSAs in the prior year scored in the Proficient or Advanced ranges during the program year (3% in math, 14% in reading). However, program participants did make some gains, and 51% of all tested, regularly attending students scored Proficient in at least one subject of the PSSA; 33% scored Proficient or Advanced in reading, and 48% of 4th grade students scored Proficient or Advanced on the science PSSA.

Tables 8 and 9 cross students' scores from 2017 with 2018 to show how PSSA test performance changed from the prior year. The cells highlighted in grey indicate students who scored within the same category each year. Blue and red colored cells indicate movement in positive and negative directions, respectively. This more detailed view of performance indicates that most of the changes occur with students' scores moving into or out of the Basic level, and that there were as many students who scored lower than previously as there were that scored higher.¹

Table 8. Math PSSA Score Changes for Regular Attendees from 2017 to 2018, Grades 4-5

		2018 Scores				
2017 Scores	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Total	
Below Basic	12	5	0	0	17	
Basic	4	8	1	0	13	
Proficient	0	0	3	0	3	
Advanced	0	0	1	1	2	
Total	16	13	5	1	35	

Table 9. Reading PSSA Score Changes for Regular Attendees from 2017 to 2018, Grades 4-5

		2018 Scores				
2017 Scores	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Total	
Below Basic	4	2	0	0	6	
Basic	4	9	3	0	16	
Proficient	1	5	4	1	11	
Advanced	0	0	0	2	2	
Total	9	16	7	3	35	

Figure G displays changes to PSSA scores for participants grouped by subject and days attending the program to see if attendance influenced a student's likelihood of improving their score. Due to small sample sizes, participants are grouped by those attending fewer than 60 days or 60 days or more, rather than by whether they are regular participants. Students participating for 60 or more days did not improve their scores at higher rates than those attending less frequently. Or, when they did (math), just as many students experienced a drop in their score as there were students that improved.

¹ Progress in science PSSA scores are not available since students do not take that portion of the exam two years in a row.

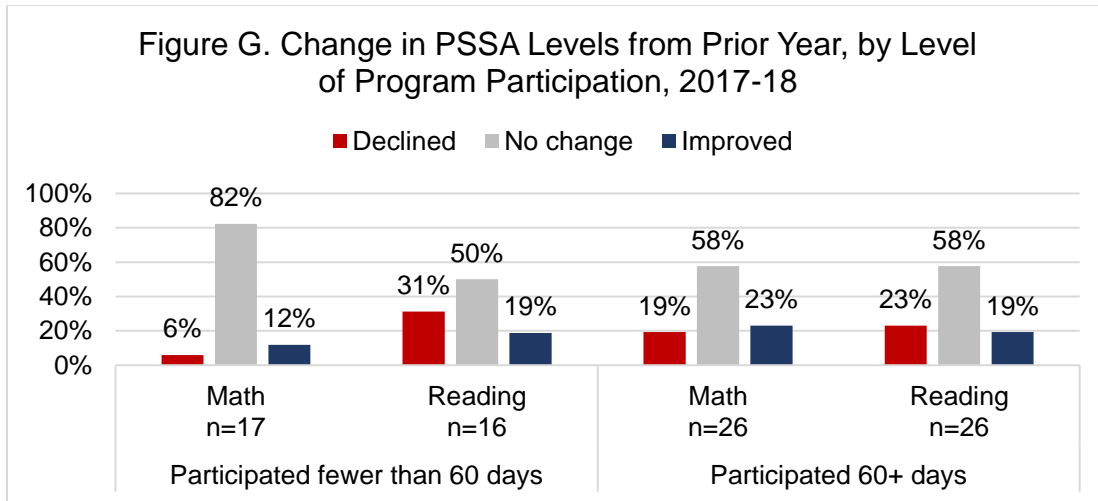
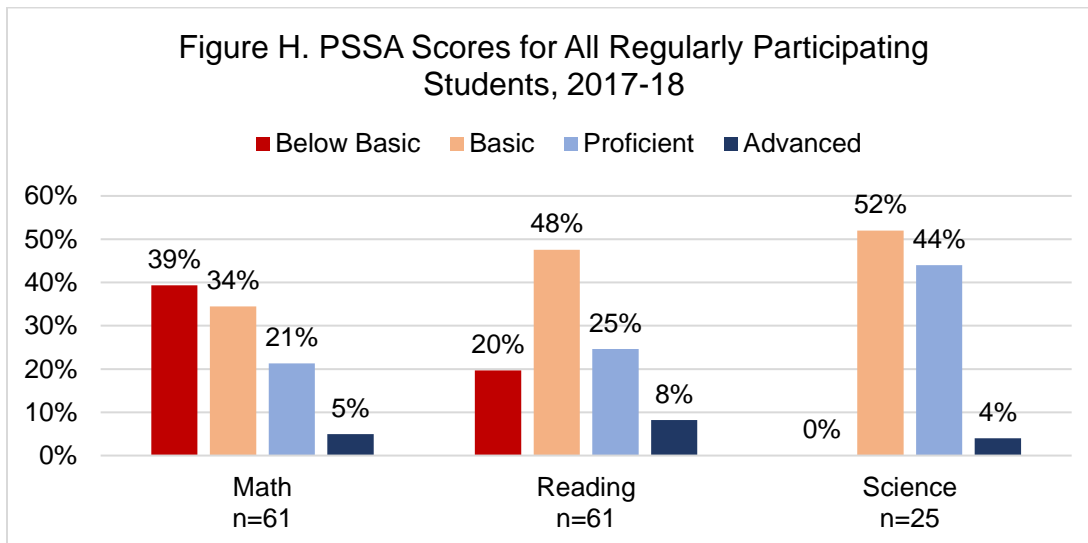


Figure H displays all standardized test scores for regularly participating students in 2017-18. Scores are lowest in math and highest in science. Two-fifths of students scored Below Basic on math, and another 34% scored at the Basic level. Examining the strategies utilized to build students' mathematical skills and comprehension may be an opportunity for program growth. While the students' classroom grades are predominantly passing, the PSSA scores indicate students have not mastered basic mathematical concepts.



Attendance

School attendance is critical to student achievement and engagement. Since the program targets at-risk students, students may be more likely to miss a high volume of school days. Among this cohort of Little Learning Warriors, 28% of regularly participating students experienced eleven or more absences and 22% had eleven or more days tardy in the prior school year.

While two of the program performance targets were met (Table 10), there is not evidence that school attendance improved for program participants. These two outcomes exist simultaneously because the

performance targets examine whether students with high rates of absences and tardiness in the prior year improved during the program year. They do not consider attendance records for the students with fewer absences in the prior year. Days absent and tardy dropped for a majority of the students with high levels in the prior year, but they also increased for students with fewer days missed in the prior year. Overall, the total number of school days missed for regularly participating students increased by 2% from 2016/17 to 2017/18. The total number of days tardy increased by 70%.

Table 10. Attendance and Behavior Progress of Regularly Attending Program Participants vs. Performance Targets

Description of Measure	Actual	Target	Eligible Number of Students*
Participants will improve their school attendance/behavior by reducing their number of days absent from the prior school year to the current year (of students needing to improve).	82%	70%	34
Participants will improve their school attendance/behavior by reducing their number of days tardy from the prior school year to the current year (of students needing to improve).	41%	70%	27
Participants will improve their school attendance/behavior by reducing their number of behavior incidents from the prior school year to the current year (of students needing to improve).	90%	70%	10

Table 11 displays the breakdown of how many students had eleven or more absences during the program year, based on whether they had eleven or more in the prior year. While 82% of chronically absent children improved their attendance, many still missed several school days. Only 16 (47%) of those with eleven or more absences in the prior year missed ten or fewer during the program year; additionally, there were more students experiencing eleven or more absences in the program year than in the prior year (38 vs. 34).

Table 11. Absences During Program Year by Whether Student Needed to Improve from Prior Year (Regular Program Participants), 2017-18

Absences in Program Year	11+ Absences in Prior Year?		Total
	No	Yes	
10 or fewer	67	16	83
11 or more	20	18	38
Total	87	34	121

Regardless of changes since the prior year, about one-third of regular attendees were absent from school eleven or more days during the program year. There is not a correlation between the number of days of program participation and the number of days absent from schools.

Table 12. Absences for Regular Attendees, 2017-18

	Count	Percentage
Absent 10 days or fewer	90	61%
Absent 11 or more days	46	31%
No data	12	8%
Total	148	100%

In addition to missing full days, tardiness negatively impacts a child’s educational experience. Program participants experience high rates of tardiness at about the same rates of absences. In the 2017-18 school year, 34% of regular participants were tardy for school eleven or more times. Twenty-two (16%) regularly participating students experience both high rates of absenteeism and tardiness. The academic performance of this group of students does *not* differ from that of program participants as a whole.

Table 13. Percentage of Regular Attendees Tardy 10 or More Times, 2017-18

	Count	Percentage
Tardy 10 days or fewer	90	66%
Tardy 11 or more days	46	34%
Total	136	100%

Most students experienced approximately the same level of tardiness during the program year compared to their prior year. 85% of students with 11 or more tardies in 2016-17 also had 11 or more during the program year. 82% with 10 or fewer still had ten or fewer. While they may not have moved below the threshold set in Table 13, 41% of students who were late to school eleven or more times during the previous year did experience fewer days tardy during the program year. This change is positive but falls shy of the target of 70%.

Table 14. Tardiness in 2017-18 by Tardiness Level in Prior School Year

Tardies in 17/18	11 or More Tardies in Prior Year?		Total
	No	Yes	
10 or fewer	77	4	81
11 or more	17	23	40
Total	94	27	121

A bright spot for program participants was the reduction in the number of school days missed due to suspensions. The program exceeded its target of 70% of students with suspensions in the prior year experiencing fewer during the program year, reaching 90%. Additionally, the number of school days missed by program participants due to suspensions dropped from 24 to 7, a reduction of 71%.

Although some students who did not have a suspension in the prior year did have one during the current program year, proportionally, fewer students missed school days due to suspensions compared to the prior year (4% vs. 8%), and none were suspended for three days or longer. These reductions may be partially attributed to local efforts to reduce and eliminate the use of suspensions for young students, but teacher surveys also indicate positive improvements in student behavior.

Table 15. Percentage of Regular Attendees Experiencing Suspensions, 2017-18

	Prior Year n=121	Program Year n=136
Any suspensions	8%	4%
<i>3+ days suspended</i>	3%	0%

Teacher Perceptions

Teacher surveys were distributed to measure students' behavioral changes in the classroom. Surveys were returned for 30 of the total 206 students, 28 of which were for students who regularly participated. Teachers completed the surveys on paper, and NLA staff entered responses into a spreadsheet. Table 16 details the number of surveys returned from each school, and the response rate (percent of students who had a completed survey about their performance).

Table 16. Teacher Survey Response Rates for Regularly Attending Students, by School, 2017-18

School	Number Completed	Percent Returned
Concord	4	10%
Manchester	0	0%
Roosevelt	15	58%
Sunnyside	7	18%
West Liberty	2	18%
Total	28	19%

Response rates for survey completion were very low for sites in this cohort, with the exception of Roosevelt. As a result, findings should be interpreted with caution. To check for selection bias, results for Roosevelt students were compared the rest of the surveys returned for Cohort 9 students. The distribution of responses were very similar for each group, indicating there is not a clear skewing of results due to the low sample size.

Of the five performance measures established for the program related to teacher-reported improvements, two targets were met – the percentage of students improving their class participation and their volunteering in class. These each indicate a heightened level of engagement in the classroom.

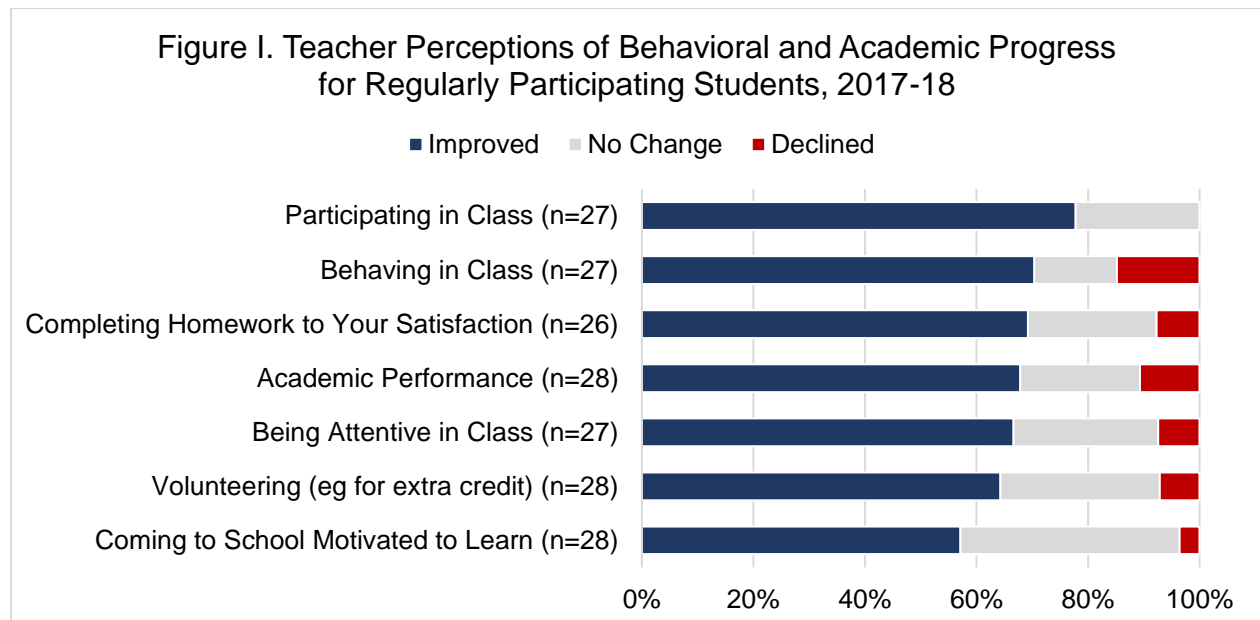
Table 17. Teacher-Reported Progress of Regularly Attending Program Participants vs. Performance Targets, for Students Needing to Improve

Description of Measure	Actual	Target	Eligible Number of Students*
Participants will have teacher-reported improvement in homework completion and class participation.	60%	90%	25
Participants will have teacher-reported improvements in student behavior.	70%	75%	27
Participants will improve their class participation.	78%	60%	27
Participants will improve their volunteering in class.	64%	60%	28
Participants will improve their motivation to learn.	57%	60%	28

* The eligible number of students varies for each item since some students were marked as Not Needing to Improve in certain areas.

Responses for all survey items are detailed in Figure I. Teachers reported some form of positive change for 89% of students who regularly participated in the program. The top 3 areas of improvement included:

- Participating in Class – 78% improved
- Behaving in Class – 70% improved
- Completing Homework to Your Satisfaction – 69% improved



Engagement & Academic Outcomes by Site

This section highlights a few of the engagement and academic analyses presented above, disaggregating the students by their Little Learning Warriors site. The number of participants with data on each measure are not large, so data should be interpreted with caution. However, understanding the differing dynamics by location is useful for identifying both model sites to observe what is working well, and to identify sites’ areas for development.

Figure J displays the percentage of students at each site who attended the program regularly (30 days or more) and most intensely (90 days or more). Students at Concord and Sunnyside attended the most program days, with over 90 percent attending regularly. The West Liberty site is an outlier – fewer than one-third of students attended regularly, and none attended more than 90 days. The differences across sites reflect the timing for when students first enrolled in programming at each site (listed in Table 18). Students joined the site at West Liberty in March and April, whereas other programs began much earlier in the school year. Concord and Sunnyside were the first to begin.

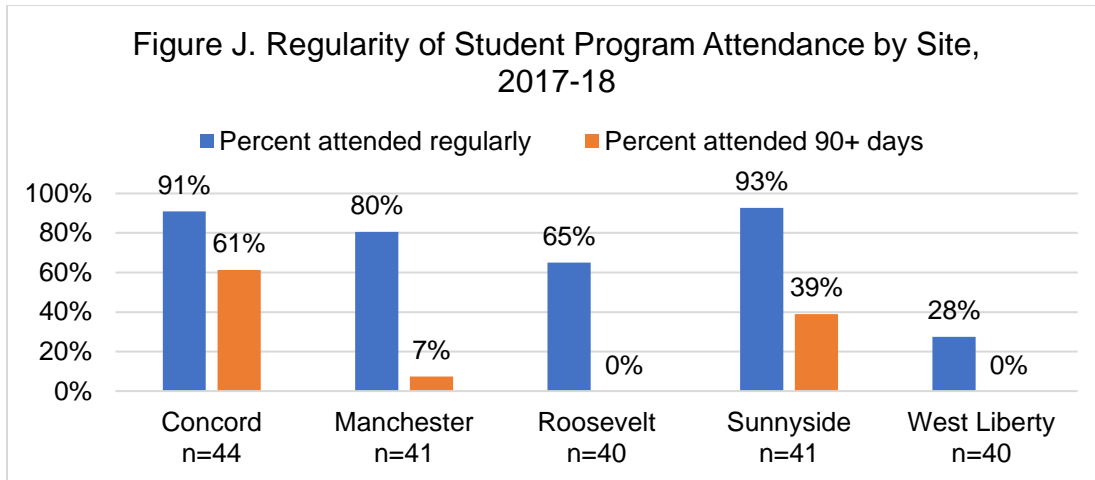


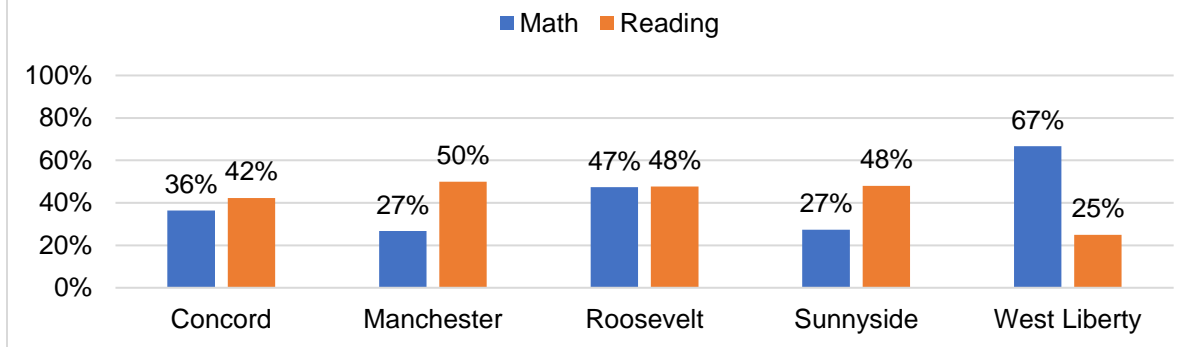
Table 18 provides additional data about the level of engagement students have at each site. Although Manchester and Roosevelt do not have high numbers of students participating for 90 days or more due to their later start, they each have a substantial proportion of students participating in the program for 60 days or more – 58% and 45%, respectively.

Table 18. Attendance Levels by CCLC Site, 2017-18

Center	Percentage Attending Regularly	Attendance Category by Site				First Month of Program
		Fewer than 30 days	30-59 days	60-89 days	90+ days	
Concord	91%	9%	18%	11%	61%	Sept
Manchester	80%	20%	22%	51%	7%	Nov
Roosevelt	65%	35%	20%	45%	0%	Feb
Sunnyside	93%	7%	17%	37%	39%	Oct
West Liberty	28%	73%	28%	0%	0%	Mar
Total	72%	28%	21%	29%	22%	

Figure K displays the percentage of students achieving grade level gains in math and reading from the beginning to the end of the program year, grouped by site. Science grades are excluded because most sites had very few students with grades, so the percentages of students improving were misleading. Each site has different strengths and weaknesses. Grade level improvements in reading are fairly consistent across sites, ranging from 42%-50% for each site except West Liberty, which was at 25%. Rates of improvement in math are more variable, ranging from 27% to 67%.

Figure K. Letter Grade Improvement During Program Year, by Site and Subject, 2017-18



Progress made during the year may be reflective of differing levels of need, indicated by letter grade distributions at the different schools. Figures L and M display the percentage of students with a C or higher in math and reading at each school. End of year grades for regularly attending students varied slightly, with small differences at each site between how many students have a C or higher in reading vs math. However, students at each site have more As and Bs in math than in reading. Site-specific observations about how improvements in letter grades relate to students' spring grades are included in the next section.

Figure L. Percent of Regular Participants with Spring Math Grades of C or Higher, 2017-18

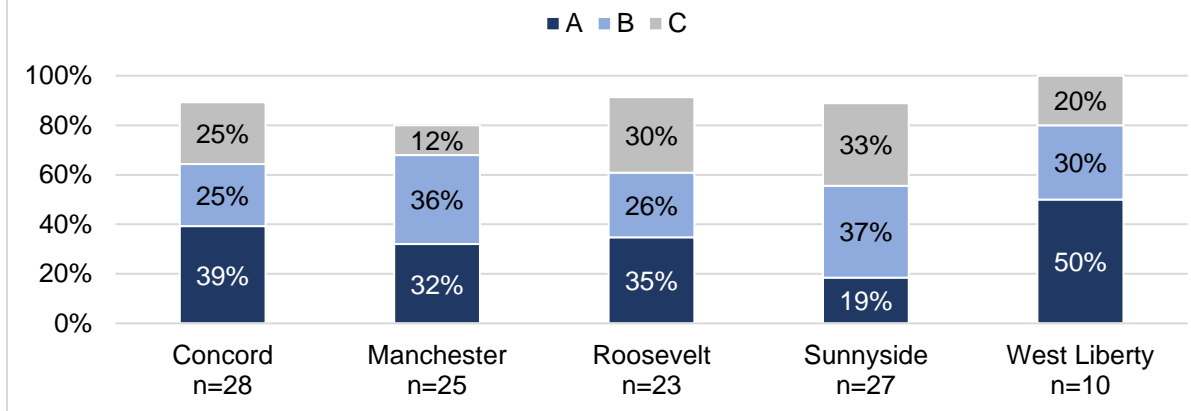
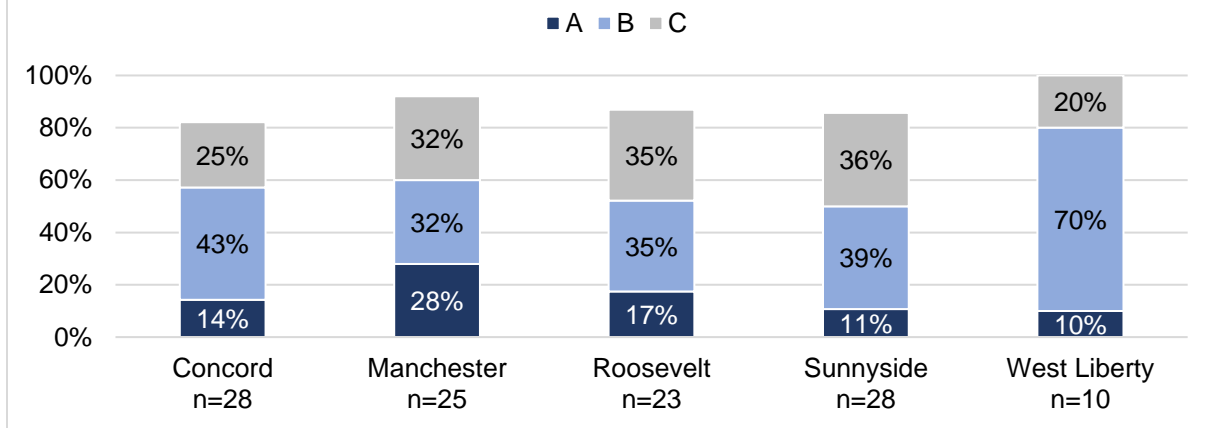
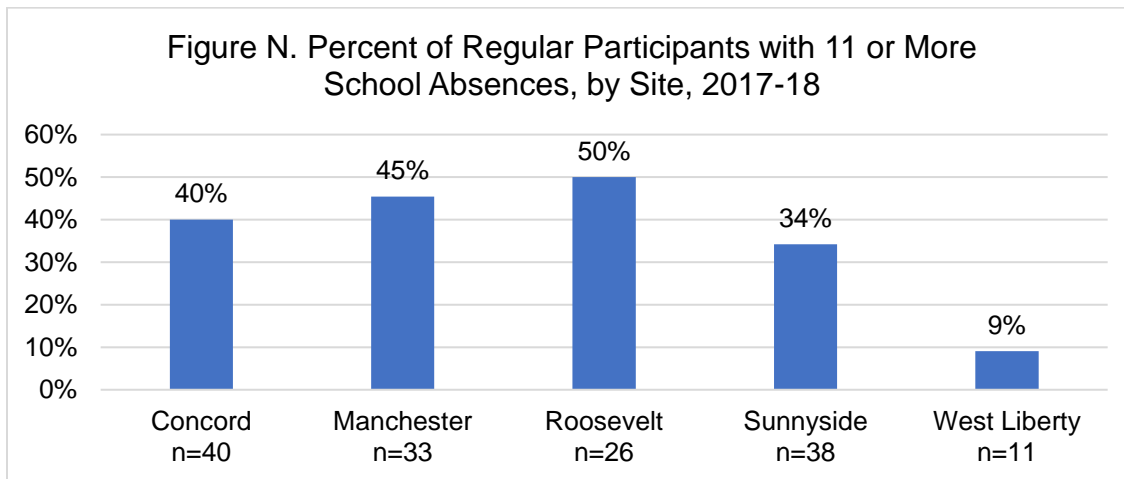


Figure M. Percent of Regular Participants with Spring Reading Grades of C or Higher, 2017-18

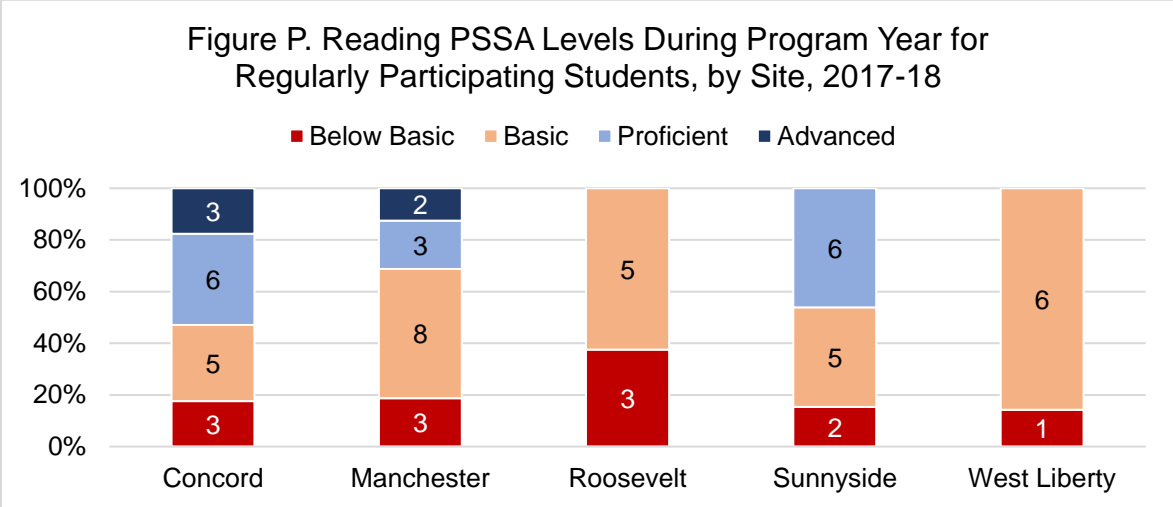
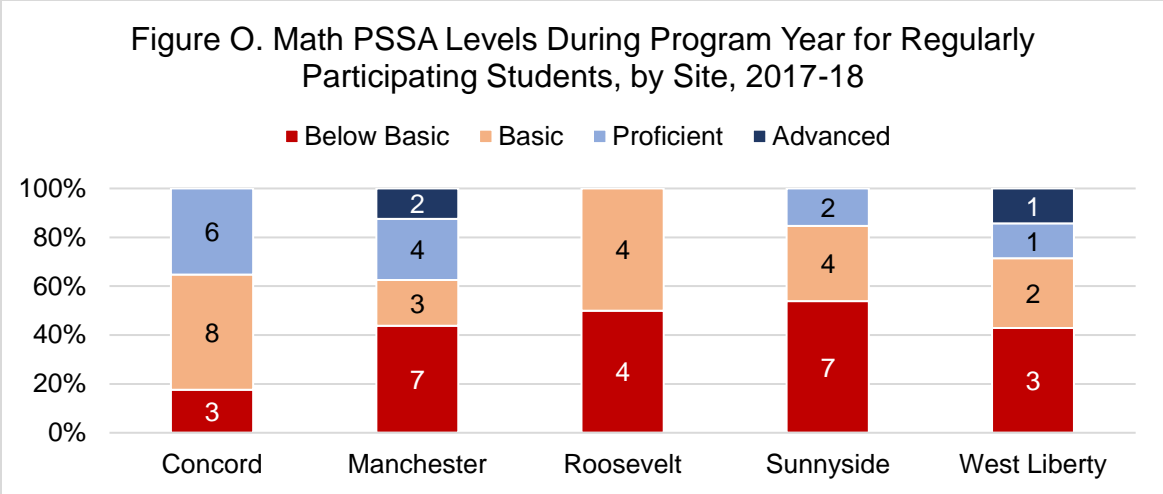


The percentages of regularly attending students with 11 or more absences during the school year varied widely by program site, from 9% at West Liberty to 50% at Roosevelt. There was not a relationship between school absences and academic performance in the program outcome data. Absences remain important to monitor as students who experience chronic absenteeism are more likely to fall behind in school.

Figure N. Percent of Regular Participants with 11 or More School Absences, by Site, 2017-18



The final two Figures (O and P) chart the program year PSSA results for regularly participating students at each school. The visuals highlight the ongoing academic challenges students involved in the program face, as well as their relative strengths and weaknesses. The proportion of students scoring at each level varies by school, but the small numbers of children make it challenging to draw precise conclusions from the data. Generally, students are faring better in reading than math, where 39% of students scored Below Basic.



A summary of the demographics, strengths and areas for development for each site are outlined below.

Concord

Concord was the first Little Learning Warriors program to begin for Cohort 9, serving students starting in September 2017. 91% of students participated for 30 days or more, and 61% attended 90 or more days. Most of Concord’s students were in 2nd-3rd grade (56%), and their demographics were unique from students served at other sites. 62% of students were male, whereas other sites were predominantly female. 56% of students were White, 29% African American, 9% Asian, and 3% Hispanic. Among other sites, 73% of students were African American and 15% were White.

Concord’s students scored well on their PSSAs compared to other program participants. More than half scored at the Proficient level or higher in reading, and only 18% scored Below Basic in math (much lower than average for Little Learning Warriors students). Despite this higher level of performance on the standardized tests, student grade distributions in math and reading were consistent with that of other sites. 36% of students increased their letter grade in math, and 89% ended the year with a C or higher. Even though 42% of Concord students increased their letter grade in reading over the course of the year, Concord had the lowest percentage of students ending the year with a C or higher (82%).

Manchester

Manchester started serving students through the Little Learning Warriors program in November 2017. 80% of students participated regularly, and 58% participated for 60 days or more. The gender and racial composition of the students was consistent with other program sites. Manchester served a higher than average proportion of 3rd graders (25%) and students receiving special education (94%). 45% of regular program participants missed school eleven or more days during the year.

Academically, Manchester's strength is reading, and math is the subject with the greatest room for development. Twice as many students increased their grade in reading (50%) during the year as they did in math (27%). At the end of the year, 92% of students had a C or higher in reading, with 28% earning an A. Only 80% of students ended the year with a C or high in math, the lowest percentage of all Cohort 9 program sites. These comparative strengths and weaknesses are also reflected in students' PSSA scores.

Roosevelt

Roosevelt's program began serving students in February, and 65% attended at least 30 days in the spring. Students were demographically similar to other sites, with a higher proportion of White students (32%) and a lower proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunches (68%). Most of Roosevelt's students were in 1st-2nd grade (62%), and this site had the highest percentage of students absent from school for eleven or more days – 50%.

Roosevelt's comparative strength is math development, though students improved their classroom grades in both math and reading at the same levels (47% and 48%). 47% of students improving their math grade is well above average for program participants, and Roosevelt's students also had higher than average grades in math at the end of the year, with 91% earning a C or higher. While 48% improved their reading grades, only 87% earned a C or higher in the spring. Since Roosevelt served more younger students, there are only PSSA results for eight students: none of these eight scored at the Proficient level or higher in math or reading in 2017-18. If this year's students remain engaged in 2018-19, there is an opportunity to see progress reflected in the test results in the next program year.

Sunnyside

Sunnyside was the second Cohort 9 site to open in 2017, serving students beginning in October. They had the highest rate of students attending regularly, at 93%. 39% of students attended 90 or more days of programming. Sunnyside served mostly K-2nd graders (64%) and had a higher than average percentage of students receiving special education (92%). Otherwise, student demographics mirrored other sites.

Sunnyside's students made academic gains in both reading and math that were on par with other program sites. Neither subject stands out as a comparative strength or weakness, though student performance in reading appears to be mixed. 48% of students increased their grades over the course of the year, and a higher than average percentage scored Proficient on their PSSAs (46%). Yet, only 86% had a classroom grade of C or higher in the spring, which is below average. Letter grades (89% C or higher) and testing levels in math were consistent with other sites; 27% of students increased their grade from the fall to spring. A bright spot for Sunnyside students was their improvement in Science.

Sunnyside was one of only two sites with eight students having a science grade that could improve (other sites all had fewer children), and five of those eight (63%) students improved their grade.

West Liberty

West Liberty was the last site to begin serving students in 2017-18, opening in March. Only 11 (28%) students attended the program for 30 days or more. The limited program exposure and small sample size makes it very challenging to assess program impact for West Liberty. While data for all sites in this first year serve as a baseline, data for West Liberty should strictly be considered a baseline description of West Liberty's students' strengths and needs rather than an assessment of how successful the programming was in impacting student achievement or behavior.

Baseline academic performance for all West Liberty participants generally matches that of the regular participants. One exception to this pattern is that their spring reading grades are more distributed between Bs and Cs. Improving students' reading skills is an opportunity for this site. All students with PSSAs tested below the Proficient level, and a lower than average percentage of students improved their classroom grades (25%). West Liberty's students are relatively stronger in math. Students improved their classroom grades over the year at a higher than average rate (67%) and ended the year with Cs or higher. Their relative strength is also reflected in higher than average PSSA scores.

Questions for Further Exploration

This evaluation will be shared with program staff and used to inform program adjustments, monitoring, and evaluation in the coming year. In addition to questions identified by the program team, the evaluation team proposes the following questions as potential items for further exploration:

- **Math:** Students made classroom gains in math in 2017-18, but PSSA scores remain low. Do any sites have success in moving students up PSSA levels in 2018-19? If so, which strategies are they employing?
- **Science:** Sample sizes were too low in 2017-18 to effectively assess the program's impact on student performance in science, but the preliminary data show no or little effect. The role and impact of STEM programming is worth examining more closely in 2018-19 for Cohort 9 sites.
- **Program Involvement and School Attendance:** Students with high levels of absences and tardies performed on par with their peers academically. A question for further exploration in the next program year is how effectively program involvement helps students with absences keep up rather than falling behind, and whether these outcomes vary by site.
- **Teacher Surveys:** The teacher surveys are the primary method for assessing changes in student behavior and soft skill development, but only one site had surveys returned for more than seven students. What strategies are needed to increase the response rates in the next program year?