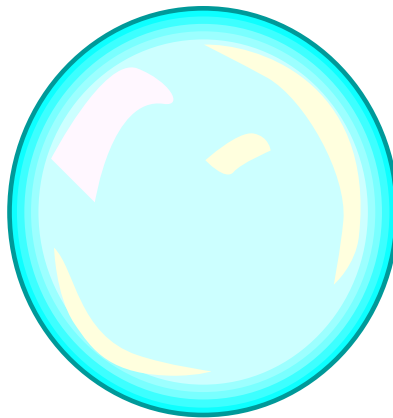


ASPIRA of Florida Youth Sanctuary
21st Century Community Learning Center
Summative Evaluation, 2017



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Birnie and Associates



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Executive Summary

The ASPIRA of Florida Youth Sanctuary, funded by a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, offers support to students of three ASPIRA charter schools in Miami-Dade county: the Arts DE/CO (Design/Communications) and the Raul Arnaldo Martinez Charter Schools in Miami and the Leadership and College Preparatory Academy in Leisure City. This evaluation, conducted by independent evaluators Birnie and Associates, covers the sixth year of operation, from August 2016 through June 2017. The after-school program operated in all three sites. The Saturday Academy operated from December through March at the Arts DECO center only. Six workshops engaged parents. The program enrolled 228 students in Grades 6, 7, and 8, 223 of whom attended 30 days or more. These findings emerged from the evaluation:

- Students benefit from and enjoy all aspects of the program, as indicated by their almost perfect attendance and also by site visits, which confirmed consistently engaging activities conducted by a caring, competent staff.
- Academically, the project aims for improvement in English language arts, mathematics, and science, as measured by report card grades. Although meaningful progress was made in all three subjects, the percent of students who earned satisfactory grades fell short of the benchmarks: 57 percent attained the standard in English, 67 percent in mathematics, and 53 percent in science. However, in Algebra, 79 percent of the students who took the end-of-course examination earned satisfactory scores, exceeding the benchmark in that subject.
- The goal for student behavior calls for 80 percent of the students to earn satisfactory conduct grades during the school year. Here, too, achievement fell short of the goal, with 60 percent of the students attaining the standard.
- The program aims for 90 percent of the students to be promoted to the next grade. In this case, performance exceeded the benchmark, with a near-perfect 98 percent of the students moving to the next grade at the end of the year.
- Parent participation remained steady, with moderate attendance at the six workshops conducted for them during the school year.

The evaluation concludes with two recommendations: continue the high quality of engagement with students and improve data collection to meet reporting requirements more effectively.

ASPIRA of Florida Youth Sanctuary 21st Century Community Learning Center Summative Evaluation, 2017

By Billie F. Birnie, Ph.D.
Birnie and Associates

The ASPIRA of Florida Youth Sanctuary, funded by a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, offers academic and social support to students of three ASPIRA charter schools in Miami-Dade County: the Arts DE/CO (Design/Communications) Charter School and the Raul Arnaldo Martinez Charter School, both in Miami, and the Leadership and College Preparatory Academy in Leisure City. This evaluation assesses the extent to which measurable objectives in the sixth year of the project were attained. (During the first five years, only DECO was involved; the other two sites were added with the renewal of the grant in the project's sixth year.) The evaluation also assesses the quality of the project and makes recommendations that emerged from the study. It uses a decision-making model (House, 1983), which assumes consensus on general goals and criteria and provides information on program quality and effectiveness. It adheres to the American Education Association's *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* and subscribes to the tenets of "utilization-focused evaluation," that is, "evaluation done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses" (Patton, 1997). In this case, the primary users are the funders and the project administrators, and the specific, intended uses are to meet reporting requirements and to apply the findings from the evaluation to the improvement of the project. Secondary users are additional program officers at the Florida and U. S. Departments of Education, who may use the evaluation to supplement their understanding of the initiative and compare it to similar programs funded by the 21st CCLC. Additional audiences may be administrators and teachers at the school and other professionals interested in the effect of after-school programs on middle school students.

- This report covers the 2016-2017 academic year. It includes:
- Overview and History
 - Student Enrollment and Attendance
 - Student and Family Demographics
 - Program Operation
 - Staff Characteristics

- Objectives and Outcomes
- Other Findings
- Progress Toward Sustainability
- Lessons Learned and Recommendations.



Overview and History

ASPIRA of Florida has been successfully working with families and young people for more than 30 years through three avenues: leadership clubs for young people, charter schools, and family programs. Its Youth Leadership Development (YLD) Program provides leadership training, cultural enrichment activities, social skill building, and community action projects for students in 54 schools in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties. Its three charter middle schools, all in predominantly minority communities in Miami-Dade County, have as their mission “to build a strong academic and moral foundation that helps students reach their full potential. We teach and model skills and behaviors that empower students to become self-directed leaders of the future. We set high expectations and challenge students to be creative problem-solvers and responsible citizens.” Faithful adherence to that mission over 15 years of operation has developed schools with very high attendance rates and strong parental involvement. Active Parenting Now and Family Literacy comprise the third avenue, that of family engagement. The parenting program, for parents of children ages 5-12, includes activities for parents and children and guidance for parents on how to become effectively involved in their children’s education. The family literacy program includes Adult Basic Education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) training for parents and young adults. ASPIRA leaders employ a comprehensive Management Information System to track performance and measure outcomes in all of their programs.

The ASPIRA Youth Sanctuary is an extension of schooling provided at the Arts De/Co campus in the Overtown/Wynwood area of Miami, the Raul Arnaldo Martinez Charter School in North Miami, and the Leadership and College Preparatory Academy in Leisure City. All three communities are populated primarily by families whose annual incomes do not include discretionary funds to pay for after-school programs, tutoring, or social enrichment activities. The 21st Century Community Learning Center grant

enables ASPIRA to offer those services free of charge and to aim for improved academic achievement, enhanced character education, and increased family involvement for the youngsters who participate.



Student Enrollment and Attendance

Attendance continued to be excellent during the sixth year of the program, which served a total of 223 regularly participating students—those who attended 30 days or more—at the three sites. Students at DECO had the opportunity to attend Saturday sessions as well as the afterschool program. Enrollment is shown in Table 1, below.

Note: Throughout the report, center names will be abbreviated as follows: DECO for the Arts DE/CO Charter School, LCPA for the Leadership and College Preparatory Academy, and RAM for the Raul Arnaldo Martinez Charter School.

<p align="center">Table 1. Student Enrollment: Total and Regularly Participating Students for School Year 2016-2017</p>		
Center Name	Total Enrolled Attending (at least one day)	Regularly Participating Enrollment (30 days or more)
DECO	120	115
LCPA	50	50
RAM	58	58
Total	228	223

At DECO, monthly attendance for the after-school program ranged from 94% to 99%, and attendance for the Saturday program was 93%. At LCPA, monthly attendance ranged from 94% to 99%, and at RAM, from 91% to 98%.



Student and Family Demographics

The program served students ages 11 to 16 in Grades 6 through 8, none of whom were students with special needs. (Five were in English for Speakers of Other Languages, but they were in Levels 3 through 5.) Most were male, Hispanic, and on free lunch. Tables 2 through 7 give detailed information on student and family demographics.

Table 2. Student Demographics for Total Participating Students (All Students Served) and Regularly Participating Students ASPIRA Youth Sanctuary								
Center Name	Total Participating Students				Regularly Participating Students			
	Gender			Age Range	Gender			Age Range
	Male	Female	DK*		Male	Female	DK*	
DECO	67	53	0	11-16	64	51	0	11-16
LCPA	22	28	0	11-16	22	28	0	11-16
RAM	28	30	0	11-16	28	30	0	11-16
Total	117	111	0	N/A	114	109	0	N/A
	*Don't Know							

**Table 3.
Student Race and Ethnicity*:
Total and Regularly Participating Students**

Total Participating Students				
	DECO	LCPA	RAM	Total
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	45	12	55	112
Hispanic or Latino	75	38	3	116
White or Caucasian American	0	0	0	0
Unknown**	0	0	0	0
Regularly Participating Students				
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	42	12	55	109
Hispanic or Latino	73	38	3	114
White or Caucasian American	0	0	0	0
Unknown**	0	0	0	0
*Ethnicity categories are non-exclusive; students can be identified under multiple ethnicities.				
**Unknown = Racial/ethnic group is unknown or cannot be verified.				

**Table 4.
Student Grade for Total Participating Students**

Center Name	Grade in School*		
	6	7	8
DECO	47	34	39
LCPA	10	24	16
RAM	25	18	15

*Grades levels are exclusive, as students can only be in one grade level. The total number of students where grade level is unknown are not indicated, but can be derived from this table.

**Table 5.
Student Grade for Regularly Participating Students**

Center Name	Grade in School*		
	6	7	8
DECO	46	31	38
LCPA	10	24	16
RAM	25	18	15

*Grades levels are exclusive, as students can only be in one grade level. The total number of students where grade level is unknown are not indicated, but can be derived from this table. 70

**Table 6.
Free/Reduced Lunch Status of Total Participating Students**

Center Name	Free or Reduced Price Lunch		
	Yes	No	DK*
DECO	117	3	0
LCPA	50	0	0
RAM	58	0	1

*Don't Know

**Table 7.
Free/Reduced Lunch Status of Regularly Participating Students**

Center Name	Free or Reduced Price Lunch		
	Yes	No	DK*
DECO	112	3	0
LCPA	50	0	0
RAM	58	0	1
*Don't Know			



Program Operation

The program operated from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. at DECO and LCPA and 3:15 to 6:15 p.m. at RAM for 178 days during the school year. DECO also conducted 11 Saturday sessions from 9:00 to 12:00 between December and March. At all three sites, the program provided academic instruction and tutorial help in mathematics, science, and reading and enrichment activities such as art, drama, chess, cheerleading, dance, and sports. Times of operation appear in Table 8.

**Table 8.
School Year 2016-2017 Operation**

Center Name	Total # weeks this site was open	Total # days this site was open	Typical # days per week this site was open	Typical # hours per week this site was open				Total # days this site was operated			
				Before School	During School	After School	Weekends/Holidays	Before School	During School	After School	Weekends/ Holidays
DECO	36	178	5	0	0	15	3*	0	0	178	11*
LCPA	36	178	5	0	0	15	0	0	0	178	0
RAM	36	178	5	0	0	15	0	0	0	178	0
*11 Saturdays											



Staff Characteristics

Thirty-one professionals served ASPIRA Youth Sanctuary in 2016-2017: 17 at DECO, 5 at LCPA, and 9 at RAM. All except two staff members were paid by CCLC; those two, both at RAM, were paid by United Way. Tables 10 through 12 identify staff members by center, position, and name. The ratio of staff to students is 1:20, consistent with the proposal.

Table 11. Regular Staff by Status at LCPA	
Staff Type	2016-2017 School Year
	Paid by CCLC
School day teachers (former and substitute)	Carrillo Diaz
Center administrators and coordinators	Villa
Youth development workers and non-school day staff with college degree or higher	Muniz Pelayo

Table 10. Regular Staff by Status at DECO	
Staff Type	Paid by CCLC
School day teachers (former and substitute)	Collado Revell
Center administrators and coordinators	Garcia Miralrio
Youth development workers and non-school day staff with college degree or higher	Emilee Joyner Josue Parra Padilla Washington

**Table 12.
Regular Staff by Status at RAM**

Staff Type	2016-2017 School Year	
	Paid by CCLC	Paid by United Way
School day teachers (former and substitute)	Harmon Nunez Timilsina	Parks
Center administrators and coordinators	Bello	
Youth development workers and non-school day staff with college degree or higher	Almonte Tasa Williams	Bufford

Staff members at all three sites participated in staff development during the year, beginning in August, reconvening in November, April, and June. Topics covered include the following: The Vision for 2016, Get Started Package, Attendance, Deliverables, Project-Based Learning, Student Supervision and Liability Issues, New Proposal, Review and Recommendations from 2016 Summative Evaluation, Goals and Objectives for 2016-2017, Reporting Professional Misconduct, Child Abuse and Neglect, Accommodations for a Very Special Population (cross ability grouping, graphic organizers, working with parents, the use of assistive technology, best practices), Summer Camp Procedures, Group Work, Risk Management, Summer Meals Program, and Reports Due.



Objectives and Outcomes

Objective Assessment

Objective assessment information and data from the End-of-Year Data Collection tab of the Objective Assessment Data Collection and Reporting Tool have been uploaded by project administrators. That information is repeated here.

Objective: 80% of regularly participating students will improve to a satisfactory English Language Arts grade or above, or maintain a high grade across the program year.

Progress: Of the 219 students for whom grades were available, 124, or 57 percent, attained the standard, indicating meaningful progress (three stars).

Objective: 70% of regularly participating students will improve to a satisfactory mathematics grade or above, or maintain a high grade across the program year.

Progress: Of the 219 students for whom grades were available, 147, or 67 percent, attained the standard, approaching the benchmark (four stars).

Objective: 65% of regularly participating students will improve to a satisfactory science grade or above, or maintain a high grade across the program year.

Progress: Of the 219 students for whom grades were available, 117, or 53 percent, attained the standard, indicating meaningful progress (three stars).

Objective: 70% of regularly participating students enrolled in Algebra I will pass the Algebra I End-of-Course exam.

Progress: Of the 14 students who took the Algebra I EOC exam, 11, or 79 percent, attained the standard (five stars).

Objective: 80% of regularly participating students will improve their conduct grades as measured by progress reports.

Progress: Of the 219 students for whom grades were available, 131, 60 percent, attained the standard, indicating meaningful progress (three stars).

Objective: 90% of regularly participating students will achieve their grade promotion as measured by report card grades.

Progress: Promotion records were available for 228 students; 223 of them, 98 percent, earned promotion to the next grade in school, exceeding the benchmark (five stars).

Objective: 90% of regularly participating family members will demonstrate their involvement in student education as measured by pre-, mid-, post-assessment.

Progress: Progress was not measured on this objective because the assessment was not created until the school year was finished. It is scheduled to be administered in 2017-2018.

Other Findings

Teacher Survey

The 21st CCLC Teacher Survey asked teachers of language arts, mathematics, and science to respond to 12 statements about 192 individual students by recording a number that signified each student's status regarding that issue. The numbers and their meaning follow:

- 1 = Declined
- 2 = No Change
- 3 = Improved
- 4 = Did Not Need To Improve

These are the statements to which the teachers responded:

- Turning in homework on time.
- Completing quality homework to your satisfaction
- Paying attention and participating in class
- Volunteering (e.g., for extra credit or more responsibilities)
- Attending class regularly
- Being attentive in class
- Behaving well in class
- Academic performance

- Coming to school motivated to learn
- Getting along well with other students (positive interactions)
- Improved self-efficacy (belief they can do well in school)
- Parents are interested and/or involved in their child's schooling

Of the 2,304 responses (192 students X 12 statements each), 2,012, or 87%, indicated that students improved or did not need to improve. No change was indicated in 288 instances, 12.5% of the responses. Two responses were declined and two left blank, accounting for the remaining .5%.

Adult Family Member Survey

The 21st CCLC Adult Family Member Survey asked a sample of 60 parents or guardians to respond to a series of questions regarding their satisfaction with the program. All of the answers, 100 percent, were positive, indicating that parents were satisfied or very satisfied with every aspect of the program cited.

Student Survey

The 21st CCLC Student Survey was administered to 177 students; of those, 174 responded, indicating overwhelming satisfaction with all 12 aspects of the program that were identified. Of the 2,079 responses, 2,000, 96%, were positive. Only 79 responses (most of those from RAM and a few from LCPA), representing 4%, were negative. (Nine items were left blank.)

Parent Engagement

Parents attended six workshops designed to improve their involvement in their children's education. Topics included the following: Elementary to Middle School Transition, The Importance of Attendance, Parent-Teacher Conferences, Less Stress About the Test, How to Recognize and Stop Bullying, The Dangers of Drugs, and Summer Reading. A Christmas recital was presented by students at the December meeting. In addition to enhancing parents' understanding of important topics, the workshops also afforded parents the opportunity to meet staff members and each other and to spend some time in relaxed fellowship.

Site Visits

Donald Jones, a member of the evaluation team, visited all three sites while the after-school program was in session. His reports indicate that positive activities were in progress during every visit. Following are summaries of his reports:

At DECO, an awards assembly was in progress, during which various teachers distributed awards to recognize students in “a myriad of categories.” Students were “sitting quietly and applauding students who received awards. All students were actively engaged and focused on the teachers.” Sixty-two students attended. This was an “excellent culminating activity at the end of the school year.”

At LCPA, “Ms. Carrillo conducted a question/answer session based on delinquency and health, previous lessons. Mr. Pelayo took some of the students outside to practice basketball (for the first time, the basketball team participated in a tournament with other charter, public, and private schools.) Mrs. Muniz engaged the remaining students in dance activities.” Students attended a pizza party from 2:30 to 2:45, during which “all students received at least one certificate for attendance, scholarship, participation, and cooperation.” The report concludes, “Outstanding program set-up: first 30-45 minutes to focus on project-based learning activities; 15 minutes for refreshments; one hour for physical activities.”

At RAM, Mr. Nunez was “constantly circulating around the computer lab while students were working to monitor their progress and keep them on task.” Students were doing a “computer-based activity to reinforce i-Ready program with special emphasis on math, reading, and Reading Plus.” Mr. Jones wrote, “Excellent group activity that had all student actively engaged. One student stood out—JJC—who shared with me an app for electronic devices to connect students in need of assistance with homework with other students who excel in given content areas; he received a national award for the best Project Based Learning Project.” In another class, students were “working on individual tablets on content-based activities covered during the school year, based on i-Ready....Excellent means to reinforce content covered as students were very engaged while working on electronic tablets.”

Data Collection

Timely collection of data continues to be a challenge.

Student Success Snapshot

J.G., who just completed the eighth grade, has been a member of the after-school program for the last three years. He entered ASPIRA in sixth grade as a passive, withdrawn child with low self-esteem. His FCAT scores reflected equally low academic achievement: he earned the lowest score of 1 in both reading and math. He also had physical challenges; because of his height, his elementary years had been difficult, as he was considered a sort of “jolly green giant” among his peers.

J.G. enrolled in the after-school program on the recommendation of his older brother, who had been a three-year participant eight years earlier. It proved to be good advice: J.G. started the intensive after-school tutoring and began to participate in the sports programs. He developed strong ties to the coaches and flourished as their mentoring began to make a positive effect on him, just as it had with his brother years earlier. Under the tutelage of the after-school staff, and with the influence of his affectionate nature and natural ability, he developed capabilities which led to his selection as the basketball team captain. His influence and leadership in that role were driving forces as the school eventually won the much-coveted county championship two years in a row.

J.G.’s academic life soared as well. He finished his years at ASPIRA with the distinction of carrying the highest GPA among all eighth grade students—a stunning 3.95. He has chosen to pursue a career in engineering, and he has been accepted at the Coral Reef STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Magnet program.



Progress Toward Sustainability

Although the ASPIRA Youth Sanctuary has no partners associated with it through the 21st CCLC grant, the ASPIRA organization is linked by tradition to several other educational and community agencies, all of which, according to the proposal, “share our mission to provide leadership through education to Hispanic and other underserved vulnerable populations.” Some of those agencies are the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami Dade College, the University of Miami’s Frost School of Music, the National Council of Puerto Rican Women, the Puerto Rican Professional Organization of South Florida,

the Florida College Access Network, the Florida Sterling Council, and ASPIRA's own Local Advisory Council. ASPIRA's leaders continually nurture relationships with all of those agencies.



Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Findings

These findings emerged from the evaluation:

- Students benefit from and enjoy all aspects of the program, as indicated by their almost perfect attendance and also by site visits, which confirmed consistently engaging activities conducted by a caring, competent staff.
- Academically, the project aims for improvement in English language arts, mathematics, and science, as measured by report card grades. Although meaningful progress was made in all three subjects, the percent of students who earned satisfactory grades fell short of the benchmarks: 57 percent attained the standard in English, 67 percent in mathematics, and 53 percent in science. However, in Algebra, 79 percent of the students who took the end-of-course examination earned satisfactory scores, exceeding the benchmark in that subject.
- The goal for student behavior calls for 80 percent of the students to earn satisfactory conduct grades during the school year. Here, too, achievement fell short of the goal, with 60 percent of the students attaining the standard.
- The program aims for 90 percent of the students to be promoted to the next grade. In this case, performance exceeded the benchmark, with a near-perfect 98 percent of the students moving to the next grade at the end of the year.
- Parent participation remained steady, with moderate attendance at the six workshops conducted for them during the school year. The objective

regarding parent involvement was not measured this year by the intended assessments, but plans call for them to be in place next year.

Implications of the Evaluation

First, a general comment about what it will take to achieve the challenging objectives for the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant: they cannot be attained through the efforts of the after-school staff alone. Only through concerted collaboration between the day-school teachers and the after-school teachers will the benchmarks be attained. That being said, here are implications from the findings in this year's evaluation for the staff at ASPIRA.

English Language Arts. Achievement was moderate with just over half (57 percent) of the students maintaining high grades throughout the year or improving their grades to A, B, or C. The end-of-school report suggests greater attention to “research-based best practices.” Those that will probably be most helpful are the six mentioned by Allington and Gabriel: Each day, every student should—

- read something he or she chooses;
- read something he or she understands;
- write about something personally meaningful;
- talk with peers about reading and writing;
- read accurately; and
- listen to a fluent adult read aloud

While it will probably be impossible to do all of those things in the after-school program, day-school teachers could help immensely if they would adopt the practices as well. Any teacher whose subject includes reading and writing—not just teachers of language arts—could work to ensure that students undertake these practices.

Mathematics. Performance in mathematics this year was greatly improved. Not only did the final percent of students who attained the standard—67—come close to the benchmark of 70; performance also improved mightily from mid-year, when only 51 percent met the mark. So the best advice for mathematics teachers is to keep doing what they are doing and intensify attention to struggling individual students to maximize their progress.

Science. In science, too, significant progress was made. At mid-year, only 42 percent of students attained the standard; by the end of the year, 53

percent had. Still, that's barely more than half who either maintained high grades throughout the year or improved their grades to A, B, or C. The Project-Based Learning should be helping here, but it may be that students are enjoying the activities without grasping the academic concepts; some investigation into more effective continuous assessment of science skills might be productive.

Algebra. The benchmark for Algebra end-of-course examinations was exceeded, with 79 percent of students for whom scores were available earning satisfactory marks of 3 or higher. It appears that all is well with algebra.

Conduct. The percent of students who either maintained high grades (A or B) or improved their grades to A, B, or C varied with the subject: in English, 60 percent attained the standard; in math, 71 percent; and in science, 73 percent. (Only the English conduct grades were reported in the uploaded spreadsheets because of the wording of the requirements.) Improvement from mid-year was minimal in all three subjects.

As in earlier years, the recommendation for this objective is to increase students' awareness of the importance of good conduct grades. Many students disregard them, thinking they "don't count." Whatever can be done to heighten awareness in this area will be worthwhile.

Promotion. Promotion rates were high for all three sites: 95 percent for RAM, 98 percent for LCPA, and 99 percent for DECO, exceeding the benchmark of 90 percent in every case.

Parent Engagement. Plans are already in place for measuring the level of parent involvement in the new school year. The survey created for the purpose will be conducted three times, as required by the grant: at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. The continuation of parent workshops and contact already underway should ensure progress in this area.

Recommendations

These **recommendations** are offered as avenues to improve the program and its accountability:

- Continue the high quality of engagement with students.
- Establish and adhere to a timeline for data collection.

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About the Evaluators: Billie F. Birnie, Ph.D., of Birnie and Associates, is an independent consultant who works primarily with schools and non-profit agencies. A member of the American Evaluation Association, she has been conducting program evaluations for more than 20 years. Questions or comments about this evaluation may be directed to her at bfbirnie@icloud.com. Donald Jones, an associate evaluator, is an experienced teacher who is exceptionally able to capture the reality of classrooms in which he observes.