Salt Lake City School District Community Learning Center Evaluation

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Executive Summary

The Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD), in a commitment to address the needs of students and families, is scaling up the development of the Community Learning Centers (CLCs) initiative across the district. To support these efforts, The Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) was contracted by SLCSD to conduct a capacity building evaluation of the CLC initiative and provide technical assistance services to support implementation.

This report represents the first district-wide evaluation of the CLC initiative. The evaluation study had several purposes:

- To document the ways in which the CLCs were being implemented at four sites (Lincoln, Mt. View/Glendale, Rose Park, and Washington),
- To identify initial outcomes that have resulted from the CLC efforts,
- To assess the degree of alignment, coordination, and capacity of the schools and district to support and sustain the CLC initiative, and
- To develop recommendations for ongoing monitoring and annual evaluation of CLC sites across the district.

As part of this evaluation, we also explored the usefulness of current data sources for evaluating the CLC efforts, which allowed for more tailored recommendations about future data collection and analysis.

CLC Overview

This evaluation was designed around a model of the SLCSD CLC initiative that was developed during the initial stages of the evaluation

through a collaborative process between the CLC schools, district, and UEPC evaluation team. Guiding the implementation of the CLCs is a conceptual model that includes five *anchors* of program service, as illustrated in the figure below, including 1) early childhood education, 2) youth development, 3) family engagement, 4) health services and 5) adult education. These anchors provide the foundation of CLC services and programs as they represent the areas of student and community life that the CLC initiative strives to influence.

Figure 1. Salt Lake City School District Community Learning Centers Model

These anchors of service provision are discussed at length in the body of the technical report in relation to research evidence connected with these five areas of study. Understanding the contributions of research across these fields informs a collective understanding of the principles that guide the design and implementation of each of the service anchors within the CLCs, including how the anchors might work together to influence outcomes in the context of SLCSD CLC initiative.

Please note that it is the expectation of the district and the evaluation team that the CLC

model presented in this report will continue to be revised and refined as the CLC initiative is implemented over time.

Evaluation Methods

The following evaluation questions were used to guide data collection and analysis for this study:

- **Implementation**
  - What services are offered?
  - What are the participation rates?
  - Which participants are more likely to participate in the various services and programs?
- **Outcomes**
  - Are the desired outcomes achieved?
- **Alignment, Coordination, and Capacity-Building**
  - What are the schools' and district's capacity to implement the CLC model?

To address these questions we accessed multiple data sources, including existing data sources (e.g., SLCSD's Student Information System (SIS), Community Education Database) and original data sources (e.g., the CLC Inventory Survey of all SLCSD schools; the CLC Stakeholder Survey of district staff, school staff, and partners; and the individual and group interviews with coordinators, administrators, teachers, parents, and community partners conducted during site visits).

In addition to multiple data sources, this capacity building evaluation study included a range of analytic techniques, including simple descriptive analyses, as well as advanced inferential designs, such as hierarchical linear modeling, to show relationships among the predictor variables (e.g., CLC anchors, attendance in CLC schools or participation in CLC programs) and the outcome variables (e.g., measures of student achievement).

We provide a cautionary note that statistically significant results indicate that the relationships cannot be explained by chance, but do not necessarily indicate causation. Qualitative data from survey and site visit interviews were also systematically analyzed using a constant-comparative method to thematically code the data to generate key findings across CLC sites. More information about the evaluation methods are presented in the body of the technical report, as well as a detailed methods discussion in the report appendix.

Summary of Implementation Findings

In this evaluation of the SLCSD's CLC initiative, we documented a variety of findings regarding the implementation of the CLC programs and services that are perceived to have enhanced the opportunities for students and families across the CLC sites. Key findings about CLC implementation are summarized below.

CLC Implementation Overall

- A range of CLC services are currently offered across the five CLC schools, including the five service anchors of early childhood education, youth development, family engagement, health services, and adult education.

- On average, the CLC schools offered more services than the non-CLC schools in the SLCSD in all five anchor areas and significantly more services in all but the youth development areas.

Early Childhood Education Implementation

- All four CLC elementary schools offered Title I preschool, and, while preschool enrollment across the district has remained stable, preschool participation has increased in the CLC schools over the past four years relative to the overall district rates of participation.
- Similar to the district as a whole, the students in CLC schools who attended preschool were slightly more racially diverse, less likely to be proficient in English, and more likely to require special education services than their peers who did not enroll in the preschool programs.
- The district's SIS provided adequate data to describe preschool participation, but did not provide data for other early childhood programs such as the Parents as Teachers or Summer Kindergarten Readiness programs.

Youth Development Implementation

- All five CLC schools offered afterschool and summer school programs. Two CLC schools offered before school programs and one school offered weekend programs.
- All CLC schools have CLC coordinators and afterschool coordinators, but only one reported having a volunteer coordinator.
- All five CLC schools offered afterschool reading or literacy programs and art or music education, four offered math education and physical activity programs,

and one CLC school offered technology education.

- The percentage of students who participated in OST programs was higher in the CLC schools than in non-CLC schools in the district across all years, 2007-08 through 2010-11.
  - o Approximately 43 percent of all students who attended CLC schools participated in at least one OST program and the majority of those students participated in 3-5 different types of activities.
- Within the CLC schools, there were slightly more students of color, students of low socioeconomic status, and English language learners among those who participated in OST compared to those that did not participate in OST activities at the CLC schools. This suggests that OST programs at the CLC schools are targeting serving student who may benefit most from such support.
- Participation rates varied widely within the activities and years across CLC sites by each of the 33 activity types designated as youth development activities in the SLCSD Community Education Database.
- The categories of OST activities provided in the Community Education Database offered a general, but incomplete view of OST participation and program implementation (e.g., the way in which activities were coded may not reflect the actual content or focus of such activities).

Family Engagement Implementation

- All five CLC schools reported having academic events (e.g., math or literacy night), school performances, a dedicated room as a family resource center, and a

family involvement or support specialist to increase family engagement.

- Several sites recorded family participation in various events, but sufficient data were not consistent or reliable for documenting the full range of implementation of family engagement activities.

- Although specific participation rates for family engagement activities were neither maintained nor available from each site, there were numerous reports during site visit interviews and in the stakeholder survey that family participation in school events is perceived to have increased over time, since the CLC efforts have been implemented.

- CLC schools reported multiple strategies for providing information (e.g., notices of events or programs offered) to parents such as email, website, newsletters, and telephone calls. The ability to send mass telephone messages was repeatedly cited as an effective communication strategy.

- The importance of building strong relationships with was recognized and consistently shared during site visit interviews and stakeholder survey responses.

Health Services Implementation

- CLCs offered more distinct types of health services on average than other non-CLC schools in the district (2.75 types for CLCs compared to 1.05 for non-CLC schools).

- Health services were provided to varying degrees at each of the CLC sites, including primary care, dental care, vision care, mental health services, and referral services.

- Services to address basic needs were provided, including food distribution at all five CLC sites, clothing distribution at one

site, housing assistance at one site, and transportation assistance at two sites.

- Service providers recorded information about health services, but sufficient data were not available for analysis.

Adult Education

- CLCs offered statistically significantly more distinct types of adult education services on average than other non-CLC schools in the district (3.3 types for CLCs compared to 1.2 for non-CLC schools).

- Adult education services were provided to varying degrees at each of the CLC sites, including employment assistance, English as a second language, exercise, recreation, financial planning, nutrition, parenting, and postsecondary education assistance.

- Notably, all five CLC schools reported offering English as a Second Langue (ESL) classes; in contrast, none of the sites reported offering computer technology classes or other skill based opportunities.

- Available data on formal adult education did not align geographically with the CLC catchment areas. As such, these data were not appropriate for documenting the implementation of adult education at the CLC sites. Informal adult education classes were offered, but participation data were not consistently recorded or available for analysis.

Summary of Outcome Findings

In addition to the implementation of the CLC programs and services, this evaluation documented a number of outcomes that are associated with CLC implementation. Key findings about CLC outcomes related to early childhood education and youth development programs are summarized below.

Early Childhood Education Outcomes

- Participation in preschool across the district was positively associated (slightly) with higher kindergarten readiness scores.
- The benefit of attending preschool was stronger for students in kindergarten at CLC sites.
- There was a lasting advantage associated with preschool participation for kindergarteners' language arts and math outcomes at the end of the kindergarten year in the CLC schools, but not in the non-CLC schools.
- Among students in schools at CLC sites, the third grade math CRT scores of students who attended preschool were nearly 2.5 times more likely to be proficient than their peers who had not attended preschool. There were no significant differences on the third grade language arts CRT scores.

Youth Development Outcomes

- As participation in OST activities increased, the outcomes of turning in homework and getting along well with other students in class both improved, as measured by the PPICS teacher survey.
- Students in OST activities showed very slight increases in their mean scores on the language arts and math CRT scores, compared to their peers who did not participate and who demonstrated slight decreases in CRT scores over a four year period.
  - Students who participated in OST in any given year had scores that were, on average, a third of a point higher than expected compared to students who did not participate.
- The percentage of students in OST activities who were chronically absent from school decreased slightly compared to their peers who did not participate in OST activities.
  - The odds of a student being chronically absent were about .7 times lower for students who participated in OST activities.
- Students who participated in "academic support" OST activities received higher test scores in language arts. The more students participated, the higher their scores were.
- Students who participated in "academic support" or "youth development" OST activities were less likely to be chronically absent. The more the students participated in OST activities, the less likely they were to be chronically absent.
- There was a stronger positive effect on language arts CRT scores associated with participation in OST programs for students of color (particularly Hispanic students) than there was for white students, but this effect was the same in both CLC and non-CLC schools.
- Although participation in any particular year was related to language arts CRT score increases and reduced rates of chronic absenteeism in that year, those yearly effects were limited to the single year or years in which the participation occurred; effects were neither cumulative nor long lasting.

Summary of Alignment, Coordination, and Capacity Building Findings

Finally, this evaluation study examined the alignment, coordination, and capacity of the schools and districts to implement the CLC initiative across the district. Key findings about alignment, coordination, and capacity-building are summarized below.

Alignment of Vision and Purpose with CLC Goals and Initiatives

- There was little disagreement about the goals and vision of the CLC as a school improvement effort, yet a considerable portion of respondents indicated that they "don't know" about the vision and purpose of the CLC initiative. There was the most uncertainty about whether CLC stakeholders were working toward shared goals.

- Survey and interview data suggested that stakeholders generally viewed the purpose of the C LC as supporting students, families, and community through partnerships and collaboration. However, there were also distinct variations in the perceived purpose and mission of the CLCs as stated above. There were particularly low levels of awareness among the teaching staff at the CLC schools regarding the purpose and goals of the CLC initiative.

- Stakeholders with knowledge of the needs assessment process, or the strengths assessment process, perceived those processes positively, but responses also suggested that this type of information was not widely shared across all stakeholders.

- For those who reported knowing about the CLC efforts, there were high levels of agreement regarding the alignment of CLC efforts to school and district goals and that programs and services were intentionally designed and targeted to students and families that needed them most. However, there was also a considerable percentage of respondents who indicated that they "don't know" about these issues, which were consistent with respondents' ratings of the CLC vision and purpose and planning process.

Communication & Coordination

- For those who reported knowing about the CLC efforts, there was general agreement regarding effective communication among those involved in the CLC efforts and that there were effective structures for collaborative work. Yet, there were also a number of respondents who disagreed or did not know about the communication and collaborative structures.

- The importance of communication and coordination to the success of the CLC efforts was repeatedly emphasized in stakeholder survey responses, as well as in site visit interviews and focus groups. Communication and coordination was discussed generally in relation to:
  - Active engagement and marketing of CLC work,
  - The importance of bridging language and cultural divisions, and
  - Expectations about roles and responsibilities within the CLCs across the schools, partners, and the district.

- For those who reported knowing about the CLC efforts, district, school, and partner agency staff members reported generally favorable views of the communication and coordination efforts associated with the CLC initiative. However, again, there were considerable portions of these three stakeholder groups that were not aware of the CLC coordination efforts.
  - Notably, 57% of district respondents indicated that they did not know whether CLC efforts were coordinated at each CLC site, and 41% and 43%, respectively, were unaware of whether district programs were coordinated to support CLC activities and whether

district departments collaborated to support CLC efforts.

- o School staff responses suggested that school staff, particularly teachers, were not altogether certain about the CLC initiative and particularly their roles and responsibilities related to the CLC work (e.g., 46% disagree that they have a clear understanding of their roles and another 21% marked "I don't know"). At least half of respondents agreed that the CLC efforts were highly coordinated overall, but fewer agreed that teachers were collaborating well with out-of-school time staff.

- o The majority of partner respondents generally agreed that the CLC leadership team worked well together, they had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, the school staff collaborated well with partners, the CLC coordinator kept them informed, and the CLC efforts were highly coordinated. Although not a large percentage, there were a number of stakeholders who reported disagreement (25% and 26% respectively) that partner roles were clear and that the CLC coordinator kept them informed.

Building Capacity

- For those who reported knowing about the CLC efforts, survey respondents generally agreed that CLC programs and services were accessible to all students and families and that those most in need were actively recruited to participate, suggesting that CLC services were readily accessible. However, the relatively large segment of respondents who marked "I don't know" (26%-33%) also

suggested that the accessibility was uncertain.

- Similar to stakeholder perspectives of program accessibility, the majority of respondents agreed that CLC programs and services were of sufficient quality and were convenient. Again, the relatively large portion of respondents (22%-32%) who are unaware of program quality (whether because they did not know about the programs or because they did not make use of them) raises additional questions about CLC program quality, accessibility, and communication.

- The majority of respondents indicated that the programs and services were adequate to meet student, family, and community needs, with the highest ratings of adequacy for OST programs and lowest ratings of adequacy related to support for adults to advance their formal education and health (mental, physical, and medical) services.

- With regard to their overall assessment of the district, school, and partners' capacity to implement the CLC initiative, a large percentage of stakeholders indicated that they were not familiar with the CLC initiative, as indicated by the large portion of those who responded "I don't know" (24%-57%). Nevertheless, responses suggested a number of strengths regarding resources provided by the district to support CLC implementation, to provide guidance on operating a CLC, to enact supportive district policies, and to provide site facilities. Responses also suggested several factors that may be hindering CLC implementation, including insufficient resources to serve all students and families, as well as cultural and linguistic barriers.

- With regard to leadership and governance, stakeholders agreed that school administrators supported the CLC initiative. Similarly, stakeholders agreed that the district superintendency supported the CLC initiative, although there were double the respondents who indicated they "didn't know." There was somewhat less agreement and lack of awareness about the degree to which school staff, families, and partners were included in school decision making related to the CLC efforts. Notably, 27% of respondents disagreed that school staff were involved in CLC decision-making and a relatively large portion did not know about family (38%) or partner (41%) involvement in decision-making.
- Stakeholder survey responses indicated that the majority of stakeholders were uncertain about the evaluation and monitoring practices related to the CLC initiative (e.g. between 46% and 60% marked "I don't know" to these items). However, among the remainder of responses (i.e., those that did not mark "I don't know"), the majority indicated agreement that data systems were in place to monitor the progress and outcomes of the CLC efforts, district-wide and school-wide data was used for ongoing improvements, and progress and achievements were communicated.

Considerations for Ongoing Improvement

Based on the findings from this first CLC evaluation, we offer the following considerations that may further enhance the current CLC efforts and improve the likelihood of long-term success of the CLC initiative, as well as potential scalability of the CLC ini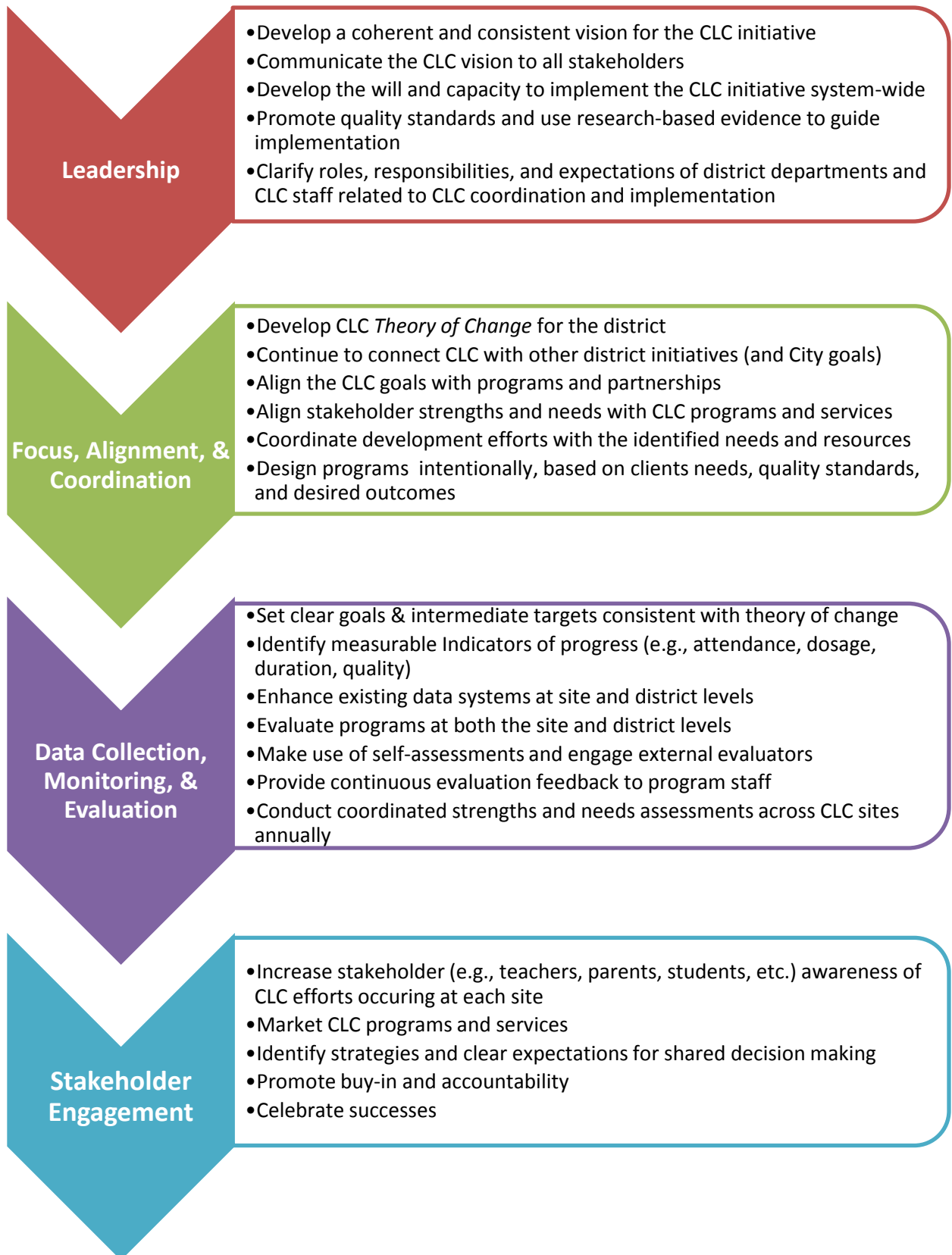tiative across the district. An overview of the considerations for CLC program quality and improvement is provided in the figure below. A more detailed discussion of considerations for ongoing improvement is also presented in the body of the technical report.

Figure 2. Considerations for Program Quality and Continuous Improvement

Leadership
- Develop a coherent and consistent vision for the CLC initiative
- Communicate the CLC vision to all stakeholders
- Develop the will and capacity to implement the CLC initiative system-wide
- Promote quality standards and use research-based evidence to guide implementation
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations of district departments and CLC staff related to CLC coordination and implementation

Focus, Alignment, & Coordination
- Develop CLC *Theory of Change* for the district
- Continue to connect CLC with other district initiatives (and City goals)
- Align the CLC goals with programs and partnerships
- Align stakeholder strengths and needs with CLC programs and services
- Coordinate development efforts with the identified needs and resources
- Design programs intentionally, based on clients needs, quality standards, and desired outcomes

Data Collection, Monitoring, & Evaluation
- Set clear goals & intermediate targets consistent with theory of change
- Identify measurable Indicators of progress (e.g., attendance, dosage, duration, quality)
- Enhance existing data systems at site and district levels
- Evaluate programs at both the site and district levels
- Make use of self-assessments and engage external evaluators
- Provide continuous evaluation feedback to program staff
- Conduct coordinated strengths and needs assessments across CLC sites annually

Stakeholder Engagement
- Increase stakeholder (e.g., teachers, parents, students, etc.) awareness of CLC efforts occuring at each site
- Market CLC programs and services
- Identify strategies and clear expectations for shared decision making
- Promote buy-in and accountability
- Celebrate successes

Acknowledgements

For more information on UEPC research, evaluation, and policy development services, contact the UEPC:

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