

Project Design

Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Situated on the US-Mexico border, the El Paso Independent School District (El Paso ISD) serves 50,769 students through its mission “to uphold the highest standards to provide inclusive and fair learning experiences that support the whole child.” El Paso ISD aims to provide a well-rounded educational experience that ensures all students are healthy, safe, valued, engaged, and academically challenged, both in the classroom and beyond. To maximize students’ access to such an experience, El Paso ISD has created an integrated system of school supports, extended learning opportunities, and community partnerships that bookend the traditional school day.

El Paso ISD conducted a comprehensive analysis of all campuses focused on identifying gaps in the three priority areas of culture, climate, and instruction (service delivery) to gauge programmatic alignment with the district’s Strategic Priorities and Board goals. This evaluation found that additional targeted intervention and support was needed at seven schools on El Paso ISD’s south side: Aoy, Cooley, Douglass, Hart, and Zavala Elementary Schools, Guillen Middle School, and Dr. Josefina Tinajero Villamil PK-8. These schools were identified based on their at-risk and economically disadvantaged populations, disciplinary referrals, decreasing attendance, and declining performance on standardized STAAR testing compared to the district average.

The selected campuses have the district’s highest minority population at 99%, compared to the district average of 84%. The average percentage of at-risk students at these schools is 85%, well above the Texas state average of 49.2%, and 96% of students are economically disadvantaged. Average daily attendance among the selected schools is 6.2% lower than the

district average. Following a review of campus improvement plans and disciplinary actions taken at the schools, it was determined that the number of disciplinary referrals on these campuses is expected to increase 12% over the next two years. One of the middle schools has been rated as a “D” or “F” campus on TEA’s 2019-2020 Focus School List. In the 2018-2019 STAAR testing, the selected schools were among the poorest performing campuses in the district. With an average of 24.42% of students not meeting academic readiness in math, 31.89% in reading, and 37.64% in science, these campuses need enrichment opportunities that will strengthen academic performance.

Additionally, given the composition of their minority population, programs at these schools must also be culturally relevant. El Paso’s south side is known as the “Ellis Island of the Southwest” and is renowned for their Mexican culture, music, arts, and language. However, the area’s high crime rates, poor living conditions, and pervasive poverty have made them socially and economically disconnected from the rest of the city. Due to these conditions, students in these neighborhoods often struggle academically, become involved in gang activity, and lack the support necessary to pursue post-secondary opportunities.

El Paso ISD recognizes that in order for students to be equipped for their lives and futures, they need more than incremental improvements - they need a system that puts learners at the center. The old model of teaching, the "one-size-fits-all" approach, is no longer a viable method to prepare students for a technology-rich digital future. Employers and universities want students who are creative, and innovative problem solvers that can apply knowledge to new and challenging situations. These learning centers will provide a safe and productive after-school activity that not only addresses the immediate concerns of attendance, behavior, and academic performance but also helps students look to the future and develop the skills and confidence they

need to succeed in career and educational opportunities. The lifelong benefits conferred by after-school programs have the potential to dramatically change the social landscape of El Paso's south side by creating a more educated population, generating twenty-first century workforce leaders, reducing neighborhood crime, and ending generational cycles of social-emotional trauma and poverty. With focused academic tutoring to boost comprehension, physical activity components to engage and improve brain function, and character-building curriculum to provide modeling and mentorship, students in the program should achieve significant gains in academic performance, attendance, and behavior. After one year of operating El Paso ISD After-School Community Learning Centers, participating schools will demonstrate a 3% improvement in state academic tests, 5% decrease in behavior incidents, and a 3% increase in daily attendance compared to their non-participating counterparts.

Activities

El Paso ISD's program is a PK-6 extended day learning program which aims to bridge academic and equity gaps by offering after-school enrichment centers focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM), literacy, social-emotional development, and health and fitness. Drawing on the design of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, El Paso ISD's After-School Community Learning Centers will serve the selected low-income and low-performing schools with the goal to improve academic performance, provide social and emotional learning opportunities, encourage parent involvement, and give underprivileged students the ability to explore STEAM careers. The three central program components that will contribute to these goals are:

- Targeted academic support using high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), high-impact tutoring (HIT), and/or school day-aligned academic activities to accelerate learning;
- Student interest-based enrichment that is both academic and enriching, including but not limited to, college and career readiness, service learning, health and wellness, and fine arts activities; and
- Family engagement in learning through ongoing activities that connect parents to the school and community.

Academic support may involve one-on-one or group tutoring, homework help, review lessons, standardized test preparation, and other activities aligned to the school curriculum and state standards. Program staff will collaborate with the instructional teams at each campus to identify which students need tutoring, ensure that materials are curriculum-appropriate, and monitor students' academic progress.

STEAM enrichment activities should be hands on, problem-based, multidisciplinary learning activities that encourage students to explore new subjects. In addition to core subjects like Reading and Math, students will take part in activities that incorporate subjects like nutrition and health education, physical fitness, youth development, drug and violence prevention, arts and music, and different STEAM fields. The program will also incorporate career readiness activities that will expose students to different occupations and the educational and professional training pathways that can guide them to their desired job.

Family engagement is a vital component of 21st CCLCs intended to strengthen the connection between school and home. Therefore, the program will offer family engagement opportunities at least once per month with activities relevant to what students have been learning

as well as educational development and career-oriented training for family members. Examples of family engagement activities might include the following:

- Providing services, classes, referrals, and resources such as high school equivalency courses, literacy and English language learning, workforce development, parenting, and life skills classes;
- Providing opportunities for parents to foster their students' overall academic success;
- Establishing cooperative agreements with other programs and community resources such as other federal programs on campus, parent teacher organizations, health and mental health services, foster care resources, local colleges, financial aid offices, adult education programs, law enforcement, major employers, local funders, and local workforce development;
- Coordinating events, group activities, classes, and presentations for parents;
- Facilitating input and involvement in program planning; and
- Referring families to services that address barriers to students' academic success.

The program will operate Monday through Friday for the duration of the 2023-2024 school year. After-school activities will be held from 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Students will receive a snack, participate in homework help and tutoring if needed, and do other scheduled enrichment activities via project-based centers activities that students will rotate through. Each activity station will have a math or literacy connection, though they may include connections to other disciplines. Guest speakers, outdoor play time, educational field trips, and other special activities will be regularly scheduled. Additionally, a monthly family engagement component will bridge support from the school to the home. These sessions will be scheduled with input from

participating parents, guardians, and other family members. Late evening, weekend, or virtual options may be utilized in order to accommodate working parents.

With more than 110 years of service in El Paso, the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region is an ideal partner to deliver this programming. They have extensive experience in providing state-licensed after-school programs and enrichment camps coupled with their ongoing commitment to broadening the STEAM learning ecosystem of the community. The YWCA aspires to change students' self-image and to visualize themselves in STEAM careers through mentorship and curricula to increase and improve social and cultural competency, financial literacy, college and career readiness, and communication, social and life skills. A 2019 report from the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region demonstrated their program's success, as over 59% of students in their after-school programs improved in math over two grading periods while their families also noted improved overall performance in school.

This program will be adapted to meet the unique needs of the community while addressing the overarching domains of behavior, attendance, and academics common to the identified campuses. To improve behavioral outcomes, the program will provide culturally responsive and student-focused programming through the YWCA's Teen Leadership program that creates meaningful and positive relationships with mentors and builds character, coping mechanisms, and interpersonal skills. The centers will also encourage students to attend school by incorporating physical activity that engages students' interest, leverages the mind-body connection in learning, and creates life-long learners and movers. With a positive feedback loop, students may find efficacy in setting and attaining other personal goals alongside their cohort of peers. The program will offer curriculum-aligned direct tutoring in collaboration with teachers and teacher leaders to effectively assist students in comprehension and retention that will

improve student performance in the classroom and close achievement gaps. The after-school learning centers will also include enrichment offerings in fine arts, financial literacy, college and career readiness, and social, life, and communication skills. These disciplines are designed to pique interest and appeal to students through broad program offerings.

Timeline

The following chart shows the timing of activities over the course of the program year, which will span the 2023-2024 academic year:

	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M
Advertise and recruit for program	X	X										
Hire program staff	X	X										
Contract partner organization	X											
Create schedule and staffing plan	X											
Identify program topics		X										
Procure program resources		X										
Conduct after-school activities			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Conduct evaluation activities			X					X				X
Plan for program continuation											X	X

El Paso ISD and the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region also plan to hold summer activities, though the exact times and locations are yet to be determined for Summer 2024.

Progress

The evaluation of the program will consist of summative and formative questions to answer one key question: does the work (academic services, STEAM enrichment, and parental

engagement) function to increase student participation in the program and improve student performance, behavior, and attendance?

From a process standpoint, the evaluation will measure students' program attendance to determine their exposure to the intervention. Activity schedules, participant attendance records, and observations of session length will provide the data to assess program dosage. The evaluation process will also assess students' level of engagement with the program in the sense of actively participating and the material holding their interest. Their response will be measured using beginning, mid-year, and end-of-year surveys; participant interviews and focus groups; and point-of-service assessments that include participant engagement scales. The results of this formative evaluation will be used to tailor implementation throughout the grant period to optimize program delivery.

Summative evaluation is outcome oriented and will thus focus on the variables that are addressed in the program goals: academic performance and engagement. To evaluate academic performance, one might measure the percentage of students participating in Program during the school year who demonstrated an improved unweighted grade point average (GPA) and the percentage who demonstrated growth in Reading and Mathematics on state assessments. Engagement can be measured with questions about students' and parents' attitudes about the program, about attending school in general, and about their interest in the program material.

During the implementation of the program, data collection will become a key component of daily program activities. The evaluator will work with the program manager, program specialist, teachers, and other program staff to facilitate data collection in the classroom, during program activities, and at parent sessions so that confidentiality and anonymity are maintained. All benchmark outcomes to be measured, from attendance to performance and even to social and

emotional learning outcomes, will be disaggregated for participants at the campus level. As part of the data collection process, grant stakeholders handling evaluation data will follow Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) confidentiality protocols. Frequent communication between the evaluator and Project Director will ensure that they have the appropriate data needed to perform an unbiased review of the project. In addition, the evaluator shall make at least two site visits per year to project campuses. This will provide an experienced context for the project and the evaluative data. Reports will present data and recommendations for program success to be shared with the Project Director to make necessary changes to improve project implementation. The Project Director will be responsible for presenting formative and summative reporting from evaluation to stakeholders like principals, teachers, and parents as feedback to show the project is progressing.

Continuous Improvement

The objective of program evaluation is not to passively review, but to analyze barriers and correct as efficiently as possible within the parameters of the grant. The Project Director will work with the evaluator to finalize the evaluation plan during the planning year. During these sessions, they will review the evaluation plan submitted with the original application, identify the most appropriate measurement tools, and determine the most feasible methods for gathering data. Reports on evaluation findings will be provided to relevant district and campus staff to change operations as needed.

To guarantee fidelity of implementation, the program will continue to meet with its key stakeholders on a quarterly basis to identify areas that require intervention, such as program supply requirements, professional development for program staff, and adjustments to the planned

lessons for a campus. Ongoing review will ensure that teacher and student needs are being met and barriers are being addressed to maximize efficacy. Program successes and calls for feedback can be shared with stakeholders at regular meetings and can be distributed to the public via the monthly program newsletters to maintain open communication.

Project Personnel

The Program Manager will have the responsibility to successfully plan, implement, and review the program to increase program participation and improve academic performance and social-emotional outcomes students at participating campuses. They will also be the point of contact for requesting, collecting, and sharing data with the evaluator throughout the project, including communication efforts such as regular program updates and social media posts. A qualified candidate should have a Master's degree and valid Texas Teacher Certificate; three (3) years teaching or grant administration experience; knowledge in the design, development, and implementation of grant programs; the ability to manage budget and personnel; and demonstrated leadership skills in working with administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the public. Peggy Gustafson will hold this position within El Paso ISD at 1.0 FTE.

The Program Specialist will coordinate day-to-day operations and onsite program implementation. The 21st Century Community Learning Center program recommends that a position such as the Program Specialist have expertise in at least one of the following program-related areas:

- Family Engagement - oversee selection, design and implementation of family engagement activities that increase family literacy and meaningful connections to school-day learning;

- Community Engagement - build connections between the school, the community learning centers, and community partners to support implementation of high-quality academic and enrichment activities, family engagement opportunities, and program sustainability;
- Accelerated Learning - oversee implementation of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), High-Impact Tutoring (HIT) and other school-day aligned academic support, to include selecting, designing, and evaluating academic and enrichment activities for students and conducting program observations to improve program quality.

A complete job description and requirements for the Program Specialist position have not yet been created.

Additionally, grant compliance oversight will be provided by the El Paso ISD Fund Development and Partnerships Department. Major duties will include coordinating budget changes with the Program Manager and working with the evaluator to prepare required reports. District employees who take on a compliance role for this grant must hold a Bachelor's degree and have a minimum of three (3) years of grant writing and management experience.

The YWCA El Paso del Norte Region will contribute seven full-time Activity Coordinators, one for each campus served, to the program staff. These positions have yet to be hired, but their qualifications should include at least 60 hours of college education or a Bachelor's degree in Child Development, as well as a minimum of two years of child care experience. Sereka Barlow, Chief Executive Officer of the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region, will be the primary contact for the partnership.

Management Plan

The Program Manager will guide the planning, communication, and implementation of the project, working closely with the YWCA and each campus' leadership team to understand needs and assets and tailor plans accordingly. They will be supported by the district's current Afterschool Program staff and the Fund Development and Partnerships Department, who are familiar with the community and connected schools, grant programming, and internal procurement systems. Other important stakeholders will include principals and assistant principals, parent engagement liaisons, core subject teachers, staff of partnering organizations, and parents of participating students on each target campus.

During the summer prior to implementation, key personnel of the After-School Community Learning Centers will create a blueprint of the responsibilities, timelines, and milestone project tasks associated with the program. The collaborative process will allow both El Paso ISD and the YWCA to merge their knowledge of best practices for the 21st Century Community Learning Center model with the practical constraints of the project period and budget. Frequent check-ins between the Program Manager, Program Specialist, and YWCA Activity Coordinators will gauge the progress being made toward the project goals and objectives and allow for adjustments to remain on-budget and on-schedule.