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State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports Competitive Grant Program Report

SL 2017-57 (SB 257), sec. 7.24(e)

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I. ELISS LEGISLATION AND GRANTS AWARDED

Legislation Overview

In the summer of 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly appropriated state funds for the Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports (ELISS) Competitive Grant Program to be administered by the Department of Public Instruction *[Session Law 2017—Section 7.24.(a-e)]*. The General Assembly appropriated up to six million dollars for the ELISS Competitive Grant Program for the 2017-18 fiscal year and up to six million dollars for the 2018-19 fiscal year. According to the legislation, the purpose of the Program was "to fund high-quality, independently validated **extended learning** and **integrated student support** service programs for at-risk students that raise standards for student academic outcomes by focusing on the following:

1. Use of an evidence-based model with a proven track record of success.
2. Inclusion of rigorous, quantitative performance measures to confirm effectiveness of the program.
3. Deployment of multiple tiered supports in schools to address student barriers to achievement, such as strategies to improve chronic absenteeism, anti-social behaviors, academic growth, and enhancement of parent and family engagement.
4. Alignment with State performance measures, student academic goals, and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
5. Prioritization in programs to integrate clear academic content, in particular, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning opportunities or reading development and proficiency instruction.
6. Minimization of student class size when providing instruction or instructional supports and interventions.
7. Expansion of student access to high-quality learning activities and academic support that strengthen student engagement and leverage community-based resources, which may include organizations that provide mentoring services and private-sector employer involvement.
8. Utilization of digital content to expand learning time, when appropriate."

Further, the legislation stated that "grants shall be used to award funds for new or existing eligible programs for at-risk students operated by (i) nonprofit corporations and (ii) nonprofit corporations working in collaboration with local school administrative units." Applicants were eligible to receive grants for up to two years in an amount of up to $500,000 per year. The legislation indicated that "programs should focus on serving:

- at-risk students not performing at grade level as demonstrated by statewide assessments,
- students at risk of dropout, and
- students at risk of school displacement due to suspension or expulsion as a result of anti-social behaviors."

The legislation required that:

- priority consideration be given to applicants "demonstrating models that focus services and programs in schools that are identified as low-performing pursuant to G.S. 11C-105.37;"[1]
- grant participants match funds received on the basis of $3 in grant funds for every $1 in non-grant funds (with matching funds not to include other state funds) and that matching funds may include in-kind contributions for up to 50% of the required match; and
- priority consideration be given to an applicant that is "a nonprofit corporation working in partnership with a local school administrative unit resulting in a match utilizing federal funds under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, or Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and other federal or local funds."

The grant program was managed by the Federal Program Monitoring and Support Division at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI). In terms of required reporting on the grant program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the legislation specified the following:

> The Department of Public Instruction shall provide [1] an interim report on the Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by September 15, 2018, with [2] a final report on the Program by September 15, 2019. The final report shall include the final results of the Program and recommendations regarding effective program models, standards, and performance measures based on student performance, leveraging of community-based resources to expand student access to learning activities, academic and behavioral support services, and potential opportunities for the State to invest in proven models for future grants programs.

This report constitutes the Final Report on the ELISS Program. DPI contracted with SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to develop this Final Report. (SERVE provided the Interim Report to DPI on August 21, 2018.)

[1] § 115C-105.37. Identification of low-performing schools: (a) Identification of Low-Performing Schools. The State Board of Education shall identify low-performing schools on an annual basis. Low-performing schools are those that receive a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth" as defined by G.S. 115C-83.15. https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115C/GS_115C-105.37.pdf

Grants Awarded

As outlined in the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) policy TCS-O-001, all ELISS grant applications submitted in the fall of 2017 went through a multiple-stage review process (i.e., initial login and screening review, Level I grant review, Level II grant review, and Level III grant review). Using the results of Level I and Level II reviews, the Federal Program Monitoring and Support Division Director at DPI presented the scoring results to the Twenty-First Century Systems Committee to jointly determine the final selection of grants for recommendation to the SBE for approval.

Of the 34 grant applications received, 18 organizations were awarded grants. The grantees awarded were those that had the highest composite scores after the Level I and II review stages, up to the total amount of state funds available. The SBE approved the awards to grantees on December 7, 2017. Grantees received notification of funding availability on December 8, 2017, and the funds were allocated in January 2018.

The legislation specified funding for two types of programs: (1) Extended Learning and (2) Integrated Student Supports. The following definitions of these two types of eligible programs were included in the application guidance materials:

- Extended Learning (EL): defined as "services and activities that are offered to at-risk students in times outside of the traditional school day. EL may include ELISS programs offered before school, after school, on Saturdays, summers, and intercessions."
- Integrated Student Supports (ISS): described (by research conducted by Child Trends in 2014[2]) as "a school-based approach to supporting students' academic success by developing or acquiring and coordinating supports that target academic and non-academic barriers to achievement."

Table 1 shows the grants awarded by whether they operated an EL Program (including after school, summer, etc.), an ISS Program (support to at-risk students during the school day), or both (Extended Learning + Integrated Student Supports).

- Seven grantees implemented only EL programs (total of $4,137,686 awarded).
- Four grantees implemented only ISS programs (total of $2,128,802 awarded).
- Seven grantees operated programs with both EL and ISS components (total of $5,335,908 awarded).

Grants were awarded to organizations located in seven of eight regions of the state, with the North Central Region receiving the highest number, six of the 18 awards. The combined amount awarded to grantees over two years (2017-19) was $11,602,396—with total awards ranging from less than $200,000 (one grantee) to over $900,000 (five grantees).

[2] https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014-05ISSWhitePaper1.pdf

Table 1. Eighteen Organizations Received ELISS Grant Awards (2017-19)

Type of Grant	Organization Name	Region	County	Total Awarded
Extended Learning (EL)	Area Day Reporting Center	Southeast	Craven	$784,002
	Book Harvest	North Central	Durham	$310,902
	FBC-W CSA dba Charlotte Community Services Association	Southwest	Mecklenburg	$735,000
	The Dream Center of Randolph County	Piedmont-Triad	Randolph	$254,800
	United Way of Pitt County	Northeast	Pitt	$980,000
	Wilson Youth United, Inc. dba the SPOT	North Central	Wilson	$435,982
	YMCA of Northwest North Carolina	Piedmont-Triad	Forsyth	$637,000
			Subtotal	**$4,137,686**
Integrated Student Supports (ISS)	Communities In Schools of Brunswick County	Southeast	Brunswick	$152,224
	Communities In Schools of Rowan County	Southwest	Rowan	$441,008
	Communities In Schools of North Carolina	North Central	Nash	$975,442
	Communities In Schools of Northwest North Carolina	Northwest	Alexander	$560,128
			Subtotal	**$2,128,802**
EL and ISS	Caring and Sharing Inc.	Sandhills	Bladen	$594,126
	Communities In Schools of Cape Fear	Southeast	New Hanover and Pender	$765,606
	Communities In Schools of Montgomery County	Sandhills	Montgomery	$978,372
	Dillard Academy	Southeast	Wayne	$660,056
	RAM Organization	North Central	Durham	$980,000
	Rebound, Alternatives for Youth	North Central	Durham	$380,892
	Student U	North Central	Durham	$976,856
			Subtotal	**$5,335,908**
			Grand Total Awarded	$11,602,396

Per the grant application guidance (pg. 2), "Eligible Organizations" were defined as follows:

> Nonprofit corporations and nonprofit corporations working in collaboration with local school administrative units are eligible to apply for the ELISS grant to implement new or existing eligible programs for at-risk students.

Of the 18 grantees, there were 12 unique nonprofit organizations. In addition, there were six nonprofits funded by ELISS to deliver a common ISS model of support during the school day (the Communities In Schools model). The six Communities In Schools (CIS) nonprofits in Table 1 that received grant awards are distinct organizations (CIS affiliates) located in different counties but with the commonality of delivering the CIS model to schools.

The CIS model of working in partnership with schools to provide Integrated Student Supports is described on the national CIS website:

> Struggling students and their families have a hard time accessing and navigating the maze of public and private services. There may be ample resources in a community, but rarely

> is there someone on the ground who is able to connect these resources with the schools and students that need them most. Through a school-based coordinator, we bring community resources into schools to empower success for all students by removing barriers for vulnerable students at risk of dropping out, keeping kids in schools and on the path to graduation and leveraging evidence, relationships and local resources to drive results.[3]

ELISS was intended in the legislation as a two-year grant award (2017-19). However, as a result of the state legislative timeframe and then the time needed to run a competitive grant process and approve the final awards (including time for RFP development, for organizations to develop their applications, for grant reviewers to score the grants, etc.), the funds were not available to selected grantees until January 2018. Thus, grantees could only implement their programming for approximately half of the 2017-18 school year. For example, in the first year of the award (with funding received in January of 2018), $5,801,196 was awarded to the 18 grantees; however, due to the mid-year timing of the awards, there was $1,607,041 unexpended and returned to the state by the end of the first fiscal year (June 30, 2018). That is, grantees returned a total of 28% of their first year (2017-18) funds. By contrast, in the second year of the grant program, 2018-19, grantees spent almost all of their allocations for the year because it was a full-year of programming.

There were also timing issues for grantees in terms of providing the intended summer programs in both fiscal years. Most grantees who had intended to provide summer programs in 2018 had to fund these programs through their 2018-19 allotment of funds rather than their 2017-18 funds because the 2017-18 fiscal year ended June 30th, and carryover of funds was not allowed. Because the second year of ELISS funding ended on June 30, 2019, many grantees were not able to provide their summer programs in 2019. Thus, even though it was a two-year grant award, most grantees who intended to provide summer programming were only able to provide it for one summer.

Data Sources for the Final Report

SERVE used three data sources in developing the Final ELISS Report: (1) site visits/interviews with grantees, (2) Program Director-completed 2018-19 online end-of-year surveys, and (3) grantee-completed end-of-year Evaluation Reports.

1. *SERVE Site Visits to ELISS Grantees.* SERVE conducted site visits/interviews with grantees during spring 2019 (March through May). In the Program Director interview component of the site visit, SERVE asked grantees about any changes in their program, key implementation features mentioned in the legislation (e.g., collaboration with low-performing schools, leveraging of community-based resources, matching funds), and

[3] https://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-model/

their progress in collecting participant data for their required 2018-19 Grantee Evaluation Report. SERVE also observed ELISS activities when possible, given interview schedules, and asked Program Directors to arrange for a key district or low-performing school contact to interview. These site visits provided context for descriptions of the grantee programs in the next sections of this report and for the Individual Grantee Profiles (available from DPI, upon request).

2. *2018-19 Online End-of-Year Program Director Surveys.* Similar to Year 1, SERVE Center developed and administered an end-of-year survey for Program Directors to complete on 2018-19 ELISS activities. The survey included questions regarding the implementation of the various program components outlined in the ELISS legislation. After approval of the survey by DPI, SERVE sent the survey link to all Program Directors on May 15, 2019, with a June 15, 2019 deadline. All Program Directors completed the survey. The results are reported in Section II of this report.
3. *2018-19 Grantee Evaluation Reports.* According to the ELISS legislation, grantees were required to "submit a final report on key performance data, including statewide test results, attendance rates, graduation rates, and promotion rates, and financial sustainability of the program." Thus, SERVE communicated regularly with Program Directors to help them develop their evaluation plans/reports using a common template that provided broad direction but allowed for reporting on each program's unique goals for participating students. All grantees were required to submit a completed 2018-19 Evaluation Report to SERVE by July 15, 2019. All 18 grantees submitted reports, which are described in Section II of this report.

II. GRANTEE IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

Overview of Grantee Services

As previously mentioned, through ELISS funding, seven organizations implemented EL programs, four organizations implemented ISS programs, and seven organizations provided both EL and ISS programs. Table 2 shows the school level of students served by grantees. Six grantees served only elementary students, five served both elementary and middle grades students, and four served elementary, middle, and high school students. There was one grantee that served only middle school students (Communities In Schools of Montgomery County), and two that served only high school students (Rebound Alternatives for Youth and Student U).

Table 2. Eighteen Grantees by Type of Program and School Level of Students Served

Type of Program	Grantee/Organization Name	School Level of Students Served		
		Elem	Middle	High
Extended Learning (EL)	Area Day Reporting Center*	✓	✓	
	Book Harvest*	✓		
	FBC-W CSA dba Charlotte Community Services Association*	✓	✓	
	The Dream Center of Randolph County	✓		
	United Way of Pitt County*	✓		

Type of Program	Grantee/Organization Name	School Level of Students Served		
		Elem	Middle	High
	Wilson Youth United, Inc. dba the SPOT*	✓		
	YMCA of Northwest North Carolina*	✓		
Integrated Student Supports (ISS)	Communities In Schools of Brunswick County	✓	✓	
	Communities In Schools of Rowan County	✓	✓	✓
	Communities In Schools of North Carolina	✓	✓	✓
	Communities In Schools of Northwest North Carolina	✓		
EL and ISS	Caring and Sharing Inc.*	✓	✓	✓
	Communities In Schools of Cape Fear*	✓	✓	✓
	Communities In Schools of Montgomery County*		✓	
	Dillard Academy*	✓	✓	
	RAM Organization*	✓	✓	
	Rebound, Alternatives for Youth*			✓
	Student U*			✓
	Total	15	10	6

*Indicates grantee provided summer programming in 2018; all but one grantee who offered after school programming also offered summer programing in 2018.

Description of Grantees

Below, we briefly describe the programs provided by the 18 grantees by grantee type (EL, ISS, and EL+ISS).

Extended Learning (EL). Six grantee organizations focused primarily on EL programs in the form of after school programs for at-risk students (with five of the six also providing summer programs in 2018). After school programming was provided either at partner schools or at community-based locations.

Two grantees provided their after school programs onsite at partnering low-performing schools.

- The YMCA of Northwest North Carolina collaborated with Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools to operate after school programs serving K-5 students at three low-performing elementary schools in the district.
- United Way of Pitt County collaborated with Pitt County Schools to operate after school programs at five low-performing elementary schools, serving primarily 1st- and 2nd-grade students who were below grade level in reading.

Two organizations provided after school programs at community-based locations, but in close collaboration with specified feeder schools.

- The Dream Center of Randolph County's ELISS-funded after school program served grades K-5 students from four schools.
- Wilson Youth United, Inc. dba the SPOT served grades 3-5 students from two low-performing schools in their after school program.

Two grantees provided after school opportunities to students from a number of schools in their respective counties. FBC-W CSA dba Charlotte Community Services Association, in Mecklenburg County, used ELISS funds to provide after school services at the Family Life Center of the First Baptist Church West. The elementary and middle school students in the program who were identified as below grade-level, at-risk for failing, and/or those for whom English is a second language were provided intensive academic supports as part of the SMART tutoring program. A second grantee, Area Day Reporting Center, operated seven after school program sites serving students from elementary and middle schools across Craven County.

One grantee offered a unique kind of EL support to at-risk students through working collaboratively with elementary schools to provide high-quality books for summer reading to at-risk students to help reduce summer reading skill loss. Book Harvest collaborated with seven low-performing elementary schools in Durham to allow all students to select ten high-quality books to take home for their summer reading. In addition, Book Harvest partnered with two low-performing elementary schools to pilot extended learning in the form of home visits for the purpose of parent literacy training for rising 2nd graders at risk for summer reading loss.

Integrated Student Supports (ISS) During the School Day. Four CIS local affiliate organizations were awarded ELISS grants to provide the CIS model to schools during the regular school day in order to improve the academic performance, attendance, or behavior of referred at-risk students. As mentioned above, CIS is a national model that involves local CIS affiliates (nonprofit organizations with their own Boards, budgets, Directors, etc.) implementing the CIS model in partnership with local schools. The CIS model involves placing a trained CIS staff person in a partnering school to provide individualized case management services during the school day to students with identified risk factors for low achievement. The case management involves making individualized plans to help students remove barriers causing low achievement, attendance, or poor behavior. Caseloads for each CIS staff person placed in a school range from 20 to 50 at-risk students. According to the national CIS website, a CIS local affiliate organization brings support and resources to the partner schools by doing the following:

- conducts an assessment of the community to determine the need for CIS;
- partners with school district leadership to identify where CIS can have the greatest impact;
- hires, trains, and assigns a site coordinator to a partner school;
- partners with the school districts, local agencies, businesses, and foundations to garner support for the organization and its work;
- mobilizes community resources to address academic and nonacademic barriers; and
- continuously evaluates their work to ensure progress is made and goals are met.

Three CIS grantees used ELISS funding to expand services to additional schools within a district with whom they were already partnering:

- CIS of Brunswick County added CIS staff in two low-performing schools (one elementary and one middle school).
- CIS of Rowan County provided CIS staff in eight schools in the district including five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Of the eight schools, seven were low-performing.
- CIS of North Carolina provided CIS staff in nine schools in the Nash-Rocky Mount School District including five elementary, two middle, and two high schools. Of the nine schools served, six were low-performing.

One CIS grantee used ELISS funding to provide its services in a new partner district:

- CIS of Northwest North Carolina placed CIS staff in five elementary schools in Alexander County with a focus on reading improvement (serving identified at-risk students with case management and tutoring or small group academic support).

Extended Learning + Integrated Student Supports (EL+ISS). Seven organizations received ELISS funding to provide a combination of EL and ISS services. Of these, two CIS affiliates provided after school (and summer 2018) programs in addition to placing CIS staff in selected schools during the school day.

- CIS of Montgomery County partnered with Montgomery County Schools to provide case management during the school day and after school programming at two low-performing middle schools. That is, the program identified at-risk students and provided them with support from CIS staff during the school day along with the extended learning benefits of attending after school and summer programs.
- CIS of Cape Fear provided ELISS-funded services to two school districts (New Hanover and Pender County). The ELISS funding allowed for placement of CIS staff serving at-risk students with case management during the school day in five schools in New Hanover County and three schools in Pender County. In addition, ELISS funding supported after school programs at four sites.

Three ELISS grants served at-risk students at charter schools (Dillard Academy in Wayne County, Reaching All Minds Academy in Durham, and Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy in Bladen County). ELISS funding provided additional supports to at-risk students at Dillard Academy and Reaching All Minds Academy through after school and summer programs and through tutoring or small group instruction during the school day. Caring and Sharing, Inc., in Bladen County, used ELISS funding to provide an after school and summer program to at-risk students (K-8) from several schools and to provide tutoring during the school day to students at a low-performing charter school serving grades 6-12 (Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy).

Two grantees provided both EL and ISS services to support their work with at-risk high school students in Durham Public Schools (DPS).

- ELISS funding supported three aspects of the Student U High School Program, which supports 50 students per grade (9^{th}-12^{th}) from DPS over their four years of high school. The ELISS grant funded: (a) regular mentoring and other support during the school day for up to 200 students (with the support provided by teachers in each high school who agreed to serve as Advocates for the students), (b) after school tutoring up to twice per week for Student U high school students with academic needs, and (c) a six-week academic summer school program for up to 100 Student U 9^{th} and 10^{th} graders.
- Rebound, Alternatives for Youth, also working in partnership with DPS, served high school students receiving suspensions or at-risk for suspensions. The ELISS grant provided for the addition of a second suspension alternative site. (The suspension alternative site provided a suspension day program from 9:00 to 2:00 with personal and academic support to high school students suspended for 1-10 days.) The Rebound suspension alternative program is intended to turn the negative of a suspension into an opportunity for student personal change and continuation of education. The ELISS-funded site served up to 15 suspended students at a time. The ELISS funding was also used to place a full-time staff member at one partner high school to provide preventive support during the school day to students at-risk for suspension.

Students Reported as Served by ELISS-Funded Programs

Program Directors reported the number of students served either via EL (after school programs) or via ISS (case management, tutoring, and other supports during the school day) in 2018-19 on the online end-of-year Program Director Survey and in their Evaluation Reports submitted in July of 2019.

- Across grantees providing EL programs, 13 grantees reported that a total of over 1,500 students participated in their after school programs in 2018-19.
- Across grantees providing ISS services, 11 grantees reported that a total of over 2,500 students received their during-the-school-day services in 2018-19.

Thus, in one full school year of implementation (2018-19), approximately 4,000 students were reported by grantees to have participated in ELISS-funded programming. (This number does not include the number of students served in summer programs provided in 2018 by 13 grantees.)

The online end-of-year Program Director survey included a question asking grantees, *"Was it a challenge to enroll the number of at-risk students you proposed to serve in your grant proposal?"* Fourteen grantees indicated "no" and four indicated "yes." Of those who indicated "yes," challenges mentioned included: (a) limited number of staff (at least initially) due to hiring lags; (b) smaller number of collaborating schools than expected; (c) lack of parental consent for

services; (d) competing student-interests during after school time, such as sports activities; and/or (e) the impacts of Hurricane Florence.

Given the legislative intent that grantees work to improve outcomes for at-risk students, the survey asked grantees to indicate the extent to which they served the types of at-risk students mentioned in the legislation. That is, the legislation indicated that the target population for these funds should be:

(a) at-risk students not performing at grade level as demonstrated by statewide assessments,
(b) students at risk of dropout, and
(c) students at risk of school displacement due to suspension or expulsion as a result of anti-social behaviors.

Thus, Program Directors were asked in the survey to indicate the percentage of students they served who met each of the three criteria as applicable (not all grantees targeted all three criteria). Their responses indicated a focus on all three types of at-risk students.

(a) 16 of 18 grantees reported that they served at-risk students not performing at grade level as demonstrated by statewide assessments. On average, grantees reported that 93% of the students they served met this at-risk criterion.
(b) 17 of 18 grantees indicated that they had a focus on serving students at risk of dropping out; on average, they reported that 67% of the students they served met this criterion.
(c) 15 of 18 grantees indicated a focus on students at risk of school displacement due to suspension or expulsion as a result of anti-social behaviors, and they reported that, on average, 58% of their students met this criterion.

Program Implementation Features Mentioned in Legislation

Collaboration with Low-Performing Schools. As stated in the legislation, the purpose of ELISS was to fund high-quality EL and ISS programming for at-risk students. The ELISS legislation also indicated that "priority consideration shall be given to applications demonstrating models that focus services and programs in schools that are identified as low-performing pursuant to G.S. 115C-105.37[4]." Because low-performing schools were a priority focus for the ELISS grantees' EL and ISS services, a successful grant necessitated effective collaboration and planning between the nonprofit organization and the targeted schools and district.

To describe the extent to which grantees were successful in their collaboration with low-performing schools, SERVE collected data from two sources: (a) the site visit interviews, which included questions to stakeholders regarding the extent and quality of their district's or school's

[4] Low-performing schools are those that receive a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of met expected growth or not met expected growth.

collaboration with the ELISS-funded organization; and (b) the online end-of-year Program Director Survey, which included a self-assessment regarding the program's collaboration with the district or low-performing schools. As part of the site visit protocol, SERVE asked Program Directors to identify a key district contact or a low-performing school principal to be interviewed either face-to-face during the visit or via phone after the visit. These stakeholder interviews provided information on districts'/schools' knowledge about the ELISS program, the level of communication, and the types and extent of collaboration.

While the district or school respondents indicated there was regular communication, the examples provided regarding the types of communication varied across grantees. Some districts/schools reported regularly-scheduled meetings to convey and discuss program-related information while others reported more informal, "as needed" communication by phone or email. Examples of effective ELISS collaboration strategies reported by stakeholders included: (a) establishing formal relationships and collaborative structures, such as Memorandums of Understanding; (b) ensuring that the partnering organizations shared a common vision and understanding of the program provided; (c) encouraging open discussions of the program's accomplishments and challenges in order to improve implementation; and (d) building trust with the district/school staff by continuously improving efforts to meet at-risk students' needs.

Given the legislative intent that nonprofit organizations awarded grants work in close collaboration with low-performing schools in improving outcomes for at-risk students, the survey asked Program Directors, *"How many low-performing schools did you serve this year (2018-19)?"* Sixteen of 18 grantees reported serving 1 to 7 (or more) low-performing schools across 16 districts.

- 3 grantees reported serving 1 low-performing school
- 4 grantees reported serving 2 low-performing schools
- 4 grantees reported serving 3-6 low-performing schools
- 5 grantees indicated they served 7 or more low-performing schools

Two of the 18 grantees reported that they did not serve any low-performing schools directly. One of these grantees was a charter school that was not considered a low-performing school, and the other grantee served 200 high school students coming from any of eight high schools in the district.

Program Directors were also asked on the survey what challenges they faced in collaborating with low-performing schools. Reported challenges varied by type of program but included issues such as: (a) principal and teacher turnover rates such that knowledge of the program had to be reestablished; (b) shifts in student, district, and/or community needs over the course of the grant; (c) difficulty in defining specific roles, responsibilities, and parameters when placing staff in

schools; and (d) competing for similar funding opportunities (i.e., for some community-based grantees, the district they served could also be their competitors in other grant competitions).

Collectively, the challenges identified by the district/school stakeholders and the ELISS Program Directors highlight the fact that nonprofit organizations and schools/districts can experience a learning curve when first working together on a collaborative effort. However, it is clear, based on some of the successful collaborations described by both the grantees and their low-performing school/district partners, that community-based organizations can effectively and efficiently supplement and support school efforts to improve outcomes for at-risk students.

Leveraging of Community-Based Resources. Since the ELISS legislation mentioned the importance of leveraging community-based resources, the Program Director Survey asked, *"To what degree have you been successful with leveraging community-based resources to expand student access to learning and academic supports (e.g., mentoring services, private-sector employer involvement)?"* Nine grantees indicated "very successful," five indicated "mostly successful," three indicated "somewhat successful," and one indicated "not successful."

As part of the spring 2019 site visit interviews, SERVE staff asked Program Directors to provide examples of community-based resources they were able to leverage to support their ELISS programming. Examples of resources included use of facilities, transportation, food for students and families, field trips for college awareness, hurricane relief assistance, tutoring and mentoring volunteers, and financial literacy workshops for parents. ELISS grantees mentioned partnering with local universities and community colleges, businesses, food banks, churches, public libraries, parks and recreation programs, police departments, hospitals, mental health facilities, community art groups, agricultural extension agencies, and others (e.g., 4H, YMCA).

Use of Digital Resources. The legislation identified the implementation feature of support for the utilization of digital content, when appropriate. The Program Director Survey asked, *"Did your program provide digital resources to expand students' learning time outside of school this year (2018-19)?"* Seventeen grantees indicated "yes" and only one indicated "no." The grantee that indicated "no" explained that the district *"is moving towards being a 1:1 county, which means that every student in the school system would have access to either a Chromebook or an iPad."*

The majority of grantees that provided digital resources reported increasing students' access to computer labs and/or laptops to complete assignments and/or for remediation. Also, several grantees expanded learning opportunities by providing students with wireless internet services. One grantee stated, *"Many participants do not have computers at home or reliable internet access, so while this seems basic, it helps students stay connected to school."* Similarly, another grantee reported, *"Given the rural location of our community and needs of families, we also provided WiFi on buses and wireless hotspots to ensure students had access to digital connectivity."*

Through ELISS funding, grantees reported increasing ELISS students' access to various computer software and/or personalized learning programs. Grantees indicated they used digital resources to enhance instruction in reading (iReady, Epic, RozzyLearning), math (Prodigy, Math Playground, Study Island, IXL), and STEM (First Robotics, Lego WeDo, Spheros, OSMO). Some grantees provided students access to online text books or other virtual school resources.

In addition to providing increased access for students, some grantees increased technology access for teachers and the families of students participating in ELISS programs. Two grantees reported purchasing smartboards, one stating: *"Smart boards were used for teachers to engage students in online learning tools in small groups and to work through math formulas."* Technology support for families included access to online book collections, texting services, and time set aside for parents to use laptops or iPads.

Matching Funds. The ELISS legislation stated,

> Grantees shall provide certification to the Department of Public Instruction that the grants received under the program shall be matched on the basis of three dollars ($3.00) in grant funds for every one dollar ($1.00) in nongrant funds…. Matching funds may include in-kind contributions for up to fifty percent (50%) of the required match[5].

The online end-of-year Program Director Survey asked grantees if they met the match criteria for fiscal year 2018-19. All 18 grantees indicated "yes." The survey also asked, *"Did the low-performing school district(s) you served this year (2018-19) provide any Title I or other direct match funding for your ELISS program activities?"* Ten grantees indicated "yes" and eight indicated "no."

In addition, the survey asked Program Directors to list sources and amounts of matching funds for 2018-19. The kinds of sources reported included: Title 1, school districts, city agencies, private donors, corporate/nonprofit grants, and donations. In-kind matching donations were reported to have come in the form of: (a) volunteer staffing—including tutors or office support; (b) facilities—including rent reduction, leasing/rental agreements, classroom furniture; and (c) school supplies—including curricular materials and student supplies.

Use of Quantitative Performance Measures. With any grant program, it is essential that grantees evaluate and report on program impact. As specified in the legislation, ELISS grantees were required to submit evaluation reports at the end of the grant period[6]. It is important to note, however, that because of the due date (July 15, 2019) needed for these evaluation reports in order to meet the deadline of a Final ELISS Report to the legislature by September 2019, some grantees indicated they did not have sufficient time to access and analyze their student outcome

[5] Matching funds shall not include other State funds.

[6] All submitted grantee evaluation reports are available from DPI.

data. It is also important to note that because of the variation of ELISS programs/services, grade levels served, academic foci, behavioral goals, etc., it was not possible for SERVE to conduct an external evaluation of each of the 18 programs in terms of extent of student improvement on key measured outcomes. It is also not meaningful or feasible to conduct a "statewide" evaluation of outcomes across all 18 programs given the varied grade levels and kinds of services provided. That is, there is not a common student outcome measure that applies to all programs equally.

All 18 grantees met the evaluation requirement and submitted an evaluation report in July 2019. Although a few grantees used external evaluators to develop their final evaluation report, the majority completed the evaluation reporting requirement using program staff. Table 3 describes the types of student outcome measures, by grantee, as reported on in their 2019 evaluation reports.

Table 3. Academic and Behavioral Student Outcome Measures Used in 2018-19 Grantee Evaluation Reports

Type of Program	Organization Name[7]	Academic Outcome Measures				Behavioral Outcome Measures		
		EOG/EOC	mCLASS	Grades	Other	Attendance	Discipline	Other
Extended Learning (EL)	Book Harvest		✓*		✓*			
	FBC-W CSA dba Charlotte Community Services Association		✓		✓	✓		
	The Dream Center of Randolph County		✓*	✓*		✓	✓*	✓
	United Way of Pitt County		✓*		✓*			✓*
	Wilson Youth United, Inc. dba the SPOT	✓		✓*		✓	✓	
	YMCA of Northwest North Carolina		✓*		✓*			✓*
Integrated Student Supports (ISS)	Communities In Schools of Brunswick County				✓	✓*	✓*	✓
	Communities In Schools of Rowan County				✓	✓*	✓*	✓
	Communities In Schools of North Carolina				✓	✓*	✓*	✓
	Communities In Schools of Northwest North Carolina				✓	✓*		✓
EL and ISS	Caring and Sharing Inc.	✓		✓*				✓
	Communities In Schools of Montgomery County							✓
	Dillard Academy		✓*		✓*	✓*	✓*	
	RAM Organization	✓	✓*		✓			
	Rebound, Alternatives for Youth						✓*	✓
	Student U	✓		✓	✓		✓	
	Total	4	7	4	11	8	8	10

*Indicates pre- and post-implementation data were reported.

Academic Outcome Measures Reported. Fifteen of 18 ELISS grantees reported academic outcome data in their evaluation reports as a means to describe the program's impact on at-risk

[7] Note: Two grantees (Area Day Reporting Center and Community In Schools of Cape Fear) were not able to access student outcome data such as EOGs in time for the report submittal and thus are not included in Table 3.

students. The most common academic measure reported by grantees was mCLASS[8] data. Seven grantees used mCLASS data in their reports with six of seven providing pre- and post-data.

Four grantees reported End-of-Grade (EOG) or End-of-Course (EOC) data, of which none provided pre- and post-comparison data. (No grantees reported EOG math data since the release of math scores by DPI was delayed until August 2019[9].)

Four grantees reported using participants' grades as an outcome measure (three of which provided pre- and post- comparison data). Eleven grantees reported "other" types of academic measures including: iReady (reading and math), Woodcock Johnson IV, Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA), Reading Scale Benchmark (LRS-AB), American College Testing (ACT) and progress on students' personal goals to improve/maintain academics.

Behavioral Outcome Measures Reported. Thirteen of 18 ELISS grantees reported behavioral outcome data in their evaluation reports. Eight grantees reported data regarding student attendance/absenteeism for the regular-school day (five of which provided pre- and post-implementation data). Eight grantees reported data regarding suspensions, expulsions, and/or discipline referrals (six of which provided pre- and post-implementation data). In addition, ten grantees reported "other" types of behavioral measures including: social emotional learning skills assessments (four grantees), students' progress on personal goals to improve/maintain school behavior (four grantees) and changes in students' classroom behavior as reported by their regular day teacher (two grantees).

Grantee Suggestions

A final question on the online end-of-year Program Director Survey asked grantees, "*What recommendations, if any, would you like to offer about the ELISS grant program and/or about improving the performance of at-risk students through Extended Learning and Integrated Student Support programs?"* The most frequent suggestions referenced the ELISS Competitive Grant Program timeline. That is, some grantees suggested extending the timeframe of the grant from one and a half years to three or more years and/or, given the mid-year start of the grant awards, allowing unspent funds to roll-over from one year to the next. As mentioned earlier, in the first year (2017-18), $1,607,041 of $5,801,196, was unspent across the 18 grantees by the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2018). Because the first year allocations were not available until January 2018, it left grantees with six months, rather than 12 months, to provide their services.

[8] mCLASS is a diagnostic and formative assessment required by DPI to be administered to K-2 students three times a year. mCLASS includes DIBELS 8th edition items and Text Reading and Comprehension items (which identifies reading levels and how students make meaning from text).

[9] Due to updates to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and Extended Content Standards, new math tests/items were administered for the first time. To ensure the results of the test scores are valid and reliable, student scores are delayed while the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction processes the test data and completes all necessary analyses. Then the State Board of Education must approve the scores and achievement levels (in August 2019), before EOG math scores can be released.

- *The funding should start at the beginning of the school calendar year and the unspent funds in the first year should be able to be rolled over.*
- *Funding became available in January 2018, yet this was a 2017-18 allocation. The planning, materials procurement, and hiring process to implement the program took place during the first year. Student services in our ELISS program began in July 2018 as indicated in our proposal and second year funding had to be used for payment because carryover funds were not allowed.*

Without the ability to roll-over unspent ELISS funds from the first year to the second year, and with the end of the grant being in June 2019, grantees reported that using ELISS funding for summer programming was challenging.

- *Students need support during the vulnerable time of summer and the timeline for the grant is hard to match with summer programming.*

In addition, as the comment below indicates, some suggested that the timeframe for showing results ("lasting change") is longer than the time provided through the ELISS grants.

- *We truly would have preferred a three- to four-year grant to show results and make needed changes. Real, lasting change seldom happens on a two-year schedule, but takes time to fully evolve simply as a best-practice.*

Despite the funding timeline challenges, grantees voiced great appreciation for the ELISS funding opportunity in that it represents an important state-supported venue for fine-tuning, validating, and showcasing promising school-community partnerships.

- *We would suggest that legislators consider using ELISS as a development pipeline for promising programs, with a plan to fund successful programs long term, either through the school system, or through a similar process that supports school-community partnerships.*
- *The only recommendation I have is to better showcase what these programs do for students in hopes of getting other businesses/foundations/etc. to support these efforts. They truly make a difference each and every day!*

III. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM MODELS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Program Models

Extended Learning (outside the school day) and Integrated Student Supports (during the school day) programs can provide critical community-based supports for low-performing schools and at-risk students. As one principal of a low-performing school served by a Communities In Schools grantee indicated, *"with almost 100% at-risk students in this school, we need all the intervention resources we can get to help our students."* The ELISS Competitive Grant Award

program comes at an opportune time of high national, state, and local interest in how to bring community-based organizations into effective partnerships with schools and districts to help address the emerging needs of at-risk students who are experiencing academic or behavioral problems in school.

In summary, across the state, during the 2018-19 school year, the 18 ELISS grantees:

- served 16 school districts in seven regions of the state;
- collaborated with up to 40 low-performing schools on service provision to at-risk students; and
- reported providing regular after school programs or during the school day services (case management, tutoring) to an estimated 4,000 at-risk students (defined as below grade level or with attendance or behavior problems that were barriers to learning).

The 18 grantees that received ELISS awards offer examples of program models that may be of interest to other nonprofit organizations in the state as they collaborate with districts and schools on efforts to improve outcomes for at-risk students. Types of program models and a few examples of ELISS grantees that fit the model type are briefly summarized below.

Established Youth Service Providers Partner with Low Performing Schools to Implement Cost-Effective and Academically-Focused After School and Summer Programs:

- The YMCA of Northwest North Carolina partnered with Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (specifically with three low-performing school principals) in jointly planning and implementing after school and summer programs. YMCA's collaborative approach led to more students served at a lower cost due to the lack of facility and transportation costs incurred (since use of the elementary school buildings was provided as an in-kind contribution). As a result of the after school programming being located at the school sites and staffing the program with teachers from those schools, there was strong curricular and instructional alignment between the regular-school-day and the after school program, thus ensuring close coordination regarding students' academic needs.
- Wilson Youth United, Inc. dba the SPOT partnered with Wilson County Schools to serve students in grades 3-5 from low-performing schools via their after school program. The goal of the program was to provide academic support to participating students to help them increase their grade level outcomes. This was accomplished by staffing the program with certified or retired teachers who supported students individually and in small groups and facilitated homework completion.

Improving Early Literacy Outcomes:

- Book Harvest, working with Durham Public Schools, used their ELISS grant to reduce inequities in access to high-quality books and reading opportunities during the summer for at-risk students in elementary schools by: (a) working with seven low-performing schools

to provide each student ten self-selected high-quality books to encourage summer reading and (b) piloting home visits at two low performing schools to model literacy activities.

- The United Way of Pitt County worked collaboratively with Pitt County Schools to develop an after school and summer program for K-2 students who needed assistance in improving their chances of meeting 3rd-grade reading standards. Their evaluation report suggested that they had success in improving reading comprehension for ELISS participants and that their close collaboration with school faculty/staff and their focus on parent engagement were critical to their success.

Improving At-Risk Student Success in Middle School:

- Montgomery County Schools and CIS of Montgomery County collaborated to integrate both EL and ISS services for a targeted group of at-risk students needing more intensive support. CIS of Montgomery County placed staff at two low-performing middle schools who provided case management and other supports to the students during the school day. These same CIS staff members also worked in the after school programs located onsite at the two schools. As a result, this ISS plus EL approach allowed for continuity of services to a core group of targeted at-risk students both during and after school.

Improving At-Risk Student Success in High School and Beyond:

- Rebound, Alternatives for Youth, worked with suspended high school students in Durham Public Schools, during their suspension period, to help them keep up academically and reflect and learn from the suspension experience going forward. In addition, the ELISS grant allowed for piloting a preventive approach in one high school by placing a full-time staff member to work with referred students on conflict management, so as to try to prevent suspensions from happening.

Improving At-Risk Student Attendance, Behavior, and Grades with a Focus on Social-Emotional Development Support During the School Day:

- Six ELISS grants supported the expansion of the nationally developed CIS model into low-performing schools in seven districts (Alexander, Brunswick, Montgomery, Nash-Rocky Mount, New Hanover, Pender, Rowan) with the hope that, once the value of this additional CIS staff person in school during the school day (providing case management to at-risk students) is demonstrated, longer-term funding will become available with district and school leadership support. The ELISS grants allowed for placement of a CIS staff member during the school day in 19 low performing schools, serving an estimated 1,500 at-risk students in 2018-19 with regular case management services (including tutoring, mentoring, or small group work with students). Improving social-emotional outcomes for students with the goal of reducing behavioral and attendance problems or improving classwork and grades was a key focus of the CIS case management services.

Funding for program models such as those described are often difficult to come by at levels that allow for strategic collaboration with the district/schools and well-planned implementation and evaluation of the program model. The ELISS funding provided valuable support towards the implementation and evaluation of program models for school-community partnerships to improve the achievement of at-risk students.

Recommendations

The interviews conducted with school principals and/or district contacts who partnered with the community organizations on the ELISS-funded programs indicated that school-community partnerships in support of improving outcomes for at-risk students can be a very positive experience for the schools served. Several principals of low-performing schools articulated that at-risk students need all the support they can get to overcome some of the challenges of poverty and other difficult situations they may face outside of school and that the community-based organizations can be valuable partners in providing this support.

In the ELISS Competitive Grant Program, one of the state's interests according to the legislation was in exploring "potential opportunities for the state to invest in proven models for future grant programs." The ELISS Competitive Grant Program in 2017-19 supported the implementation of promising program models of school-community partnerships with potential for replication in other locations. Below are suggestions for possible ways to improve the utility and impact of this funding opportunity in the future.

- Consider extending the length of the grants awarded to allow for: (1) more extensive collaborative planning between the nonprofit organization and the district/schools on the front end, (2) time to revise and improve the program model based on implementation challenges experienced, (3) time for grantees to conduct well-designed evaluations of the program's impact on student outcomes, and (4) opportunities for grantees to share the program models and lessons learned with others in the state. That is, rather than a one-and-a-half-year funding timeframe, as is currently the case, consider a three- to four-year timeframe for awarding grants. Typically, in education, the implementation of a substantive new program or intervention is a process that takes several years to complete well. If funded over a three- to four-year period, the grantees could be expected to go through a cycle of continuous improvement in partnership with schools and conduct more rigorous studies of their program's impact on at-risk students. With this longer timeframe, grantees could also be expected to share their approach, materials, evidence of success, and expertise with others in the state at the end of their funding cycle.
- Encourage grantees to work with external evaluators to help them more rigorously evaluate their program's impact on at-risk students (e.g., using a comparison group of students not receiving services). Many nonprofit organizations do not have the internal expertise or staffing needed for well-planned data collection, analysis, and evaluation reporting on students who received services. Data from schools and districts on students

served can be difficult for community organizations to access. Thus, it is important for the ELISS grant program to continue to educate community/nonprofit organizations on the importance of using trained program evaluators to help them demonstrate accountability for the results of the funding received in terms of impacts on at-risk students and schools.

- Disseminate what is learned from grantees in each award cycle. For example, a website could be developed to describe the program models, their implementation challenges, and considerations for adapting the models to new sites. Information on the program models might include a "readiness assessment" process that would help other districts and nonprofit organizations in deciding whether the program would work in their contexts.